Leadership Under Fire: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Administrator's Perceived Leadership Identity and Crisis Response at Higher Education Institutions in the United States

Melissa Moore
St. John Fisher College, melissaSmoore@gmail.com

Leadership Under Fire: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Administrator's Perceived Leadership Identity and Crisis Response at Higher Education Institutions in the United States

Abstract

The spontaneous nature of crises on college campuses, and the difficulty in predicting or preparing for such occurrences, has created a challenge for campus leadership and their execution of crisis management plans. Current research explores the effectiveness of these crisis management plans, however, a gap of knowledge exists in understanding individual leaders' experiences and the challenges they face. The intent of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of higher education administrators who have led through an unexpected crisis that impacted their institution. Research was conducted using qualitative methodology consisting of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Data retrieved from these interviews were coded into meaning units to help better understand crisis phenomena impacting senior level higher education administrators. Findings revealed administrators that have experienced a crisis often struggle with the balance between their institutional responsibilities and their personal convictions as leaders. The recommendations set forth in this study include: dedicating time for reflection and processing after a crisis event, and engaging in activities that help leaders to better understand and develop their leadership identity.

Document Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Education (EdD)

Department
Executive Leadership

First Supervisor
Theresa Pulos

Second Supervisor
Anastasia Urtz

Subject Categories
Education

Leadership Under Fire: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Administrator's Perceived

Leadership Identity and Crisis Response at Higher Education Institutions in the

United States

By

Melissa S. Moore

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Theresa Pulos

Committee Member

Dr. Anastasia Urtz

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

St. John Fisher College

May 2018

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Don and Linda. Thank you for always teaching me to dream big. For never questioning my ambition, my goals, or my heart. For sacrificing and selflessly giving all that you had for Natalie and me. You have taught me how to be a good person, to do the right thing, to work hard, to be kind, and to love others unconditionally. This accomplishment could have never happened without you.

Thank you to the incredible faculty at St. John Fisher College. To Dr. C. Michael Robinson who recruited me for this program and brought us through an incredible journey. To Dr. Kim VanDerLinden for her kind, funny words of wisdom that echoed throughout this writing process, and for Dr. Linda Evans who provided me with insight into the world and occasional dating advice.

To my committee member, Dr. Anastasia Urtz, thank you for always pushing me to think more, try harder, and to stay focused. And to my committee chair, Dr. Theresa Pulos – words cannot describe how grateful I am to you. I will be forever thankful for your advice, positive encouragement, tough love, and for this day.

To my executive mentor and fearless leader, Michael Sattler. You are the epitome of a good leader. You have taught me so much these last few years about life and leadership. Thank you for all of your support and advice.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Extraordinary 18. You are the most exceptional group of individuals that I have ever met. I am thankful for the universe (and Dr.

Biographical Sketch

Melissa S. Moore is currently the Registrar and Student Conduct Administrator at Bryant & Stratton College in Syracuse, NY.   Ms. Moore attended Le Moyne College and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in 2007. She attended Drexel University and graduated with a Master of Science degree in Higher Education, with a concentration in Enrollment Management, in 2011. Ms. Moore began her doctoral studies in May, 2015 at St. John Fisher College in the Doctorate of Education program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Moore pursued her research on crisis experiences and perceived leadership identity of senior level higher education administrators under the direction of Dr. Theresa Pulos and Dr. Anastasia Urtz and received the Ed.D. degree in 2018.

Abstract

The spontaneous nature of crises on college campuses, and the difficulty in predicting or preparing for such occurrences, has created a challenge for campus leadership and their execution of crisis management plans. Current research explores the effectiveness of these crisis management plans, however, a gap of knowledge exists in understanding individual leaders' experiences and the challenges they face. The intent of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of higher education administrators who have led through an unexpected crisis that impacted their institution. Research was conducted using qualitative methodology consisting of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Data retrieved from these interviews were coded into meaning units to help better understand crisis phenomena impacting senior level higher education administrators. Findings revealed administrators that have experienced a crisis often struggle with the balance between their institutional responsibilities and their personal convictions as leaders. The recommendations set forth in this study include: dedicating time for reflection and processing after a crisis event, and engaging in activities that help leaders to better understand and develop their leadership identity.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Higher education institutions have not been spared from crisis situations that have impacted colleges and communities around the country. In the last few decades, events have prompted conversations regarding the need for better preparation and protocols to aid campus leadership in recognizing and neutralizing threats (Dolan, 2006). Occurrences such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the Virginia Tech campus shooting, the Penn State sexual abuse scandal, Stanford sexual assault handling, and the Boston Marathon bombing, have brought national attention to institutions – specifically how institutions have reacted and addressed risks, in order to minimize disruption and loss (Dolan, 2006; Drape & Tracy, 2016; Epstein, 2014).

In the cases of Virginia Tech and the Boston bombings, campus leadership was forced to make real-time decisions on how to handle the potential of more threats with the little information that was available (Dolan, 2006; Drape & Tracy, 2016; Epstein, 2014, Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). Crisis management is a growing area in higher education administration due to these occurrences on campuses and in communities around the United States, and the demands these events place on campus leadership. These procedural plans are created with the intent of aiding administrators in launching sequential and prescriptive actions to control collateral damage (Zdziarski, 2016). Senior level higher education administrators (SLHEA) are expected to face multiple decisions in their day-to-day operations at their respective institutions (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013). These decisions vary; some are routine, mundane, and simple. Yet,

others can be more complex due to their spontaneous manifestation during times when leaders' least expect it. The nature of the crisis, the interest of the stakeholders involved, or the consequences from the outcomes, can add to the complexity of any response and call to action, especially during a crisis. When the established protocols do not attend to the needs of the given situation, college administration must make decisions as how to best proceed in both a timely and effective manner (Haris, 2012).

Research has focused on the effect that business leaders' decision-making processes have had on stakeholders and on critical moment decision-making. However, little research exists in regard to higher education administrators during crisis situations, despite the high-risk outcomes that could occur (Jones, 1991; Pearson & Claire, 1998). Furthermore, there is little research on the administrators themselves, specifically those who have experienced a crisis, their reflections on that event, or what they have learned from that experience (Haris, 2012).

The challenge in predicting, understanding, and processing looming crises in a timely fashion, has been well documented throughout the literature (Boin & Nieuwenburg, 2013; Dolan, 2006). Often, this challenge stems from the absence of knowledge and stability that accompanies crisis scenarios. The emerging trends from this research highlight the challenging situations that leaders find themselves in when having to face a crisis. These trends include the challenge of adequately preparing for all aspects of the crisis scenarios, from the moment the situation occurs, to the actions taken after an event, in order to gain a sense of control. (Boin & Nieuwenburg, 2013). The self-identified leadership role that administrators assume can impact their views on responsibility and duty. Some view themselves as leaders in the holistic sense, not just as

managers, or a position on a hierarchical organization chart. Others view themselves as representatives of the institution, charged with upholding the mission and vision (Valentine, Nam, Hollingworth, & Hall, 2014). Yet, others identify their responsibility is to the stakeholders, and they are the driving forces behind the actions taken (Valentine et al., 2014).

Universities have taken significant steps to mitigate impact from natural disasters, gun violence, sexual assault, academic scandal, or other dilemmas on stakeholders (Dolan, 2006). It is impossible to prepare multiple stakeholders, departments, or the community, for every possible scenario, but the actions of a leader during that critical moment can make a difference. Having that knowledge, or at least understanding the lived experience of leaders in that moment, may help others prepare for the future. Inherent and learned characteristics of leadership may impact the nature of these prompt decisions, but what remains unknown, is how leaders perceive their roles during a crisis, and how they make sense of their experiences (Hadley, Pittinsky, Sommer, & Zhu, 2011; Jenkins & Goodman, 2015).   Therefore, the actions employed by those in leadership and power are well worth studying (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015; Pearson & Claire, 1998). This study seeks to learn more about those experiences of administrators who have led through a crisis that impacted their institution.

Problem Statement

The spontaneous nature of campus crises and the difficulty in predicting such events have created challenges in crisis management planning. Particularly, crises on college campuses tend to fall under specific disciplines (e.g. economics, student mental health issues, violence, natural disaster) and are studied for the individual phenomena and

subsequent decisions that occur, rather than the act of crisis decision-making as a whole, or the impact of administrators involved (Pearson & Claire, 1998). The lack of connectedness within this research and discipline has created a gap in knowledge, specifically in these individual experiences that SLHEA face during unexpected crises. Research also does not fully speak to the impact that a negative decision has on higher education administrators, and how those choices may affect these leaders' future actions. The literature does, however, address the frustrations of senior administrators, explicitly universities' presidents, noting the lack of time available to thoughtfully reflect about decisions and events (Song & Hartley, 2012). This gap in knowledge is specifically acute in understanding individual leaders' experiences that SLHEA face during unexpected crises, due in part to the lack of ability to reflect on both the event and actions taken.

Research in the field of crisis management, specific to higher education, indicates the need for institutional preparedness and a clear set of guidelines to execute during a given event (Hu, Knox, & Kapucu, 2014). It has also suggested that leaders facing a crisis may rely on other variables to help frame their actions, due to the absence of knowledge, self-identity as a leader, lack of time to reflect, and the human capital involved (Song & Hartley, 2012; Yin & Jing, 2014). What remains unknown are the answers to these questions: how have senior leaders in higher education responded to unexpected crises; how they reflected on those actions; and specifically, what was their rationale for the decisions they made, and what are their thoughts on what they experienced.

The lack of research in the lived experiences of these leaders during times of crises, creates a challenge in preparing for future events, or devising a decision-making framework to help administrators prepare as best they can.

Theoretical Framework

The uncertainty that accompanies crisis situations can make it difficult for leaders to navigate through the event, in order to make timely and effective decisions. The challenge of recognizing all aspects of the situation that is occurring, the stakeholders involved, the risks, and the best pathway to a resolution, becomes difficult due to the often limited information available. Researchers have recognized that by having a set of ideas or expectations, in the form of a mental model or *frame,* leaders can better navigate unfamiliar territories with the little information they have. They do so by collecting available data and observations to then form patterns to better understand what is occurring (Bolman & Deal, 2013). *Reframing* is also essential to this sense-making process by requiring leaders to disrupt anticipated actions in order to elicit a different outcome (Bolman & Deal, 2013). While multiple versions of mental models exist, each with their own strengths and limitations, the four frames as developed by Bolman and Deal (2013), was selected for this study to help better understand the lived experiences of higher education leaders who have faced a crisis. The researchers suggest that leaders must recognize that there are inherent characteristics of organizations.

Bolman and Deal (2013) identified that under normal pretenses, certain peculiarities exist within every organization, and that it is necessary to recognize these characteristics before applying a frame and its subsequent assumptions. These

characteristics include that organizations are (a) complex, (b) surprising, (c) deceptive, and (d) ambiguous.

Organizations and institutions can be complex. Bolman and Deal (2013) categorized this complexity by the varying types of personnel, departments, objectives, and technology that exist even within one company. Leaders navigating through a crisis recognize this complexity as a challenge in gathering all the information to make a full-scale decision, one that takes into consideration all stakeholders and the varying organizational interests. A state government commissioned review panel tasked with reviewing the shooting at Virginia Tech in April 2007, recognized that a challenge for the institution and breakdown in the dissemination of information happened because of the varying groups involved with the shooter (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). The lack of a centralized data collection system or protocols that required pertinent information was blamed for the lack of *red flags* that could have prevented the events from happening (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Organizations and the situations they face are surprising. Bolman and Deal (2013) discuss that decisions made to address current problems could inevitably create more issues in the future. They encourage leaders to recognize that what they expect will happen, will often not be what actually occurs. Leaders who have experienced a crisis within their institutions or organizations, can attest that well thought out plans can deteriorate under the right conditions, or create unintended obstacles for future initiatives (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Organizations can be deceptive. Bolman and Deal (2013) stated that stakeholders and in some cases, leaders who fear criticism after a failed initiative or event, may not be

forthcoming of what the actual shortcomings were. Acknowledging this lens will assist

leaders in recognizing that information presented during a crisis situation may not be

complete or a full portrayal of the actual event or factors that occurred, and they need to

assess appropriately (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Organizations and situations can be ambiguous. Leaders who recognize that

ambiguity is a natural occurrence, not one that is perpetuated at the start of a crisis

situation, then can plan accordingly. Ambiguity can occur when persons involved

interpret information differently, when there is a lack of information available, or it can

be intentional, in order to mask the facts (Bolman and Deal, 2013).

Understanding the peculiarities within an organization helps to prepare leaders

for applying the four frames of Bolman and Deal (2013) during a crisis situation: (a)

structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, and (d) symbolic.   As previously mentioned,

Bolman and Deal (2013) suggested that in situations where uncertainty, lack of

experience, or incomplete information exist, the use of frames allows for leaders to gather

what data they do have and try to make patterns toward a resolution by applying frame-

specific assumptions.

The structural frame. This frame assumes that the goal of an organization is to

achieve well understood goals, through clearly defined roles and relationships (Bolman &

Deal, 2013). The structural frame values a methodical distribution of labor and

responsibilities, decisions that reflect the overall responsibility of the group, versus

personal agendas of a few, and active problem solving employed to address issues that

arise (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Challenges and tensions arise from the need to divide

labor and responsibility into distinct groups, whereas, a lack of communication or shared

goals could create friction during a crisis. Leaders have control in the structural frame, dictating policy and procedures for the good of the organization by creating consistency and a level of predictability (Bolman & Deal, 2013). However, it is recognized that these directives are not always adhered to, accepted, or followed, therefore requiring subsequent steps to be taken. This is known as lateral coordination (using meetings, task forces, and networks to disseminate information).

The human resource frame. This frame assumes that organizations exist to serve the needs of humans, and that humans/organizations need one another (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The frame recognizes that the relationship between organizations and humans is mutually beneficial and a poor fit is equally as harming. The human resources frame faces challenges when demands of situations and events require actions that may harm the relationships with humans (such as downsizing or requiring more of individuals). The sensitive nature of these challenges need to be addressed by leaders in a way that recognizes the value of each individual human by investing in their wellbeing, future, and success. In the context of crisis situations, leaders may identify their loyalty toward stakeholders in a given situation rather than the institution as a whole.

The political frame. Bolman and Deal (2013) contend that organizations are political entities, with competing ideas, coalitions, forces, and interests among stakeholders. The political frame assumes that members of these factions have deep-rooted values, information, beliefs, and perceptions of reality. A scarcity of resources within organizations is emphasized and leaders must decide how best to divide what the organization has amongst competing interest groups, which creates daily conflict as the group struggles for dominance and power. Decisions are made through bargaining and

negotiations, often with the successors being those who had established more power within the group dynamics. Leaders within the political frame are recognized through the legitimatization of power coming from various sources such as position coercion, control of resources, rewards, expertise, and reputation (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Conflict, when not appropriately channeled, can cause challenges in the political frame. Leaders' authority may diminish due to the growth between partisan coalitions (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The frame also naturally encourages decisive tactics and strategizing to *win* conflicts versus the development of actual resolutions where there are mutually beneficial outcomes.   Leaders during a crisis might find themselves amidst these conflicts due to heightened emotions, risks, and uncertainty that accompanies trauma.

The symbolic frame. As discussed earlier, ambiguity often accompanies organizations on a day-to-day basis and in the context of a crisis, the uncertainly and unknown can evoke emotions and feelings for stakeholders involved, who then seek for solace or understanding. The symbolic frame assumes that during uncertainty and in daily happenings, people seek symbols, rituals, and signs to help bring clarity. The frame also assumes that there is more meaning in the reasoning behind why something occurred versus the actual event itself, and that people experience these situations differently. Therefore, different meanings arise from the same situation, depending on the person viewing or experiencing it. Culture, myths, heroes and heroines, ceremonies, and stories are viewed as factors that can help bring sense to an event. Challenges to this frame include the divergence of different belief systems, values, and rituals. Crisis events, where there is a divergence of thinking, religion, and value sets, are often viewed through this frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). For higher education leaders, there is difficulty in

recognizing varying cultures and symbols that impact institutions daily and during a crisis as they are not always apparent.

The research of Bolman and Deal (2013) studied inherent characteristics of organizations and the application of their four frames; the frames provide a guide to the study of crisis phenomena experienced by SLHEA. By recognizing these characteristics, and factoring in the preset assumptions made through the frames, leaders may be able to better navigate through the chaos to a temporary or long-term resolution.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of SLHEA after an unexpected crisis that impacted their institution. A 2015 survey of college and university presidents indicates that administrators desire to have time to adequately reflect on their decisions, but admit that it has become low priority due to competing demands of the job (Song & Hartley, 2012). Research on decision-making under pressure indicates that the way in which leaders perceive crisis situations impacts their decision-making actions (Donovan, Guss, & Naslund, 2015). Administrators' actions are based on their perception in the moment of a crisis; however, they do not have time to process adequately with the limited information they have received. Therefore, in order to better understand how leaders can prepare themselves for crisis decision-making in the future, we need to better understand their perceptions and thoughts of those who have experienced it firsthand.

Viewing the crisis through the lens of participants, has the potential to provide better understanding of how administrators reflect on the event, including their decisions, actions, and outcomes. By better understanding this lived experience, practitioners in the

field may gather insight as to how reflection on a previous crisis event can inform future decisions.

Research Questions

Senior level higher education administrators who have faced crises have a lived experience worth exploring. This study asked the following research questions to better understand what they have gone through:

1. How do senior level higher education administrators reflect on the crisis they experienced?

2. How do senior level higher education administrators make sense of the event and their actions?

3. How do senior level higher education administrators perceive their leadership identity?

Potential Significance of Study

Whereas crisis management plans are becoming more common in institutions of higher education, these plans do not address the humanistic characteristics of leadership during times of duress including the impact to existing leadership identity, viewpoints or action plans of the leader (Lambert, Lambert, & Lambert, 2014). Research suggests that the actions and decisions made during these crisis times can have a heavy toll on the resiliency of the leaders, stakeholders, and institutions, due to the ill-defined, complex nature of emergent events (Somers, 2009). This study explored the lived experiences of educators who have been through a crisis that required decisions to be made, ones for which they may or may not have been prepared. The possible significance of this study

is the identification of factors that contribute to SLHEA' decision-making processes during times of crises.

This study does not seek to create a framework for administrators, but rather, to offer insight into how leaders respond to crisis times, in order to help others prepare for the future. The likelihood of reoccurrence of some of these crises to the administrators and/or the institution is unlikely. However, the essence of the human experience offers value to those seeking to prepare for potential trauma, and how best to approach a high stakes situation in the future.

Definition of Terms

Crisis – An interaction, singular, or unexpected occurrence that happens within a larger structure, between stakeholders and an organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). A crisis is an event that requires an action or decision to be made (Robinson, 1972).

High Risk Areas within a College Institution – criminal (including but not limited to robberies, physical violence, sexual assault, and terrorism); infrastructure (housing, facilities, power generators); athletics (recruiting practices, scandals); misconduct/unethical behavior (plagiarism, conflicts of interest, tampering of records, fraudulent activities); financial (mismanagement), legal conflicts, natural disasters (fires, flood, earthquakes, hurricanes), reputational (false rumors) (Mitroff, Diamond, & Alpaslan, 2006).

Man-made Crisis – acts of *human evil* including but not limited to violence, sexual assault, terrorism, arson, financial turmoil, or other incidents of harm to a person, community, or institution (Lindell, Prater, & Perry, 2007).

Natural Disaster – Crisis that emerges from weather or natural phenomena (Mitroff et al., 2006).

Senior Level Higher Education Administrators – College administrators who are in the capacity to make large-scale decisions that impact multiple stakeholders within the institution and community, oftentimes, overseeing large departments, and staff who rely on their prompt and informed actions.

Servant Leader – A descriptive term of any leader who possesses characteristics of empathy, awareness, stewardship, community building, and healing (Greenleaf, Frick, & Spears, 1996).

Stakeholders – For the purpose of this study, the stakeholders include administrators, staff, faculty, parents, the Board of Trustees and/or other governing bodies, students, third party vendors, regulatory agencies, athletic organizations, and the community (Mitroff et al., 2006).

Summary

The world has become a volatile place and in today's society, higher education leaders are often turned to in times when stakeholders request guidance and decisions. Administrators may have protocols, guidelines, or frameworks to help them navigate through the crisis at hand, but literature suggests that in the most serious of cases, something more might be occurring. Chapter 2 of this study will explore the review of the literature concerning factors which influence leadership current crisis response and preparation efforts in higher education, identified leadership roles, and the influences on leader identity and sense-making of crisis situations. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology for this study including the selection of participants, and the data collection

process. The results of the research will be disseminated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 will

provide a discussion of the findings and recommendations based on the analysis of the

data collected.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction & Purpose

  The spontaneous nature of crises creates a challenge for administrators to effectively act and process events as they are occurring. Literature indicates that there are several factors contributing to the difficulties administrators experience. These factors include: (a) the current crisis response and preparation efforts in higher education, (b) the SLHEA identified leadership role, and (c) the influences on leader identity and sense-making of crisis situations.

  This chapter will review the research on the factors and influences in leader sense making and action during a crisis, beginning with an overview of the current culture in higher education and how it may influence a leader's response. In addition, the emergent types of leadership that exist within crisis literature will be reviewed to better understand the basis and evolution of intrinsic leadership skills and traits. Lastly, the relationship between leader identity, sense making of actions to inform decisions, and how all contribute to crisis outcomes, will be examined. The chapter will conclude with the gap in research that exists.

Current Crisis Response and Preparation Efforts in Higher Education

  Research and historical data report occurrences of violent crimes, natural disasters, financial turmoil, lawsuits, terrorism, institutional reputation damage, and athletic scandals are on the rise at higher education institutions in the last few decades (Mitroff et al., 2006). Despite the attention that these events bring to the campus

community and in some cases, the national media stage, institutions still remain sluggish in fully preparing for the potential of threats (Catullo, Walker, & Floyd, 2009). A 2009 report published by the National Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA) sought to compare overall preparedness of administrators to response to crisis using a data set collected by Zdziarski in 2001 and NASPA survey results from 2007 (Catullo et al., 2009). Three hundred twenty-one institutions were selected to participate. Of these 321 institutions, 158 completed the questionnaire achieving a 49% response rate. The findings concluded that institutions began better preparing for potential threats after the September 11th terrorist attacks. The survey compared Zdziarski's (2001) data to participant responses in 2007, which found that institutions were progressing toward preparedness. Whereas Catullo et al. (2009) surmised, based on their scan of the literature, that national events since 2001, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, were the contributing factors to preparedness. However, the data did not define a causal relationship between these tragedies and these crises' impact on preparedness (2009). Due in part to the low probability of tragedy occurring, institutions continue to operate with other pressing and immediate issues taking priority over planning for a crisis, (Catullo et al., 2009). Nevertheless, SLHEA' leadership identity may be the dynamic thrust behind proactive, emergency preparedness actions (McCarthy, O'Connell, & Hall, 2005).

The Leadership Identity of Senior Level Administrators

Senior leaders' self-identity and purpose within the institution have been cited as factors influencing crisis response (McCarthy et al., 2005). Their roles and responsibilities are often attributed to what drives or forms their sense of leadership.

Some leaders may see their given responsibilities outlined by a job description consisting of a checklist of expected tasks and skills. Other leaders may view their source of leadership as something internally driven through choice-based behaviors or inherent characteristics, creating conflict between responsibility and personal identity.

Shankman and Allen (2008) suggested that leaders compartmentalize their sense of leadership into three areas. These three areas are context, self, and concern for others. The researchers found that authentic leaders possess deep rooted personal values, have a desire to earn the respect of others, and sought to build credibility, all while honoring diverse viewpoints. Additionally, Bocheński (1992) identified several traits as part of his theory on authoritarian leadership and the leader-subordinate relationship. Both of these traits may also help form leadership identity. Stakeholders recognize traditional authority, which is legitimized by established cultural and social patterns. A charismatic identity is characterized by leader traits that are deemed as extraordinary, when compared to peer leaders, and rational-legal behaviors which are legitimized by prescriptive policies, procedures, and governance structures within an organization (Bocheński, 1992; Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946). The reactions of employees and receptiveness to crisis solutions are often attributed to these stakeholder relationships, including the continuous establishment of trust, and the demonstration of competent leadership skills expected of an authority figure (Bocheński, 1992; Haddon, Loughlin, & McNally, 2015).

This legitimization of authority is much like the findings Bocheński (1992) saw in the establishment of authority based on leadership traits and skills. Research shows that there are many ways in which leaders self-identify and describe their leadership styles. These leadership styles include the leader as the authority figure, the leader as the coach,

and finally, the leader as a holistic entity. These characteristics of leadership are not mutually exclusive to each category. However, these self-identified or inherited leadership styles are often attributed to the leadership responses and actions that determine the outcome in any given situation.

      The authority figure: authoritarian leadership during crisis times. The hierarchical structure of higher education administration creates a governance structure where senior level higher education administrators, due to title, experience, and expected responsibilities, are regarded as authorities on collegial policies and procedures (Bowers, Hall, & Srinivasan, 2017). Leaders are expected to help establish order, understanding, and deliver meaningful directives to engage subordinates and stakeholders. These constituents expect SLHEA, in this top down model, to possess the capability to make immediate decisions and execute any crisis management plans. Leaders are often viewed as subject and governance experts, capable of successfully overcoming any obstacle or crisis that might arise (Bowers et al., 2017). The context of crisis situations, however, often dictates the need and desire of authoritative leadership to counterbalance the uncertainty and ambiguity that exist (Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, 2013). Bolman and Deal (2013) proposed that the legitimatization of authority and establishment of responsibilities occurs through the structural frame. Through this frame, authoritative leaders distinguish themselves as the point person during a crisis scenario, thus assuming responsibility to act in the best interest of all. Regardless of their preparedness to take on such a task, the inherent role of SLHEA within an organization is recognized as a position of power and authority.

SLHEA who identify as the authority figure during crisis times may exhibit leadership characteristics such as dominance, decisiveness, strong work ethics, trustworthiness, and a positive social attitude. Leaders who are legitimized as authority figures by subordinates are expected to possess the experience and knowledge set to help make sense of the crisis scenario at hand. These SLHEA have been assigned or earned the role of authority figure due to knowledge and skill attainment. The expectation and the assumption of subordinates is that these leaders will be best fit to develop and execute crisis management plans that will honor stakeholders' interests and protect the institution.

Nevertheless, those in authority may have autocratic leadership tendencies. Autocratic leaders have been criticized for the lack of engagement and input from subordinates, which often leaves employees feeling disengaged and demotivated (Rast et al., 2013). Historically, autocratic leadership has generated repercussions for those stakeholders who did not approve or comply to leaders' requests, which can additionally create a fear-based environment under normal context (Rast et al., 2013). However, when faced with uncertainty and ambiguity, stakeholders lean more toward the autocratic leadership style due to the unilateral decisive decision-making and actions that ensue.

The coach and holistic entity: the humanistic side of crisis events. Robert K. Greenleaf first coined the term *servant leader,* a term used to describe a leader who possesses characteristics of leadership such as empathy, awareness, stewardship, community building, and healing (Greenleaf et al., 1996). These characteristics of leadership emerge from literature as areas of priority for leaders facing a crisis. Leaders who recognize their role as mentors, coaches, spiritual leaders, educators, in loco parenti, or decision-makers, assign value to balancing the humanistic side of crisis situations

(McCarthy et al., 2005).   Their understanding of how they internally make sense of a situation and further recognize their impact on stakeholders, creates a lens in which leaders are forced to prioritize their actions. The humanistic frame, as explained by Bolman and Deal (2013), recognizes the transactional value of leaders and stakeholders. Regardless of the role or entity that the leader assumes, the relationship between stakeholders and those in leadership positions, is reliant on one another, and during a crisis, the sensitivity of this relationship is heightened due to time constraints.

Leaders who recognize the humanistic side of crisis events will acknowledge the survival phase post event (0-48 hours) as one that demands attention for all those affected by what is happening. Lewis (2017) argued however, that crisis events impact employees and stakeholders long after the actual event. Leaders who identify and assign meaning to the humanistic side of crisis management are often at odds with traditional crisis management theories. These traditional crisis management theories recommend a triage approach to minimize collateral and immediate threats, which may not encompass all humans involved in the event (Hale, Hale, & Dulek, 2006). The challenge for leaders who operate with traditional crisis management tendencies, as well as those with a coaching schema, is to foremost, recognize the needs of the organization. Organizational considerations can help both leadership identities to successfully balance and navigate through crises.

Influences on Leader Identity and Sense Making of Crisis Situations

Leader identity and the lens through which they view their responsibilities are variables that influence action. However, during a crisis, that identity and sense of duty or responsibility may be challenged due to the unpredictable variables that exist. Leaders

who prioritize personal beliefs such as religious, spiritual, or moral values, may approach crisis situations with a different lens than those with an authoritative, or humanistic approach. Leaders with a strong sense of personal identity may approach crisis situations with strong personal schema, which literature indicates is a challenge, due to the conflicting nature of trauma (Haddon et al., 2015; Kohlberg, 1981).

   Personal identity. During times of duress, personal schema can be challenged (Boin & Nieuwenburg, 2013). The struggle between responsibility and leadership identity was evident during the Penn State case involving Jerry Sandusky, and Penn State's campus leadership team argued that from the time that campus leadership was made aware of the accusations, to the time of the indictments, there were several opportunities for campus leadership to remain authentic to their "personal leadership identities" but rather, political pressures and self-interest took over (Albino et al., 2013, p. 133). Albino et al. (2013) suggested that these personal leadership identities would have been inherent for the campus leadership in place due to the numerous years, positions, experiences, credibility established, training, and exposure that all leaders had at the time the incident occurred. Using the leadership frames proposed by Bolman and Deal, Albino et al. (2013) reviewed the facts, actions, and outcomes of each of the key players in the case. By profession, Spanier, who was president of Penn State at the time of the scandal, was an accomplished family therapist, researcher, author, and was recognized in higher education for his leadership and accomplishments in promoting equality in admissions (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2017). Albino et al. (2013) argued that this experience should have directed Spanier to act in a way that upholds what is ethically and legally right. Albino et al. (2013) cited the existence of the symbolic frame within the

Penn State structure with former football coach, Joe Paterno, as a recognizable entity representing tradition, culture, faith, and belief in the football following (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The Penn State leadership team and community demonstrated conflicted beliefs as to how to proceed when the accusations were made and more information became available. Specifically, the institution faced challenges in debating the knowledge and actions of Paterno, a person who was held in the highest regard (Albino et al., 2013). Ultimately, it was determined that the breakdown in leadership identity led to severe consequences for Penn State and for the leaders themselves. Faced with challenges, moral dilemmas, and a call to action when the knowledge of criminal wrongdoing was brought forth, the leadership team acted in the interest of the college and against their personal beliefs (Albino et al., 2013). Their actions resulted in criminal charges, and in some cases, loss of jobs, and reputation damage. In addition, the college itself faced ramifications, including financial penalties and brand damage, stemming from the decisions made by their leadership team (Albino et al., 2013).

Time constraints during a crisis: Contemplation, conversation, reflection. A meta-analysis of decision-making found that when leaders are faced with making decisions or having to act in a difficult situation that is misaligned with their personal views or schema, their process in achieving a decision is based on a period of contemplation or conversation (Gunia, Wang, Huang, Wang, & Murnighan, 2012). Contemplation is the process by which a person assesses each aspect and option of a decision and recognizes that each choice has interdependent consequences. Conversation occurs when leaders rely on like-minded individuals to help with this assessment process, collectively reviewing possibilities and consequences (Gunia et al., 2012). Time

constraints that often accompany the decision-making process are a leadership challenge.

In some cases, leaders may not have the time to contemplate events or participate in

meaningful discourse to identify possible options to address the situation (Gunia et al.,

2012). In these situations, the political frame, as described by Bolman and Deal (2013),

provides a lens to help leaders better understand the ramifications of the various

outcomes, including the impact on stakeholders and the allocation of resources.

To test the effects of time constraints on decision-making, Gunia et al. (2012)

conducted an experiment on 146 undergraduate students from a college business school.

Each student participated in a decision-making activity on a computer that measured the

timing of choices, impact of decisions based on truth, and the weight of the consequences

of their decisions. Although the study was conducted using students, the overall findings

add to the body of knowledge regarding leadership and decision-making. The findings

suggested that when a person is experiencing high risk decision-making with added time

constraints, he or she may fall back on previous, familiar experiences. For leaders, they

may need to rely on previous leadership experiences, or rely on their personal beliefs,

regardless of the relevance to the current situation, before taking action. The findings also

concluded that periods of contemplation before making a decision and acting, allowed for

more ethically sound directives. Gunia et al. (2012) suggested that this could be due to

the extra time allotted to process what has happened, assess options, and begin the

process of drawing on personal values and past experiences.

A survey of college presidents commissioned by the Council of Independent

Colleges found that SLHEA identified three of points of frustration along the emergent

continuum. These points of frustration were recognized as the lack of financial

resources, faculty resistance to institutional change, and lastly, the lack of time to reflect

about the event, its aftermath, or the administrator-directed actions that ensued (Song &

Hartley, 2012). Reflection to assess the effectiveness of enacted decisions and the

problem-solving process utilized throughout the event, may become a framework to

better prepare for future issues (Song & Hartley, 2012). However, administrators who

have led through a decision-making process or crisis, acknowledge that the culture of

higher education does not encourage reflection. Rather, administrators are expected to

move on to the next pressing tasks, such as rebuilding and recovery efforts (Song &

Hartley, 2012). This lack of reflection time to properly process and make meaning of

such a tumultuous situation may prohibit professional growth of these administrators

(Mitroff et al., 2006).

  Influence of stakeholders on leadership identity and action. Stakeholders

have established roles in the logistics and operations of organizations. For the purpose of

this study, the stakeholders include administrators, staff, faculty, parents, the Board of

Trustees and/or other governing bodies, students, third party vendors, regulatory

agencies, athletic organizations, and the community (Mitroff et al., 2006). As such,

stakeholders may also influence the leader's role and the administrator's leadership

identity. Stakeholder concerns and wellbeing are variables in the decision-making

processes during a crisis situation. Jabeen and Akhtar (2013) argued that the degree of

impact and influence of the stakeholder role, is dictated by the leadership identity

established by those in charge. Jabeen and Akhtar (2013) recognize the importance of

people within the organization, as well as their influence and personal motivation. This

aligns with the human resource and political frames described by Bolman and Deal

(2013). Successful administrators, especially in crisis times, will likely possess experience, talent, skill, qualifications, positive energy, recognition of culture, and good intentions, to do what is needed to navigate through the ordeal (Jabeen & Akhtar, 2013). As unique as personal decision-making and actions are, there is a predictive nature to the way in which leaders act based on their leadership style, coupled with age, gender, tenure, experience, and biases (Jabeen & Akhtar, 2013; Zeni, Buckley, Mumford, & Griffith, 2016). The way in which the leader assesses the situation, and processes the environment around them, can impact the resolution to the conflict and the impact it has on stakeholders (De Dreu, 2003).

Preda and Stan (2016) also studied the dynamics of leadership through their inquiry into management styles and the impact these styles have on stakeholders. In 2009, 2015, and 2016, these researchers sought to learn more about the leadership tactics of Romanian managers employed during crisis times. Leadership strategies included how leaders found inspiration, how leaders communicated difficult messages, and how these leaders managed through emotional circumstances. The researchers conducted 219 structured interviews of managers, representing both the private and public sector, without limitations on age, race, or gender (Preda & Stan, 2016). The objectives of their study intended to analyze tactics used by managers during difficult decision-making processes, examine coping strategies used by managers during emotional situations, explain managers' assessments of themselves, including their limitations, strengths, and shortcomings, and gain understanding of the managers' sense-making of crisis scenarios.

Preda and Stan (2016) found that there were multiple crisis definitions among the managers, but their most difficult decision involved impact on personnel, such as

unexpected downsizing in anticipation of a financial crisis or recession, even when the organization is demonstrating profit and viability. A situation such as this may impact the culture of the organization and create an atmosphere of uncertainty. The importance of culture and symbols is recognized in the symbolic frame, which assigns value to the culture of the organization and recognizes that during a crisis, the underpinnings of organizational beliefs may be challenged (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Leaders' actions during a crisis are indicative of their leadership styles and support a causal relationship with the stakeholders that legitimizes their authority (Haddon et al., 2015). Haddon et al. (2015) found that stakeholders recognize the actions of their leaders and are sensitive to the decisions that these leaders make. The responses indicate that leaders who assign priority to traits during a crisis, such as having a strong work ethic, being a constant force, having a positive social attitude and a willingness to take risks or think outside the box, and are able to find solutions with low impact on the norms, are more likely to be accepted. Acceptance of the leader's directives is attributed to the existence of trust throughout all interactions, not just during the time of crisis.

A study by Rast et al. (2013) surveyed employees across multiple disciplines and found that under normal business context, these employees preferred a democratic leadership style. However, the findings also suggested that the higher the level of uncertainty that existed during an event or situation, the employees desired an authoritative leader at the helm. For a leader who views himself or herself as a coach, or values the humanistic side of decision-making, the stakeholder need versus leader self-identity might present a challenge or conflict at a critical time. In this case, the literature

suggests that other variables, such as inherent leadership characteristics, may emerge, which would influence the leaders' decisions and action plans.

Leadership related skills that influence actions during a crisis. Haddon et al. (2015) suggested that *leadership-related skills* that are critical during a crisis situation, are not unique to generations, gender, or any other defining attributes. Characteristics such as charisma, integrity, participative decision-making, vision, intelligence, emotional management, communication, self-awareness, sense-making, authenticity, and intuition, have been identified as attributes unique to individuals and contributing factors to positive leadership (Haddon et al., 2015).

Intuition continuously appears in literature as a leader characteristic that emerges during times of crisis (Hornak & Garza Mitchell, 2016; Li, Huang, Zhang & Ni, 2016; Phillips, Fletcher Marks, & Hine, 2015; Schmidt, 2014; Smith, 2014; Tichy & Bennis, 2007). Acting on intuition may naturally emerge as the trait that drives action in risky situations that impact stakeholders (Li et al., 2016). In a study by Li et al. (2016), participants' reliance on intuition and deliberation were tested through an open-ended questionnaire and visual experiment. Participants were shown words related to a crisis, in this case a fire, and were asked to react. The experiment was intended to measure emotion and the actions of participants under different stages of duress. This study found that these participants continuously relied on intuition over deliberation to guide their route to safety. De Dreu (2003) suggested that under emotional heightened crisis situations, intuitive skills supersede actions over deliberation due to a leader's sense of duty, responsibility, and purpose. When given the choice between acting on intuition and deliberation, the findings concluded a leader is more likely to rely on intuition regardless

of the amount of knowledge available due to the time lost deliberating potential outcomes

(De Dreu, 2003). A sense of duty, reliance on intuition, and minimal deliberation

emerged as dominant factors impacting decision-making and actions (Hornyak & Garza,

2016; Li et al., 2016; Phillips et al., 2015; Schmidt, 2014; Smith, 2014; Tichy & Bennis,

2007).

The self-identity and personal schema of coaches and holistic leaders influence

this sense of intuition and can drive action, especially in times of turmoil when

stakeholders are at risk (De Dreu, 2003). Trait driven leadership styles were evident in

the findings previously mentioned by Preda and Stan (2016) and was observed by Li et

al. (2016) as well. Literature supports that drivers of action and motivation can be

assumed, based on the leaders' characteristics and their identity (Kaplan & Tivnan,

2014). Values and intrinsic motivators that drive leadership persona are often those that

emerge in the forefront during the crisis and create a lens for leaders' decisions (Giglotti,

2016).

Regardless, leaders continuously value specific characteristics they believe they

have, as representative of good leadership. Oftentimes, these qualities can be tied to

specific events that occurred in the leader's life that made a lasting impact (Marsh, 2013).

The conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that some elements of leadership

cannot be taught or truly learned, but rather are inherit characteristics that emerge during

specific times in a leader's life. What remains unknown however, is how leaders process

their experiences in order to drive action.

Literature highlights the need to not only formulate crisis plans at an operational

level, but also to encourage a change in culture to one that supports reflection and

growth. The findings from crisis studies suggest that a need exists for intrinsic

preparation of leaders and that these leadership skills may be employed at various times

during a leader's tenure. However, little to no research exists that supports the

experiences of senior level higher education administrators who have led through a crisis

and were required to act. The four frames, as generated by Bolman and Deal (2013),

offer a lens to view crisis situations in order to help better understand how leaders view

their leadership role and the relationship to all aspects of a crisis situation. Based on the

literature regarding leader identity, traits and sense-making during a crisis can help

initiate outcomes. What remains unknown, however, is how leaders navigate through this

reflection and identification process and ultimately decide to act. By learning more about

the lived experiences of leaders who have led through crisis and trauma, future

administrators may benefit and ultimately, be better prepared for the future (Hornak &

Garza Mitchell, 2016).

Summary

The review of empirical literature reveals that decision-making of SLHEA is a

complex, organic experience in which much of the process lies in the context of the

crisis, the lived experience of leaders, commitment to stakeholders, and the frame of

reference leaders possess. Better understanding of how leaders internally assess and

reflect on their lived experiences after navigating a crisis may offer insight in how

SLHEA process crises and subsequently take action.

Leadership identity, sense-making of crisis events, and the influence of

stakeholders have been found to influence action and decision-making. Some of the

challenges that higher education administrators currently face are the lack of time to

reflect on their actions and decisions, the varying and sometimes conflicting personal views required to act, and the reactive culture of institutions due to the more pressing issues that exist in day-to-day operations (Mitroff et al., 2006). The stakeholders rely on SLHEA to do the right thing in that moment, and at times, without even knowing the full depth of the crisis at hand. Nevertheless, SLHEA must identify and unite resources quickly and effectively to minimize negative impact on stakeholders. Bolman and Deal (2013) provide frames to assist with establishing assumptions and predictable factors within a crisis situation, based on their extensive research on leaders and organizations. However, more factors may be contributing to this decision-making process.

In order to study the experience of higher education leaders during a crisis, a phenomenological qualitative research methodology was designed and conducted. Chapter 3 will present a discussion of data collection and analysis in order to answer the research questions posed.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

General Perspective

This study sought to address a gap in the literature as to the understanding of how SHLEA cognitively process emergent situations, both from the operational and the internal lenses of individual leadership identities through a qualitative research methodology design. The intersectionality between institutional policies, state and federal mandates, and established crisis management plans, as they merge with the humanistic side of leadership during trying times, is something that has yet to be examined. Literature has a strong emphasis on the need to prepare as an organization, but the gap lies in understanding how administrators perceive the events occurring and process what is happening, in order to formulate action.

The progression of crisis events as phenomena helped to define the scope of a crisis. Robinson (1972) simply defined a crisis as a situation that requires action and decision. Coombs and Holladay (2001) defined a crisis as a singular event or interaction that occurs within a larger relationship between a specific organization and some of their stakeholders. Lindell et al. (2007) defined crisis as a "man-made or natural disaster" (p. 6). Man-made crises are those perpetuated by acts of human evil such as violence, terrorism, and sexual assault, etc., whereas "natural disasters" incorporate weather or incidents found in nature, resulting in some sort of disruption (Lindell et al., 2007).

This study sought to explore the experience of SLHEA who have led through a crisis. This was achieved by focusing on the essence of SLHEA' experience including how they perceived the event, decisions made, and the aftermath. Qualitative research

31

methodology was employed and included in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to gather rich, thick descriptions of lived experiences of these leaders during a crisis on campus. The researcher gathered data using qualitative methodology in alignment with the following research questions:

1. How do senior level higher education administrators reflect on the crisis they experienced?

2. How do senior level higher education administrators make sense of the event and their actions?

3. How do senior level higher education administrators perceive their leadership identity?

Research Context

Phenomenological inquiry allows for the emergence of data from the participants and supports the exploratory process of finding patterns, enables the thematic coding of these patterns, and assists with creating an output that better explains the events that occurred (Goulding, 2005). Additionally, phenomenology describes the relationship between situations and participants, and assists in identifying the essence of the human experience (Giorgi, 2012. Essences are defined as the nuances or esthetics of experiences that help to explain a given phenomenon (Dahlberg, 2006). The intent of this study was to examine the lived experiences of SLHEA participants in order to help explain the leadership phenomena based on the essences of these experiences (Goulding, 2005). As such, a qualitative, phenomenological approach was selected as the method best suited to frame the research questions for this study.

This descriptive, phenomenological study sought to explore how SLHEA reflect on the crisis they experienced, and how they make sense of the events that occurred and their subsequent actions. The qualitative research methodology, as aligned with a phenomenological approach, strives to make sense of, and derive meaning from, the words used to describe experiences by SLHEA participants (Husserl, 1964). For the purpose of this study, senior level administrators employed at higher education institutions in the United States were selected to participate. Additionally, there was no restriction on university location, institution type and the number of SLHEA from any one campus as the study focused on the individuals' experiences, not that of the institution.

Research Participants

The participants for this study held senior level positions at higher education institutions in the United States. Senior-level administrators were defined as those who hold a recognized, managerial position within the hierarchy of their institution. For the purpose of this study, these administrators must have experienced an atypical, self-identified campus crisis. The criteria for participant selection included: (a) any SLHEA in the position to make critical campus decisions, who may or may not necessarily have reporting staff; (b) leadership decisions made by these administrators may or may not affect all aspects of the campus community or operations; and (c) crisis management and addressing crisis issues would be atypical in relation to these leaders' expected job duties. Lastly, the number of research participants from a given institution was not limited, as this study sought to identify the lived experiences from the perspective of the individual leader, rather than that of the institution.

Using this lens, potential SLHEA participants were sought using snowball sampling (Palinkas et al., 2013). Snowball sampling is defined as a qualitative method of participant recruiting process, whereas a researcher identifies a group of potential participants based on specific qualities, and those participants then refer other informants who then repeat the process (Noy, 2008). Snowball sampling was selected as the best method to identify and recruit participants because of its purposeful targeting of potential subjects, the increased likelihood that the SLHEA will self-identify as meeting the established criteria, and who might also assist the researcher in identifying other candidates for participation (Palinkas et al., 2013).

At the time of this study, the researcher was employed in a higher education institution. As such, participant solicitation occurred through word of mouth by colleagues, social media postings, and through LinkedIn, allowing for potential participants to self-select into the study. To help address limitations in securing a robust pool of qualified SLHEA who fit the criteria of this study, these newly identified participants were asked to provide other qualified referrals as potential subjects (Palinkas et al., 2013). The recommended numbers of participants for phenomenological studies vary in literature and are dependent on resources. However, six to eight participants is the recommended minimum sample size for a descriptive phenomenological study (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). For this study, six participants were identified and interviewed.

The researcher successfully defended her dissertation proposal in October 2017. St. John Fisher College's (SJFC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study for research in March 2018 (Appendix A). Upon confirmation from SJFC's IRB, qualified, identified participants were contacted via email and provided with a description

of this study's intent (Appendix B), and expectations of participants (Appendix C). A subsequent email to participants discussed scheduling of the interview (Appendix D). The design of this study is non-experimental in nature. All potential participants were over the age of 18, however, each respondent was required to sign an IRB approved consent form (Appendix E). The consent form also outlined the data collection process, secure audio taping permission, and included a clause that allowed participants to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence (Fowler, 2014). To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to participants. A copy of the completed consent form was available to any participant upon request. Participants were not reimbursed or compensated for their participation. As a courtesy for participation, a copy of the completed study was made available upon request.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Kvale (1996) emphasized designing a qualitative study with interview questions that seek to obtain the knowledge and data that will help to answer the research questions posed. The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews was selected to help guide the conversation to align with the research questions and data being probed (Kvale, 1996). This interview technique was selected to allow for deeper thoughts to naturally emerge in conversation and to reduce the pressure of the administrator to answer preset questions (McLeod, 2014).

Prior to conducting any interviews, the researcher created a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix F). This interview guide aligned the interview questions with the research questions. In addition, the interview questions aligned with the theoretical assumptions made for each of the four frames as described by Bolman and Deal (2013).

These interview questions were pilot tested by a group of higher education administrators. The intent of the pilot testing was to encourage this study's participants to engage in open-ended discussions which may include these leader's experiences, beliefs, and lessons learned, while allowing for the flow of additional and potentially relevant information (Kvale, 1996). As directed by the pilot test participants' feedback, several interview questions were reformatted to ensure robust responses to each of the interview questions posed.

Moustakas (1994) emphasizes that the preparation for the interview is crucial in setting the stage for both the interviewer and participant to engage in an open dialogue, which is free of biases, conclusions, or concern with trust issues. The phenomenological reduction process of the epoch was employed. Moustakas (1994) described epoch as setting aside "prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" in order to clear the mind and focus on the individual's experiences (p. 85). The reduction process encouraged the identification, suspension, and preconceived feelings and opinions of the researcher, regarding the phenomena to be bracketed. These bracketed feelings and opinions become known and constant to the researcher so as to purposefully omit these identified biases from the data collection (Lin, 2013). This reduction process is performed to control researcher biases and the resulting infiltration of preconceived opinions about the phenomena being studied (Moustakas, 1994). In accordance with Moustakas's bias reduction plan, prior to conducting any interviews, the researcher participated in Moustakas's epoch meditation exercise and created a journal to identify researcher bias discovered through the meditative process. At the conclusion of each

interview, the researcher compared this journal with the field notes to help recognize any potential bias, which may skew the results of the study.

In accordance with Moustakas (1994), Kvale (1996) also stressed the importance of preliminary measures to ensure a good research study. Kvale recommended that the researcher guide each participant through a preparation activity. This activity encouraged honest dialogue by conducting meditative exercises prior to the interview. This meditative process supported participant engagement in a relaxed, open mind state of being, to aid in the recall of the specific lived phenomena such as a crisis event. For the purpose of this study, the meditative exercise included asking participants "what a crisis means to them" and to begin thinking about the one actual crisis that led the SHLEA to respond to this study. The intent of this meditative exercise was not for the participant to give naturally recurring responses, as which might occur during an interview. Rather, the purpose of the meditative process was to better prepare SHLEA to discuss the phenomena without any irrelevant invasion of cognitive and emotional influences. The researcher initiated this meditative process with the interview guide pilot group, prior to engaging in the interview process.

Upon identification of a purposeful sample of SLHEA subjects, each respondent was asked to participate in one semi-structured, in-depth audio-recorded interview (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). For the purpose of this study, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were preferred. However, due to the broad participant selection criteria, phone calls were utilized to conduct audiotaped interviews. A data transcription service was employed to translate these conversations into text. Field notes were documented to capture observable moments such as change in tone, which contribute to the richness of

the data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). These field notes, generated by the researcher, were compared against audio recorded and the transcribed interview transcripts contributed to the data collection as reflexive memos. All field notes, transcripts and audiotapes are stored in a secured location within the researcher's home and will be destroyed in 3 years.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Experts in the field of research recommended a systematic approach to data analysis that balances rigor and accessibility for qualitative researchers (Moerer-Urdahl, & Creswell, 2004). To ensure accuracy, the researcher compared the voice recordings of each interview while reading the transcription in real time. The advantage of real time reviews permitted the researcher to focus on the verbatim responses of the participant. This practice helped to identify common and unique themes and descriptions of experiences across all of the SLHEA' responses, in an effort to explain the essence of these SLHEA's experiences campus crisis leadership.

In order to make sense of the data acquired during the interview process, Giorgi's (2012) Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method was applied to thoroughly review the data and assign meaning to each participant's experiences. This five-step qualitative data coding process allowed for a thorough review of interview transcripts to understand the data as a whole, and then reduce ideas into meaningful units. These sequential steps included:

1. Reading and rereading the transcript in its entirety to get a sense of the data as a whole.

2. Assuming the attitude of phenomenological reduction, recognizing the data that emerges may not make sense to the researcher, but is recognized as having meaning to the participant.

3. Transforming participants' words into expressions known as meaning units; transition in units are recognized to understand the evolution of the phenomena and participants experience.

4. Transforming meaning units into phenomenological sensitive terms so that they can be more easily integrated with other descriptors that carry the same intent, but would normally not be grouped together.

5. Determining the general framework of an experience by designating essential transformations found in the data and in the breakdown of the meaning units (Giorgi, 2012).

This coding method allowed for a reduction of data into themes preserving the essence of participants' experiences. Additionally, this coding method permits for comparison of various crisis experiences, despite any identifiable crisis origins, such as fire, assault, financial collapse, or other variables. In vivo coding themes were developed and applied to the data to preserve participants' intent and to further help make sense of the data (Saldaña, 2016). This coding process was vital in helping to answer the initial research questions and to accurately portray the experiences of participating administrators during crisis and the possible lens in which they understood their leadership identity and responsibility. Generated themes and descriptors, along with their subsequent groupings, were reviewed and approved by the researcher's committee chair. As with the interview process, researcher bias was identified and omitted. The

researcher's relationship to the topic and data prior to the coding process were documented in reflexive memos in the researcher's journal, which were then bracketed, in order to avoid skewing the data (Moustakas, 1994).

Validity and credibility of the study was established through a process known as member checking, whereby each participant or member was offered the opportunity to review their transcript for accuracy and intent (Creswell, 2009). Participants were encouraged to provide additional information or explanations as they saw fit.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 described the rationale of selecting a qualitative research method design to explore the impact of leadership identity on crisis responses at higher education institutions. Research instrumentation and data analysis methods for this study were discussed.

Chapter 4 will report the results of the data collection. Chapter 5 will provide implications of the findings, recommendations for future research, along with recommendations for leadership in organizations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of SLHEA after an unexpected crisis that impacted their institution. Viewing the crisis through the lens of participants has the potential to help better understand how administrators reflect on the event, including their decisions, actions, and outcomes. By better understanding this lived experience, practitioners in the field may gather insight as to how reflection on a previous crisis event can inform future decisions. Snowball sampling was used to identify and recruit participants. The method of participant recruitment was selected because of its purposeful targeting of potential subjects based on the increased likelihood the SLHEA would self-identify as meeting the established criteria and assist in referring others as well (Noy, 2008). Six participants were identified and selected, all of whom are currently employed in senior level higher education positions at liberal arts colleges in the northeast United States.

Research Questions

The intent of Chapter 4 is to report research findings with the purpose of answering the established research questions. The following questions guided this study:

1. How do senior level higher education administrators reflect on the crisis they experienced?

2. How do senior level higher education administrators make sense of the event and their actions?

3. How do senior level higher education administrators perceive their leadership identity?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a research guide in order to capture the lived experiences of SLHEA. The output of that collection process was then reviewed and rereviewed using initial/open, then in vivo coding processes. The subsequent categories and themes outlined in the findings answer the stated research questions.

Data Analysis and Findings

The findings that surfaced from this research were organized and presented in categories and themes. Those categories and themes then were compared back to the initial research questions to help explain the phenomena. Categories and theme titles were created with the intent of capturing the lived experiences of participants. Four core categories were identified through the analysis of the data. The first category, *sense of dynamics* incorporates three themes: (a) you cannot choose time, place, or level of preparedness; (b) you cannot control how people react; and (c) you cannot choose the type of crisis situation. The second category, *anticipating what is to come*, incorporates three themes: (a) learning to move forward, (b) awaiting a ripple effect, and (c) controlling the controllable. The third category, *importance of reflection* incorporates three themes: (a) intrinsic assessment of actions and feelings, (b) achieving a sense of resolution, and (c) recognizing the impact on holistic leadership. The fourth category, *doing the right thing* incorporate two themes: (a) sticking with personal convictions and (b) assigning personal values.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the categories, themes, and the essences of each.

Table 4.1

Categories, Themes, and Essences

Categories	Themes	Essences
Sense of Dynamics	You cannot choose time, place, or level of preparedness	Flexibility Fluidity Responsiveness Organic
	You cannot control how people react	
	You cannot choose the type of crisis situation	
Anticipating What is to Come	Learning to move forward	Isolating Lingering Predictability Containment
	Awaiting a ripple effect	
	Controlling the controllable	
Importance of Reflection	Intrinsic assessment of actions and feelings	Reflection Resolution Acceptance Philosophy Growth
	Achieving a sense of resolution	
	Recognizing impact on holistic leadership	
Doing the "right thing"	Sticking with personal convictions	Morality Risks
	Weighing hard decisions	

Category 1: sense of dynamics. The first category, sense of dynamics, surfaced as participants described their experience with handling multiple variables present in crisis situations with or without the availability of crisis protocols or plans. The themes

identified include: (a) you cannot choose time, place, or level of preparedness; (b) you

cannot control how people react; and (c) you cannot choose the crisis situation.

     You cannot choose time, place, or level of preparedness. The senior level

administrators were asked to discuss a time when they experienced a crisis that impacted

them. They were then encouraged to reflect back and share their initial feelings to better

understand that lived experience. The administrators' descriptions of feelings ranged

from chaos and uncertainty, to comfort in the ability to relate the current situation with a

past experience. The theme that emerged was that, despite the best preparation efforts,

the variables that impact a crisis situation are not always foreseeable, making it difficult

to formulate a prescriptive response.

     Participant 5 remarked "I've been here 20 years, that's the first time either of

things happened, just happened to happen I think the same year" regarding two highly

publicized violent deaths of community members on properties on and adjacent to the

college. Both events were unrelated to the institution yet the close proximity to the

college, specifically, student housing, created anxiety and fear among students and

parents. "I do remember people thinking it wasn't safe, and how do you tell them it was

a suicide, so you have nothing to be afraid of" (Participant 5). Participant 2 shared a

similar experience with timing of tandem crisis situations, one that exacerbated the other,

"It was mayhem" due to a man-made crisis that was then hit with a natural disaster.

     When asked about their role in the crisis response, the SLHEA participants

identified that they were responsible for executing the response efforts, however, they

sometimes only had "functional expertise" regarding the area it was impacting

(Participant 2, p 8). "I had a leader who is just not business savvy and really was out of

her comfort zone. She really didn't know what she was doing" commented Participant 2. The challenge the SLHEA faced was that they were required to be point persons throughout these crisis situations, however, they were not necessarily given the operational tools needed to be effective, and in some scenarios, lacked the capacity or resources to fully assess and respond to the situation. Many leaders commented that procedures and policies were changed in the aftermath, in response to the situations that occurred. Participant 5 and Participant 6 recognized that there were procedures and protocols that the institution had created and they were expected to use. Participant 5 noted that the crisis manual was kept in a senior administrator's office, but was not accessible to the frontline staff who were physically assisting in crisis response. Participant 6 recognized that college staff was trained to follow a prescriptive set of steps, assessing the situation at each level, and they were effective in doing so in this case. However, the final step, seeking police assistance, was where the breakdown occurred and intensified the crisis for them. Participant 2 recalled,

> I never experienced a crisis like that. It felt like something out of a movie. There
> was no plan for it whatsoever. There were no generator backups. There was
> nothing. And the administration just sat around with sort of hands in their
> pockets, not knowing what to do. We were out of our element. We really did not
> know what we were doing.

Participant 4 recognized that the leader's behavior could influence the receptiveness to change and resiliency of stakeholders. Participant 4 stated that you need to "allow things to happen more organically. You still have to push really hard if you want to get anything done. But you also have to give a little time to just sort itself out."

You cannot control how people react. In learning more about the crisis events, a theme that emerged was the unanticipated response of stakeholders in each of the situations. Participants recognized that in some cases, the institutions did not take into consideration or plan for specific reactions or feelings. However, the behaviors of stakeholders created a challenge. In trying to actively diffuse their unique situations, the behaviors and reactions of stakeholders added another element to the crisis response. Participant 1 noted,

> People started mudslinging a little bit. As I used to say, I'm a developmental psychologist by training, that's my area, and we start acting like children. There's name-calling going on, all the things your mother told you not to do as a child, that's how it starts. We're adults. We're supposed to be mature adults.

Other SLHEA recognized that they were able to control and contain the logistical side of the institution however; the behavioral responses were at times, not anticipated and out of their scope of practice. Participant 2 reflected on the under preparedness:

> She [the boss] was relying on people with what I would consider functional expertise, people like me who understood compliance. But I really didn't know how to deal with compliance and disgruntled people. So, we never stopped to factor in what was going to be the plan when everybody was going to explode all at once. We just did not stop to think that it was going to explode the way we experienced it.

> Participant 3 recognized that his lack of knowledge about the culture of the institution inhibited his ability to predict behaviors and response of stakeholders, specifically the faculty. Participant 3 stated, "I didn't realize how, at first, they were

against getting help from a central body. And if I had known that, telling them *you need to do this-* and yeah, that did not go over well."   Participant 3 further commented, "they have lived in fear" and felt that caused them to stop thinking globally or pushing to create higher standards in their operations. The day-to-day operations of the campus were threatened due to the behavior and feelings of essential employees who were needed to function. Participant 2 reflected on a natural disaster at the campus that threatened the IT infrastructure. The two groups of essential staff who were needed to address the situation were not available, and the other, unwilling to participate. "You know what, let this fall apart" was the reported response (Participant 2). "It was mayhem. No one can be found. No one wanted to cooperate. You couldn't even drive onto the campus" (Participant 2).

Stakeholders who are facing a crisis often experience emotions that are unique to the individual, but in a group setting, these can create another variable for SLHEA to consider. This concern of *mob mentality* was mentioned by participants who were managing large entities within the crisis event, specifically dealing with groups that had animosity towards the decisions made. Participant 1 commented, "we had to deal with the students protesting. The actual editor of the newspaper at that time was [student editor] . . . he was a vocal person and clearly was a big fan of [the moderator]. He made a lot of noise."

Participant 2 recalled, "I was sent into, I don't know how to say it . . . these are really hungry wolves who just wanted to take on the administration for making this decision without consulting them." He further explained, "I was surrounded by about 30 very disgruntled, very frustrated, very angry staff members who basically just went after me because I was the only one sent in, in this new role that I was not prepared for."

For Participant 2, the employee response was described this way:

> The biggest crisis of that whole situation is that we ended up having some
> individuals file HR grievances on the same day. One person ended up completely
> resigning and was threatening with a lawsuit. Other individuals refused to
> recognize me as a new leader. There was a lot of shouting and cursing and people
> getting on tables and say this is very authoritarian of this liberal arts Catholic
> college to be making these kind of decisions without consulting with people or
> even letting them know it was going to happen.

You cannot choose the type of crisis situation. All participants responded to the
interview question "Is crisis response part of your job responsibilities?" They all
responded with a degree of "yes." Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6, all recognized that the
inherent responsibilities of their job would require a response to situations that could
arise, however; it was not a day-to-day occurrence. For each of these participants
however, the crisis they experienced was beyond their scope of what any of their crisis
plans or past experiences had called for. Participant 5 noted that when they enacted their
protocol for crisis response regarding a student having a mental health breakdown, the
concern was the unfavorable response they had previously experienced. The volunteer
paramedics who had responded to the college to take care of drunk students felt that they
should not have to give up their personal time to help someone who got himself or herself
into that situation. Participant 5's response was a feeling that emerged from many of the
administrators:

> You don't get to choose. You don't pass judgments on anybody about how they
> got to where they got. When you get there, you assess the situation, you provide

them with the attention they need. The rest of it? Check that at the door when you

get on your shift, because you do not get to judge. Your role is to respond. Not

pass judgment.

Category 2: anticipating what is to come. Anticipating what is to come

emerged as a challenge for administrators as they began describing the process of

assessing situations and adequately addressing the multitude of needs. The themes

identified under this category include: (a) learning to move forward, (b) awaiting a ripple

effect, and (c) controlling the controllable.

Learning to move forward. Senior level administrators are human and subject to

the same sort of feelings and emotions that other stakeholders experience during these

crisis situations. The assumption that their respective campuses have, however, is that

these administrators are key to resolving the conflict in some sort of mechanical fashion,

void of human emotion and politics. This presents a challenge for administrators in these

roles as they navigate how to appropriately address the crisis at hand, and work with

competing or conflicting agendas that threaten to disrupt day-to-day operations of the

campus.

Participant 2 commented that the crisis:

[This] was probably one of the worst times I've ever experienced having been in

higher education administration. As a matter of fact, it was the worst time I've

ever experienced working in higher education because I was able to see how

people's own agendas and how politics can polarize what I consider to be the

main units of a university.

Participant 2 then remarked,

We're talking about the people who make this institution operate day-to-day. And they allowed their personality and their views and their own agendas to really impede the college from moving. I think a lot of that could have been avoided.

Participant 3 discussed that business had to continue as the crisis loomed in the background. The emphasis through this process, was transparency with the parties involved, especially students and faculty members who were actively teaching and learning while they awaited news that could impact their livelihood. Participant 3 commented:

What's really important is that in these moments of crisis, it's one, to be completely transparent and as forthright with all your constituents, the students, the faculty, the staff, alumni, and cases of political officials, and really lay it out in simple terms so that themselves will understand it, that you haven't created a false crisis, that it's real.

Participant 1 noted that, "It certainly was one of the more difficult things that I had to do, but not the most difficult thing. And so, I keep that perspective and do not let it distract me from my other responsibilities."

Awaiting the ripple effect. As evident through the previously discussed themes, actions carry ramifications and for the administrators, sometimes those ripple effects resulting from their decision-making created a challenge they did not anticipate.

Participants 1, 5, and 6 mentioned the impact that social media has on these crisis situations. For Participant 1, at the time of the event, social media platforms such as Facebook did not exist at the institution. However, in reflecting on past and even current

experiences, it was acknowledged that Facebook would have caused catastrophic

consequences, had it been available. Participant 6 discussed how even before

administrators arrived at campus to address the situation, false news and reports were

being posted and shared via the social networking platform, Twitter. Participant 5 had

never experienced such a loss of control of information stating, "For me, I think the

hardest thing to deal with was the social media, it was so fast, and I don't know how to

fix that." The concern was not only with false information being shared, but also the

sense of reliability that the institution was exhibiting. Participant 5 stated, "In the old

days we would have time to come up with solutions and kind of get the information, we

could kind of old all the informing tight to the chest, or vest, whatever the phrase is."

Participants acknowledged the controlling of communication and flow of knowledge to

the campus and respective stakeholders was critical during crisis events, and in some

scenarios, would have helped to avoid the crisis all together.

Some of the SLHEA reflected on how isolating the overall experience was for

them personally and professionally. Participant 1 commented that as an administrator, he

never could "bring his work home" meaning sharing the details of the day. He stated:

"I became an administrator and I can't bring my work home, I mean I bring my work

home but I can't share it. Because the stuff is just . . . nobody would believe it, and it's

just something you don't do." Participant 1 further elaborated on his feelings of isolation,

stating that once the crisis happened, and the student protests and negative responses

began, administrators that initiated the events retreated. Participant 1 stated:

> It was not just me, I had to give the news, but it really was initiated from the
>
> academic side. It was [the college president] telling the dean of arts and sciences

to fix this. So, one I took the action of telling [the moderator], I felt like I was left

out there and everybody else retreated. Everybody else meaning all the other

administrators. And so, it became problem and what I did as opposed to what the

college was trying to change.

This feeling of abandonment still lingers for the participant, and was evident in

his choice to share this specific crisis versus another, which included an unexpected death

of a student. Participant 1 recognized that, "People didn't have my back. Deniability,

like I don't know what you're talking about. As opposed to supporting the decision. So

that was . . . personally, that's still, that's not a pleasant memory." Participant 6 shared

this feeling of isolation, referring to the lack of support she received from local officials

and stated, "That was the hardest thing. And the realization for the first time in my life

that I can't dial 9-1-1 and expect that someone's going to provide the assistance that I

need. I have no faith anymore."

Controlling the controllable. All participants acknowledged the crisis experience

that they shared was unique, not something they necessarily had or could have planned

for. However, when asked to reflect on their experiences and how they processed the

situation, the administrators recognized that the essence of the crisis experience was one

that could be addressed by breaking down the individual variables. This means that if the

participants framed each component, they may be able to draw on past experiences to

make their decisions.

Yeah, there's not a document or a book that you could follow. But the experiences

I've had in public education with financial crisis, so I had worked for the [State

University System]. We had nearly $400 million budget reduction to our system

funding. So many of the processes and the leadership style that you would use to

manage that sort of budget crisis are the same sort of skills you would use in this

particular process. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 also drew on past experiences to address the crisis situation he was

experiencing. The challenge though, was understanding that prescriptive steps and

responses such as demanding *you must do this*, is not always accepted in all campus

cultures, and leaders need to recognize that.

  Category 3: importance of reflection. Research question one for this study

sought to better understand how leaders engage in the practice of reflection during, or

after crisis events on campus. When asked to reflect on their experiences, some

administrators recognized that upon looking back, there were elements of the experience

that they wish they could have done differently, or perhaps now, view with a different

lens. Literature supports the importance of administrators spending time reflecting on

their experiences and actions; the data from this set of participants support that notion.

The themes that emerged through this experience of reflection include: (a) intrinsic

assessment of actions and feelings, (b) achieving a sense of resolution, and (c)

recognizing the impact on holistic leadership.

  Intrinsic assessment of actions and feelings. Participants reflected on the

feelings and emotions that they experienced during this crisis experience. Participant 1

discussed that after the event, the process of internally assessing what happened and the

subsequent response was important in order to grow and learn.   Time and growth as an

administrator and leader has aided in this process for many of the participants. Participant

4 shared:

I used to be more of a bull. Just kind of charge in, I am here and I'm going to do

it. I'm North on the wheel. I'm just charging in and I don't care how you feel.

And I think I have really softened myself in a lot of ways.

Participant 2 echoed those sentiments and reflected on how the participants perceived

their personal definition of a leader dictated their actions that, "it wasn't necessary that I

didn't know. I just didn't have a leadership identity. I was just taking orders and doing

what they wanted me to do, but I was conflicted."

Participant 1 shared how balancing responsibilities of an administrator and thier

personal feelings created a challenge. In addition, a strong-willed college president to

whom the participant directly reported, added another layer to take into consideration.

Participant 1 stated,

The reason you have vice-presidents is you charge them with a responsibility and

let them do it. As opposed to you getting involved directly. Because he needs to

think about the larger institution. For me, that was my crisis. Dealing with being

stuck between a real strong person, a lot of personalities. And everyone now isn't

so involved, people have forgotten why we started this whole thing.

Achieving a sense of resolution. With each of the SLHEA it was evident that

that there were elements and specific aspects of these particular crises, that they chose to

share, that stood out above the rest. The participants in some cases, indicated that what

they were sharing was not the worse crisis that they had experienced, yet these were the

events that stuck with them professional and personally. Some discussed that this

lingering feeling was due to the absence of human consideration when the decision or

crisis began. For others, although they believed they had a solid response plan in place,

the various members within the framework did not respond in a way that administration had anticipated.

For Participant 1, the event and feelings after the fact have still lingered in the participants mind because of the loss of control, sensibility, and the inner conflicts the event created. "I am more comfortable with some of the personal stuff now. Time does heal some of that, but it doesn't heal all of it" (Participant 1). Other participants recalled that despite the turmoil, they were able to focus on the outcome achieved. Participant 3 discussed that maintaining the college's legacy, mission, and symbols, such as colors on regalia and names on t-shirts in the bookstore, was important to the students, faculty, and alumni they were serving. Despite the challenges he faced with navigating options, taking the harder route, and avoiding the college's closure Participant 3 stated "The college's identity will be maintained" and "Its name will be maintained. We signed a memorandum of understanding and we also have a master agreement, how the two colleges will get merged and how it will transition forward" (Participant 3).

For other participants, the sense of closure and resolution may take more time. Participant 6 remarked that a prominent local police official had asked "Why are you even in your job if you can't manage this" and he was reluctant to provide services to the college because he did not feel it was that serious. Other participants felt that their lack of leadership development and understanding of leadership identity was partly to blame for the outcome of the situation and those impacted. Participant 2 stated that:

> You can find ways to sort of use your influence to help them see a different
> perspective, but at that time, I really wasn't there with my leadership. If anything,
> I was just leading based on what people told me to do. And after that, I started

learning how I had to frame different situations, right. That there was an HR

perspective that I didn't take into consideration.

    Recognizing impact on holistic leadership. Each leader was asked how this

experience changed or informed their leadership practices. The responses varied, some

participants felt that if anything, it made them more prepared to respond again to

situations, while others recognized that there were moments of contemplation where they

felt that the actions they took were in conflict with their personal beliefs, or the college's

mission that they were trying to uphold.

    Participant 3 has over 35 years of experience in higher education, much of that

time spent in administration. The financial crisis that was experienced at the institution

was something for which as a leader, Participant 3 felt prepared. Entering the situation,

the participant assessed all options, drew on his past experiences and skills acquired, and

applied them to what was happening.

> Well, I think one, it strengthens your leadership abilities. Two, for me, it
>
> reinforced my belief in leadership qualities and having regular mechanisms and
>
> being able to communicate to faculty, staff, and alumni and to be able to
>
> communicate in a way that does make everything simple, and for people to be
>
> able to understand, to be able to openly discuss the matters that are important to
>
> the different constituencies." (Participant 3)

Participant 5 felt the same:

> You do pretty much the same things you would have done. I wouldn't do too
>
> much differently now. So I don't think it's changed my leadership, other than if it
>
> happens again, you are kind of like not worried about it, been through it before.

Others did feel that there were areas on which the college could place focus, and that there were active steps they could take to help. Participant 6 recognized that the college's emergency protocol included third-party resources that were not always willing to comply. The focus for that leader was to continue relationship building with those entities, while trying to understand their animosity in order to foster better collaboration.

I think some of it is ongoing conversations with village law encouragement to reassure them that we value them, we don't call them when we don't need them, but when we do need them, they need to be here. So that's a work in progress, constantly looking at that. (Participant 6)

Participant 1 reflected that their overall experience made them question how to balance their perceived institutional responsibilities and their feelings toward their leadership. However, they would not have necessarily been able to change their response. Participant 2 spoke along those same lines, but added that they felt they had the opportunity to speak up.

I had those opportunities. One, I didn't exercise them, and two, I think I didn't know how to exercise it because I didn't know how to convey that this is wrong because I was afraid of losing my job, or I was afraid that I wasn't being loyal, and I wasn't going with what my boss wants. So, there were lessons learned from that experience. (Participant 2)

Category 4: doing the right thing. Each participant spoke of at least one stakeholder or entity that guided their decision-making process throughout this experience. Some recognized that their priorities shifted from one group to another as the crisis evolved. At the root of the participants' experiences were convictions and inherent

personal beliefs, that they had since reflected on and sought to better recognize. This category assists in answering research question 3 regarding how leaders view their leadership identity. The themes that emerged through the idea of doing the right thing include: (a) sticking with personal convictions, and (b) weighing hard decisions.

Sticking with personal convictions. Over the course of the interviews, each of the participants identified stakeholders or entities that helped to guide all of their decision-making and actions. Some of these stakeholders included students, staff, faculty, and the community. Others acknowledged that they felt a sense of loyalty to the mission of the institution, affiliated religious groups, and/or to the principles of social justice. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 recognized that their decision-making and actions were in part, influenced by the idea of doing right by these stakeholder or entities. Participant 1 noted this:

> I would certainly, it is part of what our whole talk is, getting to the social justice. Was this fair and appropriate to everyone involved? At the immediate level, the people you think about is the players. Do you have the [newspaper] staff, all those students they no longer have the leader they like.

Participant 3 explained that his drive arose from taking care of the people and a having a responsibility to maintain the institutional identity.

> I felt a strong sense of obligation to the Catholic church because it's a Catholic institution, [a religious affiliation], the legacy of everyone who came before me to continue the college and preserve its name, preserve its mission, and to preserve its purpose. (Participant 3)

Additionally, Participant 2 commented:

And once I started understanding more about myself as a leader I started realizing

that I probably never would have agreed with that contract in the first place. I just

thought a leader, at the time for me meant that you have to make hard decisions.

But the part about it was I never stopped to think about how you need to weigh

those decisions. And sometimes as hard as they are, sometimes you have to go

against those decisions. So that was what I think helped development with that,

going through these crisis, is to self-examine my own leadership abilities and to

understand that you just don't have to take orders. And if you don't want to take

orders, that's fine. You know you can always find another place to go. But the

one thing you shouldn't compromise in your own leadership style and your

leadership skills because someone's walking you off a cliff. At some point you've

got to know when to say "Hey, listen. This just isn't for me."

Participant 5 recognized that as a leader in student development, the protection of

students was her main focus. However, in the evolution of the crisis that occurred, she

recognized that once the event left the parameters of the institution, she felt a stronger

responsibility to the community, as they were unaware of the scenario that was unfolding,

or the potential danger.

Weighing hard decisions. Throughout the interviews, it was evident that the

participants were all presented with some sort of option or decision that had to be made

during the crisis situation. The challenges that arise from being presented with options is

that sometimes there is not a clear choice or definitive route. Participant 1 discussed that

even after the crisis began, he consistently was evaluating his actions, trying to determine

if he did the right thing, and how he should assign value to each of his areas of

responsibility: the president, the institution, and student learning. Participant 3

acknowledged that when faced with the decision to either close the institution or find a

perspective buyer, that the close out would have been the easier route. However, "the

more difficult pieces would be finding the right partner that sees value in the college and

is willing to maintain the legacy and maintain the faculty at the college" (Participant 3),

because as previously mentioned, the loyalty felt by this participant drove him to

maintain the mission and legacy of those before him. Participant 1 also spoke about the

decisions that needed to be made regarding dismissing a student from college due to

behavior issues. The institution was not equipped to address this. "I've got to protect the

other 2,500 students. So, I think and I'm more comfortable with some of the personal

stuff now" (Participant 1).

Findings Related to the Research Questions

The four categories that emerged from the data suggest that SLHEA are managing

multiple factors during a crisis event, from operational decision-making, to managing

internal human emotions. This study was guided by three research questions and the

subsequent section will present how this data provided insight to answering these

questions and adding to the limited body of knowledge that exists.

Q1: How do administrators reflect on the crisis? Research question 1 was

crafted with the intent to learn more about how SLHEA reflect on the event of which they

were a part. The purpose was to elicit information on how the crisis unfolded through

their unique lenses.

Based on the responses provided, it was determined that SLHEA did not always

feel prepared for the crisis event as it transpired, despite factors such as years of

experience, or crisis plans or protocols, due the other factors and challenges that existed, such as response of stakeholders, lack of support from superiors and community entities, and loss of control over information (Participants 1, 2, 5, and 6 reported this feeling. Despite the feeling of unpreparedness, the SLHEA still were required to respond and act.

The core category *sense of dynamics* incorporates these feelings and their sentiments about preparedness. When asked to reflect back, SLHEA noted that there were variables they could not control such as time, place, or level of preparedness of the institution/leader, the type of crisis situation they were facing, the complexity of the event, or how stakeholders responded.

Q2: How do administrators make sense of the event and their actions?
Research question 2 was constructed with the intent to learn more about how SLHEA have come to understand crisis and their subsequent actions in response. The purpose was to try to better comprehend the thought process and feelings of these administrators in order to make sense of SLHEA' emotions and behaviors.

Based on the responses provided, it was determined that the SLHEA' crisis events can be complex, compounded occurrences that require the balance of internal emotions and operational decision-making. Participants noted that their actions were driven by various sources such as: directives by superiors, crisis protocols for the given situation, and past professional experiences Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 all voiced this concern. Participant responses indicate the challenge in balancing the ongoing crisis, and managing the day-to-day operations at the institution, while also managing their personal emotions and feelings that were occurring.

The core categories: *sense of dynamics, anticipating what is to come,* and *importance of reflection,* highlight themes that encompass the challenge in this balance. Sense of dynamics incorporates the need to be fluid and flexible during the crisis, in order to best prepare for the impact of the type of event, stakeholder response, and the unintended feelings that arise. It answers the research question in regard to how the SLHEA made sense of the event that happened. Participants 1 and 2 noted that they started to feel isolated as people they had expected to be a consistent support, started to retreat or were not equipped to address what was occurring.   The notion of anticipating what is to come, and learning to move forward, also adds to this sense making and the feelings that arose, specifically the sense of abandonment and isolation that some participants felt. This was evident to Participants 1 and 2, in particular.   The importance of reflection, and the intrinsic assessment of actions and feelings, provides insight as to how administrators worked through the crisis experience process, by recognizing their internal response to the event, but not being able to fully anticipate how that response was impacting their decision-making and actions, nor how to manage those feelings while handling the logistics and immediate demands.

Q3: How do administrators perceive their leadership identity? The intent of research question 3 was to learn more about the SLHEA' views on their leadership styles and practices, and to discuss whether this crisis experience influenced how they framed crisis situations and their leadership practices.

When asked how SLHEA felt this crisis impacted their leadership and leadership identity, the responses varied. Some participants felt that this experience elicited a sense of needing to do what was right in the eyes of those they were serving. Others felt a

strong inner conflict as the situation progressed and they realized the actions required of them were not completely aligned with their personal beliefs.

The core categories and themes that speak to leader identity include (a) anticipating what is to come and learning to move forward; (b) importance of reflection, recognizing impact on holistic leadership; and (c) doing the right thing – sticking with personal convictions, and weighing hard decisions.

Some participants noted that this crisis experience has remained with them throughout their careers and personal lives, due to the unanticipated response of stakeholders involved. Participant 1 and Participant 2 recognized that they had opportunities to address the crisis from a human resources frame, putting people first, however; the event did not transpire that way, and there was a negative response as a result. Both felt this was something that they take more into consideration now. Participant 6 felt that she had identified herself as a student-centered leader however, this was challenged when the crisis event moved from the campus into the community, putting unsuspecting community members potentially in harm's way. There was a shift to a more utilitarian approach, recognizing that as a member within this said community, the administrator did have an obligation to protect them as well, as they were in more immediate risk. The participant had to weigh hard decisions and come to terms that their student-centered approach may be situational and that the bigger picture and possible outcomes had to be taken into consideration. Participant 2 regrets not sticking to their personal convictions and felt that had they thought about their actions and how that looked from a leadership perspective, they never would have agreed to assist without appropriate conversations with those impacted. Participant 4 recognized that they had a

skewed sense of what being a leader meant and accredited it to being young and inexperienced at the time, stating that they were like a "bull" and that was not an effective way to manage (Participant 4, p.3).

The challenge with collecting data to help answer research question 3 was that higher education leaders and leaders in general, do not dedicate time to reflection and processing of events. Only one of the participants had the formal opportunity to process and reflect on the event that transpired, which led to a better understanding of their personal response and possible implications to future leadership.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of senior level higher education administrators who had experienced a crisis. The intent was to learn more about how they processed this experience, how they reflected on what happened, and the ways in which they view their leadership identity. Four categories and 11 themes emerged from the data and were reviewed in Chapter 4. These categories, the related themes, and essences helped to give more insight to this phenomena and guidance in the proposed research questions.

In Chapter 5, the researcher summarizes and further discusses these findings while also reviewing literature on crisis experiences. The chapter will conclude with a beginning to end synopsis of this study, including the establishment of the research problem, identification of major scholars, discussion of methodology, the data findings, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Events in the past few decades have brought light to the complex situations that crises can create on college campuses. While crisis management plans are considered a best practice and can help to bring operational and logistical direction to aid administrators navigating an event, these plans do not account for the internal struggles these leaders face as they try to balance responsibilities, process what is occurring, make sense of the unknown, and ultimately seek resolution of the outcome.

The purpose of this research study was to explore the lived experiences of senior level higher education administrators and their response to crisis situations. The subsequent chapter will discuss the research findings and examine possible implications for administrators. The researcher's recommendations will be addressed alongside recognized limitations, followed by a conclusion.

This study highlighted the complex experiences administrators face as they attempt to balance the multi-faceted responsibilities of their job and leadership identity. Information gathered from this study suggests that administrators find this balance at odds with one another as the leader attempts to preserve their personal beliefs of what is right, and their responsibility to the institution. What compounds this dichotomy is the lack of time to reflect and process events as they unfold, and in the subsequent months this often leaves leaders with a lack of resolution and ability to effectively process what has happened and the impact it has had on their identity. Literature on crisis management and crisis experiences suggest prescriptive protocols to help identify and navigate

through a crisis occurrence (Hu et al., 2014). These step-by-step action plans however, do not take into consideration this internal leadership struggle that some administrators face as they try to perform assigned duties\while preserving values they find foundational to who they are as leaders. In a study by Giglotti (2016), a college president described this challenge as the "personal and intimate experience of being human" (p.195).

In order to better understand this phenomenon, three research questions were formed and helped to guide this phenomenological qualitative study. These questions served as a base to help formulate questions and seek participants to help add to the limited body of knowledge. These questions are:

1. How do senior level higher education administrators reflect on the crisis they experienced?

2. How do senior level higher education administrators make sense of the event and their actions?

3. How do senior level higher education administrators perceive their leadership identity?

Six senior level higher education administrators participated in one-on-one, in depth, semi-structured interviews. Participation in this study was voluntary and interviews were not scheduled until informed consent was received. Because of the potential sensitive information that might be shared during these interviews, it was important to establish trust and clarity in how the identities of participants and institutions would be protected. Demographic information was maintained using participant number labels and all names provided in interview transcripts were modified to their respective

titles e.g., "moderator," "student leader," as an added measure of protection when using direct quotes in the Chapter 4 findings.

An interview guide was created based on the research questions and informed by literature from the field. This interview guide helped to ensure the appropriate questions were asked of each interview participant, offered follow-up statement questions to further probe, and guided the researcher's thoughts/reasoning behind each question. Interviews were digitally recorded so that the interviewer could focus on being an active listener, and a professional transcription service was employed to transfer the digital recordings to written texts. Audio recordings of the interviews were reviewed alongside the physical transcripts to ensure accuracy. Two levels of coding, open and in vivo, were used to specifically breakdown the raw data and reassemble into categories.

Meaning units, field notes, and these coding categories were discussed with the researcher's committee chair to help validate patterns and findings. Feedback was provided to help improve clarity and to ensure intent of labels used.

In vivo codes used in level two coding helped to preserve the intent of the participants and added to the richness of the data. Therefore, accuracy was critical. Field notes and reflective memos were maintained and reviewed during this coding process to add to the data and also to ensure that any possible researcher biases were recognized and accounted for. The reflective memos allowed for the researcher to fully immerse in the data, and begin to piece patterns and thoughts together during the data collection process. In addition, in incidents where the researcher could identify, or was aware of the crisis experience due to her personal and professional affiliations to the institutions or participants, the reflective memos allowed for all aspects of preconceived knowledge to

be recorded and biases recognized. This allowed for the preservation of facts provided by the participants, which added to the credibility of the data findings.

This process of coding and recoding led to the emergence of four core categories, subsequent themes, and the essences of the experience. These core categories serve as a synopsis of the data and intend to tell a story of the experiences of SLHEA during crisis response. In addition, these categories and themes have implications on administrators who may find themselves in a similar situation. Those implications are discussed thoroughly in the following section.

Implications of Findings

A phenomenological approach was used to conduct this qualitative study with the intent of learning more about the lived experiences of SLHEA. The findings from the data add to the limited body of research that exists, specifically regarding how administrators understand their leadership identity and balance their institutional responsibilities during a crisis event.

These data were analyzed using two levels of coding methods appropriate for qualitative studies: open/initial and in vivo. Open/initial coding allowed for the data to be broken into smaller, more manageable meaning units and allowed for codes to be assigned and themes assembled. In vivo coding was selected for the second level because of the emphasis it had on preserving the participants voice and helped to further formulate the categories, themes, and essences of these experiences.

Four core categories that emerged from the data included: (a) sense of dynamics, (b), anticipating what is to come, (c) importance of reflection, and (d) doing the right

thing. The categories helped to further explain 11 themes that also emerged after coding the data and analyzing the findings. They were:

1. You cannot choose time, place or level of preparedness

2. You cannot control how people react

3. You cannot choose the type of crisis situation

4. Learning to move forward

5. Awaiting a ripple effect

6. Controlling the controllable

7. Intrinsic assessment of actions and feelings

8. Achieving a sense of resolution

9. Recognizing impact on holistic leadership

10. Sticking with personal convictions

11. Weighing hard decisions

While literature supports aspects of these categories and themes, specifically, the need for reflection, other categories and themes were unanticipated and unexpected. Those implications will be contrasted and explored.

Sense of dynamics. The first category, sense of dynamics, captured the organic, complex nature of crisis interactions and the need for leaders to be fluid, flexible, and responsive, based on how the event unfolds. The subsequent themes embody the realization of leaders that there are many aspects to a crisis event that they cannot control, including the type of crisis, the time, location, the stakeholders involved, or how those stakeholders react. A common thread throughout the data and the subsequent findings is

that leaders in crisis mode often are managing personal feelings about what is occurring along with the need to respond.

Research question 2 asked how SLHEA make sense of the event and their actions, and the interview questions specifically asked if there were protocols or crisis management plans in place. Of the six participants, only one had a crisis plan that specifically addressed the event of which they were speaking. The other participants had relied on directives from management, past dealings with crisis events, and intuition, yet interestingly enough, all reported similar feelings in response to what they experienced.

The research on crisis management as a field of study is vast and it widely supports the need for a plan or protocol to address situations (Wang & Hutchins, 2010). However, the participant responses suggest that there is a missing component to these plans, as the feelings that arose from their experiences could have disrupted their progress and action, if not appropriately addressed. This discovery suggests that there may be a missing element to crisis management plans and protocols, one that does not account for humanistic side of administrators tasked with executing them.

Literature on crisis plans relative to higher education indicate that having prescribed steps during a crisis situation will allow for the campus community to effectively identify, address, and diffuse a situation. Often, these plans are created to combat specific situations such as natural disasters and active shooters, but do not allow for complex events or allow for other crisis experiences (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). The challenge with prescriptive plans is that they can restrict leaders or prevent them from responding in ways that identify with their personal schema and experiences. These plans may also not account for unexpected variables, such as the response from

stakeholders who are impacted by the event. In addition, if the crisis manifests into an occurrence not covered by these plans, it presents a challenge for leaders who are not prepared to process the event at hand. However, there are opportunities for leaders to prepare for these types of crises that are beyond the scope of their experiences or what is expected. This will be further discussed in the section on implications for senior administrators.

Participant 2 spoke of this disconnect with crisis plans during their interview. They discussed in depth, about how the initial crisis event at the campus was in response to a poorly communicated change that impacted the technological infrastructure of the college. This announcement happened without a communications plan or preparation with impacted staff, with the attitude of *this is happening, deal with it*, and without anticipating a negative response that might occur.   To compound that event, a natural disaster hit the campus and the protocol that senior administrators had in place, or had anticipated to be their solution, was not available to them. With each passing minute, a massive amount of institutional data was being lost from the technology servers as administrators sat around, as Participant 2 stated, "with their hands in their pockets, not knowing what to do. We were out of our element. We really did not know what we were doing."

These plans are also not always made available to frontline or first response staff, but rather housed in administrative offices to meet protocol or state/federal mandates. Participant 6 noted that prior, and during their crisis event, there was a red binder that had directions on how to handle certain scenarios. However, that binder was locked in a senior administrator's office, not accessible to the staff working directly with the

stakeholders who were impacted. The result of their crisis event was the creation of a one-page document that is not kept at every desk, outlining what to do and who to call in various situations.

The participants who lacked a crisis situation plan echoed sentiments found in the literature, that the reactive nature of higher education is often due to the *what are the chances attitude* or *that could never happen here.* This is not surprising or uncommon, as the statistical data relative to crisis events suggest that the likelihood of events, such an active shooter for example, is low (Blair & Schweit, 2013). Regardless, even one occurrence at a college campus could result in casualties, loss of property, and damage to the institution, the aftermath for which the administrators are left responsible.

Zdziarski (2016) discusses that crisis response is not just about responding, but creating a culture of preparedness, including administrators who are ready to *lead with the heart* and navigate through even the murkiest of situations. Zdziarski (2016) discusses that often times, crisis events such as a shooting, are over within minutes, leaving little time for administrators to think, act, and respond.   The author suggests, rather than a crisis management plan that addresses specific natural disasters and man-made occurrences, institutions and administrators should prepare an all-hazards approach which allows for both functional and situational protocols. This open approach to crisis management response and planning may aid administrators in identifying the elements of a crisis and encourage a holistic response, rather than focusing on the type of event. This suggested approach to crisis management is not commonly found in literature, however, the findings of this study suggest it is a best practice to consider. Of the participants interviewed, four out of the six crisis events discussed were identified as unique and not

something that the participants ever would have anticipated and were not events for which their institutions were prepared. Regardless, they happened.

Participant 5 commented that they had been at the institution for 20 years and never experienced two horrific events so close to campus. Participant 2 described "mayhem" after the back-to-back man-made, then natural disaster they had experienced. The common thread throughout these experiences and the reflection that the participants shared, was that they needed to prepare themselves to expect the unexpected and to assume nothing, including how stakeholders may respond. The presence of *hard data* or the facts in a situation, may aid the administrator in helping to make an informed decision. However, administrators need to be prepared for the unexpected, such as the potential of a negative response from stakeholders, or a failed/flawed protocol plan as suggested by Preda and Stan (2016). Participant 2 noted that their expertise was in compliance, not human resources, so by not viewing the crisis through the human resources lens, the Participant and their administrative counterparts did not anticipate the perception and reaction of stakeholders, which ultimately led to the crisis. Participant 1 noted that the child-like behaviors that the stakeholders exhibited during the institution's crisis was something they did not ever expect. And as a developmental psychologist, it was something the participant could assess as a mental health practitioner, but struggled with as a higher education leader, leaving the administrator with a sense of defeat. This experience suggested that human behavior and response was not something that could easily be predicted or contained, which is a factor that needs to be considered during a crisis and in the development of crisis management plans.

There was a struggle in *balance* that Participant 1 and Participant 2 experienced where they felt a sense of loyalty to superiors, their jobs, or their institutions, but also felt an internal conflict as a leader, that the directives and actions they were taking, despite being told what to do by someone in a higher authority, were not aligned with how they felt personally. This type of inner conflict during a crisis situation, could result in serious implications, as events are often time sensitive. Walumbwa, Maidique, and Atamanik (2014) recognized this experience of leaders and identified it as a pitfall in decision-making. Walumbwa et al. (2014) state, "Heuristics in decision-making seek to maximize accuracy, minimize cognitive effort, maximize justification of their decision, and minimize negative emotions related to the decision" (p. 286). They suggested a way to mitigate these pitfalls would be to increase the leader's understanding of the nuances in decision-making, including the heuristics, and to promote more self-awareness that takes into account cognitive capacity, biases, and internal reactions (Walumbwa et al., 2014). The time to reflect and assess personal beliefs, however, is likely not during a time-sensitive event. Therefore, this reflection needs to happen before any crisis occurs, as part of leadership development and immediately after, as a way to process all that has occurred.

Anticipating what is to come. This was identified as a category due to the emergence of themes surrounding how leaders learned to move forward through an event and experience the subsequent ripple effects. The participants spoke in depth about the sequential steps and actions in which they engaged during the crisis, and were encouraged through interview questions, to explain their emotions and feelings during each of these stages. Research question 1 asked how SLHEA reflect on the crisis and the

raw, visceral responses received suggest that the aftermath of the event and its impact on the individual leader warrants processing this experience.

What was discovered is that the participants were not immune to human emotions, and those emotions left an imprint on their sense of leadership. Participants 1 and 2 spoke about how the toxicity that erupted from these experiences disheartened them in a way, and has stuck with them even after all this time. In some cases, the participants spoke of how they could not share these experiences with anyone, due to a lack of superior support or policies that banned their discussion of events such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This created a sense of isolation and heightened emotions that accompanied the feelings of isolation, which distracted from the immediate needs at hand. This was something the participants had not anticipated, created a challenge for them as the crisis unfolded, and without reflection, could inhibit their leadership growth within this experience.

Participant 3 commented that a crucial part of reflection is breaking down the aspects of the event to their essences and being able to effectively apply that experience to other events in the future. By doing so, it may help administrators to balance the emotional response to what they are experiencing, navigating the complexity of the event, and preparing for unanticipated outcomes or ripples.

The participants had not anticipated the ripple effect that the crisis would create, specifically regarding social media. Participants 5 and 6 commented that in the years before Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms, they were afforded time to collect as much factual information as possible, craft a response, and communicate that to the campus community. Participant 5 stressed that being a "reliable source" of

information for the students through a fearful time, was something that was important to them. However, they had never anticipated that the event and false information would reach Twitter and go viral before they physically even reached campus. Communication planning and response was echoed in many participant interviews. However, Zaid (1996), Coombs (2015), and Druckman (2001) indicate that the priority of leaders should not be to "frame" or try to communicate to stakeholders that things are okay, or are being handled. Activities such as this take away from the leader's ability to effectively and quickly address situations, and rather, they should be focused on containment first (Bowers et al., 2017). Leaders need to learn to *control the controllable* in the crisis situation and be able to respond accordingly.

Importance of reflection. This emerged as a third category due to participants assigning value to the act of discussing what happened, how they felt, and how this event has stuck with them. Each of the research questions asked the SLHEA to reflect on the crisis, to recall how they made sense of the event, and to share how they perceive their leadership identity – all of which require deep reflection and contemplation.

A survey of college presidents conducted by NASPA indicated that college presidents felt that a lack of time to reflect was a threat to their leadership and ability to govern (Song & Hartley, 2012). Part of this reflection piece was spending time identifying how this event made the participant feel internally as a leader versus a self-assessment checklist that asks *yes* or *no* style questions.

Participant 1 commented that this event was not the worst they had ever experienced; yet, they chose to share it because it was something that has stuck with them and was an experience from which they have not fully healed. The response of the

college president at the time, and the lack of acceptance in responsibility of peer administrators left Participant 1 with a feeling of abandonment, something that they have had to learn to come to terms with, as an unpleasant byproduct of leadership. Participant 6 recalled that a prominent local police official in the community questioned why they had their job if they could not handle the particular situation, and it caused the participant to lose faith in what they considered a staple in crisis response within the community. In that scenario, the participant had reached the final step in their crisis protocol plan, only to have it fail when the police and ambulance refused to answer the 9-1-1 calls for help. The participant had to quickly act, bypassing normal 9-1-1 protocol, and demanding help for their student as the situation became dire. When asked about their perceptions of their leadership identity, the participant strongly identified that their responsibility was to take care of the students whom were trusted into their care as an administrator, and to do what was right by them.

Doing the right thing. This led to the last category, doing the right thing. Participant 1 recognized, in the midst of the crisis, that they had the opportunity to uphold their personal convictions and do what they would view as the right thing to do. In the process of executing directives, they harmed stakeholders, a phenomenon that Boin and Nieuwenburg (2013) describe as the "moral costs of discretionary decision-making" (p. 367). Each participant recognized that there were stakeholders or elements of the crisis that they focused on to help guide their movement forward. Participant 6 felt that her decisions were always driven by her student-centered beliefs, however, when the crisis moved to the community, that sense of responsibility shifted from the student in crisis, to those community members who were unaware that they potentially were in danger. This

administrator struggled with that realization as she identified her student centered focus as a strong element of her leadership identity.

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 recognized that their decision-making was driven by what they felt were necessary steps to do what was right in the eyes of specific stakeholders, whether they be superiors, students, the community, employers, or the essence of the institution. Although they did not explicitly identify a specific leadership theory, their responses align closely with that of a servant leader. Participant 1 spoke of a time when a student was identified on campus as having a serious drinking problem after numerous conduct violations. The protocol for the college was to bring the student to the judicial committee for sanctions and that committee decided to get the student the help they needed versus dismissal. A committee member volunteered to be a weekly mentor and they were able to successfully support this student as he transitioned into sobriety and completed his college degree.

Being a leader sometimes means having to make hard decisions and weighing potential ramifications of those actions. The participants recognized that the options presented were not always clear, and were fogged by the sense of responsibility. The outcomes of their decisions did not always offer full resolution. Preda and Stan (2016) identify this dichotomy as the difference in applying leadership models and leadership styles to crisis situations, and that each respectively offers prescriptive and descriptive steps to achieve a desired outcome. It was evident throughout these interviews that the phenomena administrators experienced does not follow a flat trajectory but rather, there are multiple gears in motion as the leader processes their internal conflicts and

assignment of values in conjunction with the operational steps needed to move to a resolution.

   The four frames of Bolman and Deal. The four frames provided the theoretical framework that was selected to help guide this study. The concept of reframing, proposed by Bolman and Deal (2013), offers a mental model for leaders to help identify characteristics of an institution to help create a lens from which to view crisis situations. Based on the review of literature, it was thought that SLHEA might view crisis situations through one of the four frames: (a) structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, or (d) symbolic. However, the findings suggest that each crisis situation was unique and that leaders were not always able to view the occurrence through one of the prescribed frames. The events were organic and complex, and as they evolved, the shift in priorities and response from stakeholders would change. The influence and unpredictability of stakeholders was unanticipated, a finding that created a further challenge in viewing the crisis through the frames. Therefore, a leadership framework, that is sensitive to the uniqueness of crisis situations and the demands of stakeholders would be better suited for this study.

   A model that is able to assess a situation while also adjusting to the receptiveness of stakeholders may be a method in assessing this study's data. The situational leadership model developed by Hersey is one recommendation (Northouse, 2015). The model uses prescriptive quadrants to help leaders interact and influence stakeholders based on their receptiveness and skill level. In Chapter 2, the review of the literature on crisis events suggested that stakeholders seek autocratic leaders to make decisions during difficult times, however, the findings from this study suggest that this call for leadership

may be situational or based on the type of crisis events occurring. Leaders, however, recognize they have a responsibility to the success of crisis responses and decision-making. Therefore, a model that allows for adjusting the type of leadership response based on the crisis and the skill set of stakeholders, would better assist in understanding these phenomena.

Implications for senior level administrators. The implications of this study recognize the complex, vast, and emotional challenges leaders face as they process crisis situations. At the root of their decisions are deep, personal reasoning that the participants recognized as a critical piece of, or challenge to, their leadership identity, one that they should seek to better understand. This study suggests that administrators could benefit from actively reflecting on their experiences in order to better understand the impact it has on their emotional well-being and their leadership practices. In addition, leaders that are in tune with their personal identity and understanding of the various leadership styles and practices may be able to navigate through crisis experiences using those lenses. And in the end, leaders should have a higher degree of resolution in the decisions they make, as they may better align with their personal beliefs and values.

Implications for future research. The recruitment of participants for this study yielded six senior level administrators from small liberal arts colleges in the Northeast United States. In order to validate that the findings from this study may be universally true for all senior level administrators facing crises, a larger, broader sample is recommended. In addition, this study focused on the lived experiences of senior administrators and did not take into account years of service, frequency and depth of crisis experiences, and allowed for administrators to self-select the crisis they chose to

discuss. In future research, it may be valuable to apply the same methodology, but with a variance in the interview guide to help construct a timeline of experiences with an attempt to correlate experience to preparedness or experience to development of leadership identity.

In addition, crisis management literature suggested that during a crisis experience, stakeholders generally looked toward autocratic leadership practices to help guide them through the event. The findings from this study suggest that this is not always the case based on the perceived response received by SLHEA. A future case study that looked at all facets of an institution that has experienced a crisis may help give a more holistic picture of the response of stakeholders, administrators, and other involved parties.

Limitations

The intent of a qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences and subsequent phenomena that the identified participants have faced. The participants in this study provided rich, descriptive data regarding their experiences, regrets, feelings, and sense of vulnerability. Participation was voluntary, and participants were selected based on the criteria that they were currently, or previously had, a senior leadership position, and they experienced a singular crisis event that disrupted their institution. The participants self-identified as meeting these criteria after responding to direct contact from the researcher, postings to social media (LinkedIn, Facebook), or being referred to the researcher by a peer.

The responses that were elicited from the participants suggest that the administrators felt inclined to share their experiences as a way to process and share their raw, visceral feelings with a neutral party. In addition, the researcher had professional

connections with three of the participants that spanned 10 years and therefore, was at an advantage in establishing trust.

Lastly, although the focus of this study was on the experiences of the researchers versus that of the institution. The institutional makeup may impact the type of crisis situations that a leader may experience and impact the accessibility of resources during the response and the aftermath.

Recommendations

The results of this research suggest that during a crisis, administrators have a multitude of the responsibilities, and intrinsic feelings they must manage in order to navigate through to a state of resolution. This balancing act can create turmoil for the leader and challenge their leadership identity, wanting to do the right thing, while maintaining loyalty to an institution, superiors, or other stakeholders. This study recommends that leaders create opportunities to self-reflect and process situations they experience as part of crisis response. In addition, it is recommended that leaders dedicate time to understanding their personal leadership identity and the items they assign value to, in order to establish a base or control during crisis experiences. Zdziarski (2016, para. 5) encourages leaders to "respond from the heart," and that humans respond and grieve differently to crisis experiences. Leaders should be prepared to manage not only their human needs, but also those who rely on them. As author Gene Klann noted,

> Effective crisis leadership boils down to responding to the human needs,
> emotions, and behaviors caused by the crisis. Effective leaders respond to those
> emotional needs as those needs are perceived by those experiencing the crisis, not

just their personal perception of what those emotional needs are, might be, or

should be. (2003, pp.8-9)

On the logistical side, it was indicated by multiple participants that on top of managing

the crisis occurrence, they still had responsibility to the day-to-day operations of the

campus. It is recommended that any campus protocols or procedures include an

established "B team" that would allow for appropriate administrative staff to support and

run day-to-day operations, allowing SLHEA the dedicated time to diffuse the crisis and

begin the healing process as needed. SLHEA are often in highly visible positions within

their institutions and it important they be available.

Conclusion

The spontaneous nature of campus crises and the difficulty in predicting such

events have created challenges in crisis management planning, especially for

administrators who are tasked with diffusing the event. The study of crisis management

suggests having plans and protocols will aid leaders in taking actions and making

decisions, however, these plans do not always account for truly unanticipated events or

the intrinsic response of the administrators. Limited research exists on how

administrators perceive their role in crisis response and how they reflect on those

experiences. The intent of this study was to add to the body of knowledge of crisis

management, specifically by examining the lived experiences of higher education leaders

who have led through a crisis.

A review of the literature identified a gap in knowledge and the following

research questions were developed to address the limited information available. Those

questions were:

1. How do senior level higher education administrators reflect on the crisis they experienced?

2. How do senior level higher education administrators make sense of the event and their actions?

3. How do senior level higher education administrators perceive their leadership identity?

A phenomenological qualitative study was selected as the method to guide the data collection process and subsequent findings. The four frames approach, developed by Bolman and Deal (2013) was selected as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis process.

The participants of this study represent a small sample of a larger network of administrators at institutions across the United States. Each institution is unique in their diversity of students and faculty, missions and values, and ultimately, the challenges and crises that they experience. All of the participants in this study recognized that crisis decision-making was a part of their job, but not one for which they are ever truly, fully prepared.

The lasting impact of these crisis experiences were evident during the semi-structured interview process, as many of the participants noted that although the situations they chose to discuss were serious, they were not the worst situations they ever had to deal with, which speaks volumes. In some cases, the negative, primal response of stakeholders was the cause of unanticipated conflicts. In others, the *unique once in a lifetime* nature of the event spawned the need for institutional response and the subsequent development of protocols.

The current political and social climate of the United States at the time of this study is one that should be noted. From the start to finish of this dissertation process, multiple crisis events have impacted institutions of all sizes and make-up. Events such as hurricane devastation, active shootings, acts of domestic terrorism, outbreaks of disease, student protests, handling of sexual assaults, financial collapse, accreditation concerns, and athletic scandals have been at the forefront of media attention and highlighted the complex nature of colleges and their operations. Arguably, more than ever, administrators who are responsible for managing these events and helping their students, faculty, and institutions survive, are in need of guidance in how to do so.

The recommendations of this study suggest that administrators not only rely on current crisis protocol plans at their respective institutions, but also create a culture of reflection that strives to understand leadership identity. During a crisis event, time is essential and a deeper development of understanding of leaders' personal values and the lens in which they view their leadership responsibilities, will allow for a prompt operational response. In addition, the understanding of leadership identity and the possible ramifications of being the leader in charge (such as feelings of isolation, and abandonment) may allow for leaders to better prepare themselves for that outcome and learn to move forward.

Future research is needed to further explore the complex nature of crisis decision-making at college campuses and the intersectionality of stakeholders, institutional missions, crisis response plans, and campus leadership. By seeking to further understand these dynamics, SLHEA may be able to better prepare for crisis events.

References

Albino, J., Siegfried, W. D., & Yancey, G. (2013). Personal leadership identity and leadership frames: Understanding what happened at Penn State. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal, 16*(3), 131-146.

Blair, P. J. & Schweit, K.W. (2013). *A study of active shooter incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2013*. Washington, DC: Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-study-2000-2013-1.pdf

Bocheński, J. M. (1992). Ce este autoritatea? Introducere în logica autorităţii [What is authority? Introduction to the logic of authority], Bucharest, Romania: Humanitas.

Boin, A., & Nieuwenburg, P. (2013). The moral costs of discretionary decision-making in crisis. *Public Integrity*, *15*(4), 367-384. doi:10.2753/PIN1099-9922150403

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (2013). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (5th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Bowers, M., Hall, R., & Srinivasan, M. (2017). Organizational culture and leadership style: The missing combination for selecting the right leader for effective crisis management. *Business Horizons, 60*(4), 551-563.

Catullo, L. A., Walker, D. A., & Floyd, D. L. (2009). The status of crisis management at NASPA member institutions. *NASPA Journal, 46*(2), 301-324.

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2016). *Qualitative research guidelines project.* Retrieved from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation website: http://www.qualres.org/index.html

Coombs, W. (2015). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Coombs, W., & Holladay, S. (2001). An extended examination of the crisis situations: A fusion of the relational management and symbolic approaches. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 13*(4), 321-340.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dahlberg, K. (2006). The essence of essences/the search for meaning structures in phenomenological analysis of lifeworld phenomena. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, 1*(1), 11-19.

De Dreu, C. K. (2003). Time pressure and closing of the mind in negotiation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *91*(2), 280-295. doi:10.1016/S0749-5978(03)00022-0

Dolan, T. G. (2006). Few schools are ready to manage a crisis. *Education Digest: Essential Condensed for Quick Review, 72*(2), 4-8.

Donovan, S., Guss, C., & Naslund, D. (2015). Improving dynamic decision making through training and self-reflection. *Judgement and Decision Making, 10*(4), 284-295.

Drape, J. & Tracy, M. (2016, December 30). A majority rules it was rape. That isn't enough at Stanford. *The New York Times,* pp. A1-B.

Druckman, J. (2001). On the limits of framing effects: Who can frame? *The Journal of Politics, 63*(4), 1041-1066.

Epstein, B. (2014). Should the crime determine the extent of due process: The National Collegiate Athletic Association followed such logic during the Penn State scandal. *The Sports Lawyers Journal, 21*(1), 169-200.

Fowler, F. (2014). *Survey of research methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gigliotti, R. (2016). Leader as performer; leader as human: A discursive and retrospective construction of crisis leadership. *Atlantic Journal of Communication, 24*(4), 185-200.

Giorgi, A. (2012). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 43*(1), 3-12.

Goulding, C. (2005). Grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology A comparative analysis of three qualitative strategies for marketing research. *European Journal of Marketing*, *39*(3-4), 294-308.

Gerth, H. H., & Wright Mills, C. (1946). From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. *The Journal of Philosophy, 43*(26), 722-723.

Greenleaf, R., Frick, D., & Spears, L. (1996). *On becoming a servant-leader* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Gunia, B., Wang, L., Huang, L., Wang, J., & Murnighan, J. (2012). Contemplation and conversation: Subtle influences on moral decision making. *Academy of Management Journal, 55*(1), 13-34.

Haddon, A., Loughlin, C., & McNally, C. (2015). Leadership in a time of financial crisis: What do we want from our leaders? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 36*(5), 612-627. Retrieved from http://pluma.sjfc.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.pluma.sjfc.edu/docview/1689305988?accountid=27700

Hadley, C. N., Pittinsky, T. L., Sommer, S. A., & Zhu, W. (2011). Measuring the efficacy of leaders to assess information and make decisions in a crisis: The C-LEAD scale. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *22*(4), 633–648.

Hale, J., Hale, D., & Dulek, R. (2006). Decision processes during crisis response: An exploratory investigation. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 18*(3), 301-320.

Haris, I. (2012). Determinant factors of decision making process in higher education institution (A case of state university of Gorontalo, Indonesia). *Global Journal of Management and Business Research, 12*(18). Retrieved from *https://www.journalofbusiness.org/index.php/GJMBR/article/download/831/758*

Hendrickson, R., Lane, J., Harris, J., & Dorman, R. (2013). *Academic leadership and governance of higher education: A guide for trustees, leaders, and aspiring leaders of two- and four-year institutions*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Hornak, A. M., & Garza Mitchell, R. L. (2016). Changing times, complex decisions. Presidential values and decision making. *Community College Review*, *44*(2), 119-134. doi:10.1177/0091552116629548

Hu, Q., Knox, C. C., & Kapucu, N. (2014). What have we learned since September 11, 2001? A network study of the Boston Marathon bombings response. *Public Administration Review*, *74*(6), 698-712. doi:10.1111/puar.12284

Husserl, E. (1964). *The idea of phenomenology*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Jabeen, S., & Akhtar, M. M. S. (2013). Decision making styles of university leadership. *The Dialogue*, *VIII*(3), 273-284.

Jenkins, S., & Goodman, M. (2015). "He's one of ours": A case study of a campus response to crisis. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 23*(4), 201-209.

Jones, T. M. (1991). Ethical decision making by individuals in organizations: An issue-contingent model. *The Academy of Management Review*, *16*(2), 366–395. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/258867

Kaplan, U., & Tivnan, T. (2014). Moral motivation based on multiple developmental structures: An exploration of cognitive and emotional dynamics. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 175*(3), 1-21.

Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The philosophy of moral development: Moral stages and the idea of justice*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

Klann, G. (2003). *Crisis leadership: Using military lessons, organizational experiences, and the power of influence to lessen the impact of chaos on the people you lead*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lambert, S., Lambert, J., & Lambert, S. (2014). Distressed college students following traumatic events. *VISTAS Online.* Retrieved from https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article_21.pdf?sfvrsn=10

Lewis, G. (2017). *Organizational crisis management: The human factor.* Boca Raton, FL: Auerbach Publications.

Li, H., Huang, L., Zhang, Y., & Ni, S. (2016). Effects of intuition and deliberation on escape judgment and decision-making under different complexities of crisis situations. *Safety Science*, *89,* 106-113. doi:10.1016/j.ssci.2016.06.006

Lin, C. S. (2013). Revealing the "essence" of things: Using phenomenology in LIS research. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries, 4*, 469-478. Retrieved from http://www.qqml.net/papers/December_2013_Issue/2413QQML_Journal_2013_Chi ShiouLIn_4_469_478.pdf

Lindell M. K., Prater, C. S. and Perry, R. W. (2007) *Fundamentals of Emergency Management*. Emmitsburg, MD: Federal Emergency Management Agency Emergency Management Institute.

Marsh, C. (2013). Business executives' perceptions of ethical leadership and its development. *Journal of Business Ethics, 114*(3), 565-582.

McCarthy, J., O'Connell, D., & Hall, D. (2005). Leading beyond tragedy: The balance of personal identity and adaptability. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 26*(5/6), 458-475.

McLeod, S. A. (2014). *The interview method*. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/interviews.html

Mertens, D. M. & Wilson, A. T. (2012). *Program evaluation theory and practice: A comprehensive guide.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Mitroff, I. I., Diamond, M. A., & Alpaslan, C. M. (2006). How prepared are America's

colleges and universities for major crises? Assessing the state of crisis management.*Change*: *The Magazine of Higher Learning, 38*(1), 61-67.

Moerer-Urdahl, T., & Creswell, J. (2004). Using transcendental phenomenology to explore the "ripple effect" in a leadership mentoring program. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(2), 19-35.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Northouse, P. (2015). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Los Angeles, CA.: Sage Publications.

 Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 11*(4), 327-344.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2013). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, *42*(5), 533–544. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

Pearson, C. M., & Clair, J. A. (1998). Reframing management. *Academy Of Management Review*, *23*(1), 59-76. doi:10.5465/AMR.1998.192960

Phillips, W., Fletcher, J., Marks, A., & Hine, D. (2015). Thinking styles and decision making: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 142*(3), 260-290.

Preda, M., & Stan, M. (2016). Leadership styles during crisis: 'We're all In this together... the crisis as new normality.' *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences, 12*, 55-74.

Rast, D., Hogg, M., & Giessner, S. (2013). Self-uncertainty and support for autocratic leadership. *Self and Identity, 12*(6), 635-649.

Robinson, J. A. (1972). Crisis: An appraisal of concepts and theories. In C. F. Hermann (Ed.), *International crises: Insights from behavioral research.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA.: Sage Publications.

Schmidt, C. D. (2014). Questioning intuition through reflective engagement. *Journal of Moral Education, 43*(4), 429-446.

Shankman, M., & Allen, S. (2008). *Emotionally intelligent leadership: A guide for college students* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Smith, W. K., (2014). Dynamic decision making: A model of senior leaders managing strategic paradoxes. *Academy of Management Journal, 57*(6), 1592-1633. doi:10.5465/amj.2011/0932

Somers, S. (2009). Measuring resilience potential: An adaptive strategy for organizational crisis planning. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 17*(1), 12-23.

Song, W., Hartley, H. I. (2012). *A study of presidents of independent colleges and universities.* Washington, DC: The Council of Independent Colleges.

Tichy, N., & Bennis, W. (2007). *Judgment: How winning leaders make great calls.* New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Valentine, S., Nam, S., Hollingworth, D., & Hall, C. (2014). Ethical context and ethical decision making: Examination of an alternative statistical approach for identifying variable relationships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *124*(3), 509. doi:10.1007/s10551-013-1879-8

Virginia Tech Review Panel. (2016). *Mass shootings at Virginia Tech, April 16, 2007: Report of the Virginia Tech review panel presented to Timothy M. Kaine, Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia.* Blacksburg, VA: author. Retrieved from https://lccn.loc.gov/2008397165

Walumbwa, F., Maidique, M., & Atamanik, C. (2014). Decision-making in a crisis: What every leader needs to know. *Organizational Dynamics, 43*(4), 284-293.

Wang, J., & Hutchins, H. (2010). Crisis Management in Higher Education: What Have We Learned From Virginia Tech? *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 12*(5), 552-572.

Yin, S., & Jing, R. (2014). A schematic view of crisis threat assessment. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 22*(2), 97-107.

Zaid, M. (1996). Culture, ideology, and strategic framing. In D. McAdam, J. McCarthy, & M. Zaid (Eds.), *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings* (pp. 261-274). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zdziarski, E., II. (2016). Campus crisis: It's not just about responding. *The Presidency*, *19*(2), 26-30. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/Campuses-Crisis-Its-Not-Just-About-Responding.aspx

Zdziarski, E. (2001). *Institutional preparedness to respond to campus crises as perceived by student affairs administrators in selected NASPA member institutions.* (Doctoral

dissertation, Texas A& M University, 2001). Retrieved from Dissertation Abstracts International, (62, 3714).

Zeni, T. A., Buckley, M. R., Mumford, M. D. & Griffith, J. A. (2016). Making "sense" of ethical decision making. *The Leadership Quarterly, 27*(6), 838-855. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.09.002

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

March 12, 2018

File No: 3834-021518-03

Melissa Moore
St. John Fisher College

Dear Ms. Moore:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, "Leadership Under Fire: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Administrator's Perceived Leadership Identity and Crisis Response at Higher Education Institutions in the United States."

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at irb@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta

Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

ELB: jdr

Appendix B

Draft of the Introductory Email

March 12, 2018

Dear Mr. Doe:

Hello, I would like to invite you to participate in a study that I (Melissa S. Moore) am conducting as a doctoral student in the St. John Fisher Executive Leadership program. The study will focus on the lived experiences of Senior Level Higher Education Administrators that have experienced crisis or trauma that impacted their institutions.

By exploring the experiences of senior level administrators who have steered through a crisis, we may learn more about the decision-making process, and factors that contribute to their actions. And more importantly, how to better prepare leaders for potential threats and future occurrences. The title of this dissertation research study is *Leadership Under Fire: A Study of Senior Level Higher Education Administrators of Experienced Crisis or Trauma Events Impacting their Institutions.*

Participation benefits include contributing to the understanding of crisis decision-making in higher education. The study will focus on higher education administrators with no restrictions on institution size or type.

The purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of how administrators process crisis situations to form decisions and actions. Crisis is defined as natural or man made events that disrupted operations or challenged insititutional norms. The crisis can occur within the geographic proximity of the campus or in the community surrounding. If you can answer yes to the following questions, I ask that you please consider participating in the study:

1. Have you experienced a crisis that impacted your institution?
2. Are you currently considered senior leadership at an institution of higher education?
3. Have you:
    a. Experienced a trauma or crisis that impacted your institutions operations
    b. Had to make decisions and take action on behalf of the institution or stakeholders

If you agree to participate in the study, a face-to-face, phone, Skype, or FaceTime interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will take between 60 – 90 minutes. If additional clarification is needed, a brief follow-up phone

call (up to 30 minutes) or email may be requested and scheduled at a time convenient for you.

A one-page informational form is being provided to you that summarizes details of the study. **Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will have the option of terminating your participation at any time without any penalty or repercussions.** Additionally, your participation will be confidential. During all aspects of the study, your identity will be protected with the use of a pseudonym. Your institution will also be assigned a pseudonym as an additional measure to protect privacy.

All paper documents and electronic documents collected and analyzed for this study will be kept in a secured and locked file cabinet at the researcher's home address. Only the researcher will have access to the secured file cabinet. All paper documents and electronic documents, and analyzed materials will be kept at the secured location for three years after completion of the study, after which time, all documents will be destroyed by shredding (paper documents) and erasing (electronic documents).

For further information about the study, please contact me (Melissa S. Moore) via email at msm05770@students.sjfc.edu or my Doctoral Advisor, Theresa Pulos, Ed.D., at tpulos@sjfc.edu. The research study has been reviewed and approved by St. John Fisher College's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

I appreciate you taking the time to consider participating in this study, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Melissa S. Moore, Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College
Ralph C. Wilson School of Education
Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership
3690 East Avenue
Rochester, New York 14618

Appendix C

Informational Form
Regarding Data Collection and Participant Rights

- The title of the study is "Leadership Under Fire: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Administrator's Perceived Leadership Identity and Crisis Response at Higher Education Institutions in the United States."

- The researcher is Melissa S. Moore, a doctoral candidate in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. The researcher is also Registrar at Bryant & Stratton College, a for-profit college with a campus located in Syracuse, NY.

- The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of between six to eight senior level higher education administrators.

- The researcher will conduct between six to eight one-on-one face-to-face or phone interviews with senior level higher education administrators that have experienced a crisis or trauma at their institution in which their leadership, decision-making or action planning was required.

- The two data gathering techniques to be utilized are semi-structured interviews, and a research notebook including field notes and reflective memos. All paper documents and electronic documents collected and analyzed for this study will be kept in a secured and locked file cabinet at the researcher's home address.

- The identity of the participants and their organizations will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants and their organizations.

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Participants can withdraw their participation in the study at any point by simply informing the researcher that they no longer would like to participate. There will be no repercussions from withdrawing from the study.

Appendix D

Draft of the Participation Email

March 20, 2018

Dear Mr. Doe:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.   Your role as a higher education administrator and experience with trauma makes you an ideal candidate for this study.

I have been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY, to conduct research for my dissertation in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. The study will focus on exploring the experiences of six to eight senior level higher education administrators that have experienced a crisis at their institution. The study will add value to the literature on higher education crisis management and we may learn more about the factors contributing to leaders' actions during crucial times.

I would also like to schedule a face-to-face or phone interview with you, at your convenience over the next six-eight weeks. We can discuss a convenient, comfortable meeting location that meets your needs.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Melissa S. Moore, Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College, Ralph C. Wilson School of Education
Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership
3690 East Avenue
Rochester, New York 14618

St. John Fisher College: Informed Consent Form

Title of study: The Transformation of Senior Level Higher Education Administrators'
                    Leadership Role Identities and Leadership Practices through Crisis
Management:
                    A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

Name(s) of researcher(s): Melissa S. Moore

Faculty Supervisor: Theresa Pulos, Ed.D.
Phone for Faculty Supervisor for further information: 585-385-8000

Purpose of study: This study will focus on exploring the experiences of six to eight senior level higher education administrators who have experienced a crisis impacting their institution. The study will add to the body of knowledge on crisis management in higher education with the intent to offer insight in leaders decision-making process during critical times.

Place of study: Throughout the United States. Specific location determined by the participant.
Length of participation:
   • One day for 60-90 minutes – face-to-face or phone interview
   • One day for 30 minutes – as necessary, follow-up (phone call or email)

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

There are no obvious risks. You may experience undue stress related to talking about crisis experiences during the interview and there is the risk of loss of time. Problems involving the identification of participants, recruitment efforts or data collection are not expected. Participation is voluntary. Participants who feel uncomfortable or who change their minds about participating will be told that they may stop participating at any time. If you have any problems during or after the interview you should contact your primary care provider.

The benefits include contributing to the limited body of knowledge on senior level administrators and their experiences during a crisis.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:
Pseudonyms will be used during the completion of all forms, as well as in the interview sessions, and in the typed transcripts to ensure confidentiality and privacy of the participants and their organizations.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Participant)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your primary care provider for appropriate referrals.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study, you can contact _____ by phone at _____ or by email at irb@sjfc.edu.

Interview Protocol: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Level Higher Education
Administrators Who Have Experienced Crisis or Trauma Impacting their Institutions

Date of Interview: _____ Time of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Interviewee: _____

Review purpose of the study: This study will focus on exploring the experiences of six
to eight senior level higher education administrators who have experienced a crisis
impacting their institution. The study will add to the body of knowledge on crisis
management in higher education with the intent to offer insight in leaders decision-
making process during critical times.

Review participant rights: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can
withdraw your participation in the study at any point by simply informing me (the
researcher) that you no longer want to participate. There will be no repercussions from
withdrawing from the study.

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your current role? What are the duties and
   responsibilities expected with your position?
2. Please tell me about an experience when you were faced with a crisis situation
   at either your current institution or a previous one that you were employed at?
3. What was the crisis plan or suggested protocol available to address this crisis?
   What were some of the resources provided by the institution to help inform
   your decisions and actions?
4. Who were some of the key players that responded to this crisis? What was
   your role in the response effort? What was your relationship with these
   players?
5. How were decisions made as the situation progressed?
6. Did you find that your established relationships with other campus leaders
   changed during the course of this crisis? Can you provide some examples of
   relationships that changed? What were some of the points of friction or
   agreement? Did these changes still persist even after the crisis was over?
7. What are some of the areas of culture and community that you were
   concerned with during this crisis?

8. Reflecting back, what were some of the thoughts and feelings that went through your mind during this crisis? How did you feel about this situation once the initial crisis had passed? Did you find yourself thinking about this situation after work hours?
9. Often times, people process crisis situations after the fact and attempt to make sense of what happened. What are some of the ways that you have attempted to process or reflect on what occurred?
10. Now that you have reflected back, what are some of the ways that this crisis has impacted our views on leadership?
11. What were some of the leadership lessons that you took from this?
12. How have you changed your professional practices as a result of what you experienced? Have you also changed aspects of your personal life?

Close interview: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Follow-up call/email: The recording of this interview will be professionally transcribed. Once the transcription is ready, I can share with you a copy and encourage you to review to ensure accuracy and intent. I encourage you to let me know if there are areas you'd like to clarify. We can do so over email or set up a call.   If I do not hear from you, I will assume that you approve the transcript and your answers represent your intent.

Next steps: Data will be collected and analyzed during Fall 2017. The study will be finalized in Spring 2018 and once approved, a copy will be sent to you.