Did You Take Care of Everybody? Insights on Crisis Management From Senior Student Affairs Professionals

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DID YOU TAKE CARE OF EVERYBODY?
INSIGHTS ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT
FROM SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS
PROFESSIONALS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Matthew Lawrence Peterson Ricke

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Leadership, Policy and Development:
Higher Education and P-12 Education
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

May 2020
This Dissertation by: Matthew Lawrence Peterson Ricke

Entitled: Did You Take Care of Everybody? Insights on Crisis Management from Senior Student Affairs Professionals

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership.

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This constructivist narrative study explored the experiences of five senior student affairs administrators who responded to an organizational crisis impacting their universities. Crisis management is a critical competency for higher education leaders (Peters, 2014) and involves the prevention, mitigation, and planning prior to a crisis; response and recovery during the crisis; and learning and changing following a crisis (Zdziarski, 2006). This study was guided by the research question: how do campus leaders at an institution of higher education (IHE) make meaning of a campus crisis event? Five participants, all of whom are senior student affairs professionals with extensive crisis management experience, shared their stories of responding to the death of a student or staff member on campus. Death is often unexpected and particularly challenging on college campuses, since college is often considered to be a safe environment characterized by tight-knit social communities (Cintrón, 2007). Using crystallization as an overarching framework for understanding, this researcher used narrative interviewing and reflective drawing to facilitate participants’ sharing of their crisis stories. Two distinct scholarly contributions emerged from this study, each employing divergent analytical approaches that were then represented as research manuscripts. The first manuscript, which used organizational frames as a theoretical
framework to analyze participants’ stories, drew upon the narrative interview data to elicit the following themes: student affairs’ leaders’ interactions with families, impacts on student affairs leaders’ families, tensions between structure and intuition, adaptability as necessity, and applying lessons learned to organizational change. The second piece, in which the author created transcription poetry as an analytical strategy, situated poems derived from transcript data adjacent to narrative passages and the participants’ reflective drawings to create a tapestry of meaning. Following the presentation of this tapestry, the author reflected upon the methodological challenges that emerged during the research process, including how narrative interviewing opened the way for deep sharing of stories, the use of poemishness and dilemmas of poetic (re)presentation, dilemmas in generating participant-driven reflective images, and the author’s own process of meaning-making while wrestling with the topic of death. The findings in both articles make significant contributions to both the scholarly literature on crisis management in student affairs and higher education as well as the methodological literature on arts-based research, namely the use of transcription poetry and reflective drawing. Since crisis management is an essential competency for student affairs leaders, implications for student affairs graduate preparation and professional practice are discussed.

*Keywords*: crisis management, student affairs, student death, transcription poetry, narrative inquiry
DEDICATION

To my mom, Mary Rushing,

for spending countless hours over the years
helping me hone my writing voice,
and for reminding me
to get out of my own way.

I love you.

To my grandma, Beatrice Soderberg,

who spent so much time
teaching me the value of libraries
and museums as founts of knowledge,
and for helping me be a good person.

I miss you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral degree and the resulting dissertation are the product of six arduous years of exploration, discernment, and active experimentation, marked by both fantastic successes and colossal failures. There are many without whom this process would have been more taxing than it was. Most notably, this project would never have come to fruition without my loving husband, Eddie Ricke. Eddie, you are the one who gave me permission to pursue this ridiculous academic adventure, who encouraged and held me when frustration set in and I wanted to quit, and who relinquished hundreds (if not thousands) of hours of potential quality time so I could read, write, and study. I love you infinitely.

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writing our book!), but mostly I look forward to spending many lazy days at Disney and long chats over microbrews. Thank you for everything!

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To those esteemed colleagues who participated in this study, thank you for trusting me with your stories and your wisdom. Your work and leadership in the area of crisis management was the inspiration for my pursuit of this topic. I know each of your institutions is a better, safer place for your leadership.

To my cohort mates, Dr. Lyda McCartin and Dr. Cherjanéét Lenzy: we, the three, survived! I am grateful for the time we shared in this program and for your support. We did it!

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Finally, to those who lead and have led through tragedy, crisis, and disaster on your campuses, your work is critical to the educational mission of colleges and universities. Thank you for all you do. Watch out for yourselves and each other and remember to create space for healing and meaning-making. Stay strong and be well.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), perpetrated a violent mass-casualty incident on campus. The attack lasted over two hours. Cho first shot two students in a university residence hall before moving on to a classroom in an academic building for Engineering Science and Mechanics, where he shot and killed five faculty members and 25 students before he turned his firearm on himself (Vicary & Fraley, 2010). The incident resulted in 32 deaths, 17 injuries, and extensive psychological harm to students, faculty and staff (Hughes et al., 2011).

In the days and months following, the incident received extensive media, public, and government scrutiny regarding the state of public safety and crisis management functions on college and university campuses, as well as spawning discussion regarding related topics such as mental health, firearms laws, and violent behavior (Wang & Hutchins, 2010). The subsequent government review, and its 260-page report, explored how the incident was managed by the University and local emergency officials. After conducting “over 200 interviews and [reviewing] thousands of pages of records” (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007, p. 1), the panel rendered its findings, which included the need for colleges to coordinate with law enforcement, the requirement for timely warnings and other prompt communications, and the need not to allow privacy laws to
interfere with effective crisis mitigation. These changes occurred at both the institutional state government levels (Wang & Hutchins, 2010).

Though hardly the first campus tragedy, the Virginia Tech incident may have served as a tipping point in how higher education institutions understand and manage crises (Jablonski, McClellan, & Zdziarski, 2008; Treadwell, 2017). Characterized by acts of violence, these types of campus tragedies have influenced the development of a new professional discipline within higher education administration, IHE emergency management (Farris & McCreight, 2014). Other crises, such as the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal in 2011 (Giroux & Giroux, 2012), highly visible campus protests (Tracy & Southall, 2015), governmental intervention into campus sexual misconduct cases regarding Title IX (Kingkade, 2016), and environmental catastrophes (e.g. Hurricane Katrina; Brown, 2014), have compelled IHEs to review their crisis management procedures to ensure effectiveness.

As the world has become increasingly complex, the opportunities for crises to emerge have likewise increased. Zdziarski (2006) ruminated, “Campus crisis is inevitable” (p. 613), and the ubiquity of campus crisis and how institutions respond to crises is therefore a matter of both practical and scholarly importance. The types of crises faced by institutions are becoming increasingly complicated as the infrastructures of institutions have become more technologically and socially intricate (Mitroff, Diamond, & Alpaslan, 2006). Universities are complex systems interconnected within a local, state, and federal context (Braun, Peus, Frey, & Knipfer, 2016). Demands on universities to compete for enrollment while growing to meet the demands of the local and state economy place external burdens on these organizations. Within the constantly changing
environment in which they operate, organizations such as universities experience crisis as “more the norm rather than the exception” (Paraskevas, 2006, p. 894).

In order to achieve their educational missions, colleges and universities must meet the reality of complexity in order to ensure continuity of service in the wake of tragedy, while also responding to public demands for accountability and transparency as stewards of state and federal resources (Leveille, 2005) and private donations to university endowments. To do so, higher education leaders must understand crisis, the ways in which it manifests on campuses, and how to prepare for these crises and respond in a balanced way, without fueling public concern for campus safety with an overzealous response (Fox & Savage, 2009). As student affairs practitioners are “educators who share responsibility with faculty, academic administrators, other staff, and students themselves for creating the conditions under which students are likely to expend time and energy in educationally-purposeful activities” (American College Personnel Association, 2008, para. 9), managing crises and mitigating harm are mission-essential functions.

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and NASPA: Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (2015) identified crisis management skills as essential in the domains of Organizational and Human Resources as well as Advising and Supporting for professionals in the field. Table 1.1 details the professional competencies speaking specifically to crisis management. These competencies (e.g. understanding campus emergency protocols, creating campus crisis management plans, responding to students in crisis) compel practitioners to understand crisis management systems as well as develop crisis skills for interpersonal crisis management. It is the overwhelming need to maintain the integrity of the mission of institutions of higher education and the safety
of students, faculty and staff that makes the study of crisis management compelling for student affairs educators and other higher education professionals.

Table 1.1

*Professional Competencies Addressing Crisis Functions* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Area</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational and Human Resources</td>
<td>Foundational</td>
<td>Describe campus protocols for responding to significant incidents and campus crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational and Human Resources</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Explain the interaction and integration of campus crisis intervention systems (e.g. National Incident Management System, behavioral intervention teams, critical incident response teams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational and Human Resources</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Participate in developing, implementing, and assessing the effectiveness of the campus crisis management program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising and Support</td>
<td>Foundational</td>
<td>Identify when and with whom to implement appropriate crisis management and intervention responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising and Support</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Initiate and exercise appropriate institutional crisis intervention responses and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising and Support</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Coordinate and lead response processes as they relate to crisis interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Develop contingency plans for the continual operation of basic college and university functions in the event of software, hardware, or connectivity failures as a result of routine issues or in response to crises and emergencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ACPA and NASPA identified ten professional competency areas; the three competency areas listed above are those that included specific references to crisis management competencies. There are likely other competency areas (e.g. law, policy, and governance; leadership) which would contribute to effective crisis management in a higher education context.

Research on organizational crisis management which could inform practice is said to exist within disciplinary silos, missing opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-
disciplinary scholarship which could result in a more nuanced understanding of crisis phenomena (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, & Coombs, 2017). While there are higher education and student affairs trade publications on the topic of organizational crisis management, this dearth in rigorous, empirical scholarship appears to apply to organizational crisis management literature in higher education, with noteworthy exceptions following high-publicity cases, such as Virginia Tech (e.g. Fox & Savage, 2009; Vicary & Fraley, 2010; Wang & Hutchins, 2010) and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (e.g. Krane et al., 2007; Shaw, 2016; Shaw, 2017; Topper, 2011). Additionally, little scholarship exists that addresses organizational change following campus crises (Shaw, 2017). Given both the increasing complexity of crises and an apparent increase in public accountability, as well as the imperative to prepare higher education leaders to address the ubiquity of crisis, conducting rigorous scholarship on crisis management to inform professional practice in higher education is crucial.

I begin this chapter by discussing the problem addressed through this study, the purpose of the study, and research questions. I proceed with describing the research approach, including the methodology and methods, used in this inquiry. I explore my own experiences with crisis and its management within the context of my work in higher education institutions as an undergraduate student, graduate assistant, and professional staff member as a means of identifying what experiences have shaped my understanding of this topic. Included are a poem and drawings I created as reflections of these crisis management experiences, intended to mirror the data collection and analysis methods I discuss later in this study.
Study Problem

Crisis management is an important facet of leadership within an organizational context (Baumann, 2011; Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005; Lawson, 2014; Mishra, 1996). As mentioned previously, crisis management is also a core competency in student affairs professional practice, where they are tasked with responding effectively to personal and organizational crises (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Organizational leaders are expected be able to:

- detect the early warning signs of crisis,
- help their constituents make sense of crisis during and after the event,
- ensure the continuity of their enterprise in the wake of crisis,
- minimize the damage done by a crisis, and
- learn from and reflect upon the crisis management response to improve organizational effectiveness in future events (Wooten & James, 2008).

Understanding the latter, the process by which leaders reflect upon crisis and make meaning of their experience, is a crucial and understudied component of effective crisis leadership. To date, scant empirical exploration of the personal meaning-making process of higher education leaders who have managed crisis on campus has been conducted. By expanding our understanding of the role of meaning-making in organizational crisis leadership, the field of student affairs and higher education can facilitate more effective training for future higher education leaders as they encounter campus crises.

Additionally, leaders in higher education and other organizational contexts could benefit from more reflexive practice when it comes to managing crisis rather than operating out of urgency with little preparation to engage crises well. If higher education
leaders do not understand how crises change themselves and their organizations, they may continue to manage crises as they always have without improving themselves and the crisis response as a whole. This study sought to address this dearth in the higher education literature by creating two new contributions to the body of scholarship (found herein as Chapters Four and Five).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this constructivist narrative inquiry was to explore how higher education leaders make meaning of their experience of an organizational crisis on campus. Specifically, I addressed the following research question: how do campus leaders at an institution of higher education (IHE) make meaning of a campus crisis event? By co-creating knowledge by drawing upon the experiences of higher education leaders through narrative interviews (Riessman, 2008) as well as an arts-based reflective drawing exercise (Riessman, 2008; Tracy & Redden, 2015), I cultivated a deeper understanding of the issue of crisis meaning-making which I in turn shared in the form of two journal articles informed by a crystallization approach (Ellingson, 2009).

The study explored personal meaning-making of crises from the unique vantage points of each participant. Participants’ stories and experiences were situated in their professional contexts. Participants were tasked with creating reflective drawings as well, deepening the meaning-making process around their experiences. Thus, this study contributes to a richer and more contextualized understanding of crisis management as a leadership competency and of how leaders then used the meaning they glean from the management of a crisis to inform personal growth and organizational change.
Significance

The literature established the importance of effective leadership in the management of organizational crises (e.g. Baumann, 2011; Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005; Lawson, 2014; Mishra, 1996). This study built upon existing crisis management literature in two ways. First, it diverged from the majority of crisis management literature focused on procedural understandings of the management of crisis (e.g. Fink, 1986; Mitroff, 1994; Coombs, 2007, 2015) by exploring the intrapersonal aspects of crisis leadership. This is significant as crisis management models are often adopted by institutions as one-size-fits-all approaches to responding to institutional dilemmas, lacking critical reflection upon the human elements of crisis response. Second, this study brought together and expanded upon two bodies of literature – meaning-making (e.g. Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005; Graci & Fivush, 2017; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015; Park, 2016) and crisis management (e.g. Hemphill & Hephner LaBanc, 2010; Rosenthal, Charles, & ‘t Hart, 1989; Treadwell, 2017; Zdziarski, Dunkel, & Rollo, 2007).

This study can be used to inform the development of higher education and student affairs leaders by improving understanding of leaders’ meaning-making of an organizational crisis during and after it occurs. Higher education leaders can be spurred to deepen their reflections around crisis events which contribute to their effectiveness as leaders at their institutions. Enhancing understanding of how crisis leaders make meaning of their experiences managing crisis may inform professional practice by improving training on crisis management, helping crisis leaders reflect on their experiences, and encouraging meaning-making as a critical component of crisis leadership. Throughout
this study, specific implications are discussed regarding the graduate preparation and professional development of student affairs professionals regarding crisis management competencies, as well as potential new directions for research on higher education crisis management.

**Research Approach**

My approach to this research endeavor is rooted in a constructivist worldview (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constructivism is a naturalistic form of inquiry which compels researchers to engage deeply with the people and context involved in the study as well as acknowledging the inherent incompleteness of truth claims (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). As the researcher, I was the primary tool of data collection as well as an active co-creator of knowledge, able to draw on my own experiences to facilitate the meaning-making process with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conducting research within a constructivist worldview meant that I allowed space for meaning and knowledge generation throughout the research process and was not apart from the study but rather a part of it.

This study was both emergent and exploratory. Emergent research design involves “taking [our] training, adapting it, applying it, modifying it, and working beyond it as appropriate with respect to our research objectives” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 2). The study drew on interrelated disciplines, such as higher education administration, crisis management, meaning-making psychology, and organizational change, transcending strict disciplinary boundaries to offer a more contextualized understanding of the topic of inquiry. Student affairs is itself an interdisciplinary field (Magolda & Baxter Magolda, 2011), and my experience in this field has informed an interdisciplinary
outlook on research. This study was exploratory in that I sought to understand possible connections between personal meaning-making and organizational change in the context of crisis management. This topic had yet to be investigated, and thus I remained open throughout the course of the study to possibilities that would arise.

Following approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I solicited participants from various institutions of higher education (IHE) who have extensive higher education experience and who have experienced a crisis impacting the entire campus. For the purpose of this study, crisis was defined as an event or circumstance, often sudden in its presentation, which poses a threat to an institution’s ability to carry out its mission, the wellbeing of people and property, the financial stability of the institution, and/or the institution’s reputation (Zdziarski, 2006). I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit and select participants who had the experience necessary to address the research questions (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). Ultimately, I found five participants who were willing to share their stories. These participants were all senior higher education leaders who were able to draw on extensive crisis management experience to share their stories, insight and wisdom with me. Coincidentally, though the call was broader than this, all five participants shared a similar experience as the crisis most salient to them – the death of a person or persons on campus. This commonality added nuance to the study.

In order to collect data for this study, I used semi-structured narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Riessman, 2008) as well as a reflective drawing exercise (lisahunter, 2017; Tracy & Redden, 2015) situated within a narrative inquiry methodology (Riessman, 2008). The interview process entailed two semi-structured
interviews about the participants’ experience of crisis and how they made meaning of the crisis event. Participants engaged in a reflective drawing exercise between the first and second interviews, where they were asked to reflect upon how they changed as a result of the crisis and how their institutions changed (or did not change) after the crisis. To memorialize the stories, I audio recorded each participant’s interviews and asked that they provide me either a photograph or original copy of their reflective drawings. I then transcribed the interviews, so I could work with the data in written form as well as the original audio. I asked each participant to self-select a pseudonym and identify the pronouns I should use to describe them in this study. Those participants who did not select a pseudonym asked that I do so on their behalf.

As I approached this constructivist inquiry using stories and images as data, I opted to employ crystallization (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000) as an analytical approach due in part to crystallization’s focus on richness and complexity of meaning. In this approach, I looked at the data from a variety of angles by using various data analysis strategies along the qualitative continuum. These strategies included spending time with the data and allowing understandings and insights to emerge organically, embedding the participants’ reflective drawings adjacent to their own narratives to contextualize the drawings, and using transcription poetry as a means of eliciting new meaning from the data, which was then presented in poetic form. These analyses were woven together to provide diverse and robust understandings of the data while allowing readers to draw their own meaning from this study and the narratives herein. I used two forms of analysis – content analysis and transcription poetry – to create distinct yet complimentary journal articles which appear here in Chapters Four and Five.
Researcher Experience with Campus Crisis Management

My heart is pounding, 
but I exude calm, control. 
I hear the distant whine of the siren 
and the profound silence of the residents 
sitting in the hall, 
crouched, 
waiting, 
holding each other, 
scared.

The radio squawks:

The tornado is a half mile southeast of campus.

A collective gasp. 
We wait, together.

We have trained for this, 
our residence life team, 
we have trained 
to be the tranquility 
in the face of chaos.

Our calm becomes their calm, 
each of us taking a portion of the hall 
to connect, 
to care, 
until the storm passes over.

Finally, the all-clear, 
a collective sigh of relief. 
then we part, 
returning to the day.

- Matt

I thought I was accustomed to experiencing disasters. As a child who grew up 
primarily in Michigan (in the infamously named Tornado Alley region of the United 
States), I was always fascinated with severe weather of all kinds, eventually becoming a 
SKYWARN® severe weather spotter for the National Weather Service and an amateur
storm chaser. My first passion, upon which I thought I would build a career, was meteorology. As a kid, I tracked hurricanes on paper maps tacked on my bedroom walls. I watched the changes of the tides on Lake Michigan in the summer, and intense storms bombard the coast with snow and ice during the winter. It was routine during Michigan summers to shelter in the basement for an entire evening waiting out tornado warnings. In high school and college, after storms devastated the communities in which I lived, I served as a disaster relief volunteer to provide resources and support.

None of this experience fully prepared me to support the needs of others in the moment of a terrifying storm. Watching out for the needs of others in the moment of crisis was different than attending to my own needs. A great weight of responsibility rested on my shoulders as a campus leader. The poem above reflects one of my experiences supporting a residence hall community through a weather-related emergency. Fortunately for our campus, the tornado stayed away from campus, the winds from the storm causing minimal roofing damage to higher profile buildings. The students who lived in the residence hall I managed were briefed on the first day of the semester on where to go if there were ever a tornado warning. A few, despite our best efforts, would run outside any time the tornado sirens blared across campus. Most would seek refuge in the middle of the hallway, finding shelter and awaiting the directions of the residence life staff who would announce the “all clear” once it was safe to do so. Some would remain, wanting to talk about their feelings, tears streaming down their face as they reflected upon what could have happened had the storm actually come to campus.

I admit, with all my training and experience responding to crises, my heartrate still kicks up a notch when I hear a civil siren or receive a text alert to shelter-in-place. I
have learned to compartmentalize my reactions in order to get the job done, to be present and supportive to those whose lives depend upon an orderly institutional response. Only recently have I spent concerted effort reflecting upon these experiences as I have been asked by others to share my experiences to improve the quality of crisis responses on the campuses I have served. Processing my narratives of crisis – reading press coverage of crises in which I have been involved, writing about the experience of responding to crisis, sharing my stories with others – helps me to discern how I approach this work and what my underlying assumptions are as a means of entrance into this inquiry. I have processed various parts of this story aloud with others, and with myself, but have never expressed the disparate pieces together in this way.

I believe as scholar-practitioner, I have an obligation to write my experience and the experiences of others as a way to rise to the challenge of improving our profession and my own practice within it. I ponder these writings and professional texts with a critical eye, seeking to understand the meaning behind my own actions and those of others in order to improve the practice of student affairs in higher education. As a scholar, writing is the primary means by which I articulate my understandings of the world to a broader audience, make meaning of my experiences, and initiate social change.

I have worked professionally in the field of student affairs and higher education since 2003, when I took my first full-time job as a resident director at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Crisis management has always been a portion of my job description, and at times this function was more salient to my professional identity. When I was working in residence life, crises were expected. As a leader on a campus behavioral intervention and threat assessment team, I was faced daily with potential crises and
charged with determining how the institution could best support a student concern before it escalated into a crisis. In that same role, I was called upon to work with students experiencing suicidal and homicidal ideation, support the campus when there was a disaster, and support the needs of the behavioral intervention team as they sought both to respond to various crises and to understand them. I was also called upon to manage responses when the untimely death of a student occurred, such as communicating with families and emergency contacts, coordinating a mental health response to those impacted by the loss, and finding ways which we – as a campus community – might mark the tragedy and process collectively our feelings. Crisis management work was hard and continues to be challenging as I worked with new levels of crisis as a Title IX coordinator, where I responded to campus sexual violence and other forms of gender-based discrimination. This was trauma on an interpersonal level, which sometimes had a ripple effect upon the rest of the community. Many of us who do Title IX work, and other forms of crisis response, find ourselves struggling with secondary trauma, stress, and burnout as a result. Some of the same also find that crisis motivates us to action, as providing care in community is often part of our calling.

My story of crisis in higher education began during my time as an undergraduate resident assistant (RA) at Western Michigan University. Responding to personal and interpersonal crises is part and parcel of the daily work of an RA and was honestly one of my favorite parts of the job. I was able to see, in the moment of crisis, a resolution, if even partial, to the concerns to which I had been called. I can trace back my desire to pursue a career in student affairs to multiple similar situations. My approach to crisis management has been informed by myriad crisis events occurring on the seven
Motifs of My Experiences with Campus Crises

What follows is an array of motifs; storied segments of my life detailing recurring and symbolic themes regarding my experience with crisis management in higher education. Motifs are “[complexes] of separate parts subtly reiterating on one level what is taking place on another” (Freedman, 1971, p.129). These parts recur throughout a narrative, cumulating in a significance that transcends mere symbolism and offers a greater meaning than any individual component. Each motif thus represents both the recurring theme of crisis management and my experiences of it from different times and places. Individually, they chronicle major crisis events impacting my understanding and my career. As a whole, they set the tone for the pursuit of this research.

First motif: September 11, 2001. I had just begun my junior year at Western Michigan University (WMU), a mid-sized public land-grant institution in Kalamazoo. Having already worked on campus for a year and a half, I entered a new role as Senior Resident Assistant for the Davis/French/Zimmerman residential complex. Part of my job was informally supervising the other Resident Assistants (RAs) in Davis Hall while managing a floor community of about fifty undergraduate students, many of whom were older than me. Davis Hall was known as an upper-division residence because the rooms were so much larger than anywhere else on campus, so juniors and seniors, and a few graduate students, migrated there and stayed until they finished school or moved off-campus. It was a wonderful community, supported by a dedicated team of residence life staff.
Unfortunately, two days prior to the start of residence hall staff training, on August 7, my family told me my brother had passed away. This tragedy had left a gaping hole in my soul, and I was numb when the academic year began. On September 11, I left my residence hall to attend a counseling appointment to try to work through my feelings about my brother’s death. This was my third and final counseling appointment, which was scheduled with the director of the counseling center. I had already decided it was the final counseling meeting as I found his approach overly reductive and not supportive of my own meaning-making around my brother’s suicide. (The counseling director relied heavily on determining which stage of grief I found myself in at any given moment.) As I was leaving, one of the RAs in my building, Cory, stopped me at the front desk. He asked, “Have you seen the news? Terrorists attacked the World Trade Center. Again.” He was referring to the 1993 terrorist bombing of the same building, which I was only loosely aware of as a then-twelve-year-old. I was singularly focused on getting through this final appointment and closing this excruciating chapter of my life, so I acknowledged his statement, said we could talk about it when I returned, and then I left.

While sitting in my counseling appointment, trying hard not to check out of the conversation with the director, the on-call pager attached to my belt began vibrating. It was a call to return to the residence hall; an emergency required it. I used the text as an opportunity to terminate our session early, tell the counseling director I would not be returning, and then promptly left the office suite. In the main entryway of the building, I saw for the first time the video reel of the footage. One plane, then another, crashing into the Trade Center towers, images that would be replayed over and over throughout the subsequent days. I stood in momentary shock at the image, my entire body pulsing with
urgency and fear and confusion. I shook myself out of it, pulled to respond to a call greater than my reaction, and ran back to my residence hall at the heart of campus.

We called a staff meeting. Our graduate assistant facilitated. Our residence hall system – in fact, every single campus building – was on 24 hours of lockdown, meaning our residence halls were to stay locked and strict entry protocols were to be observed. We were always to have two staff members at the desk, and only residents and their guests could come in after presenting a photo ID and signing into the log book. It was all strictly structured, the tone indicating a need to protect the sanctity of our residence halls and the residents therein. It was a means by which we could control inflow and outflow, which theoretically meant we would know always who was in our building.

We went on rounds regularly, making sure our residents were alright, checking in on those who may be in distress while we ourselves experienced the chaotic emotions of the day’s events. About 25% of the residents in the residence hall in which I worked were international students from the Middle East. Many had chosen to go off-campus to friends’ houses upon the encouragement of the international student services office, uncertain of how they might be treated if they stayed on our predominantly White public campus. Those who did choose to stay closed their doors, a contrast to most of the (White) residents whose doors remained open to the hallway, encouraging passersby to stop for conversation and commiseration. We (i.e. the staff) brought “sick trays” from the dining hall to the residents who chose to stay in their rooms out of concerns for safety. I tried to stop by and check in with my international residents, but many were too worried to open their doors.
For the majority of the day, I sat in my room or in the commons area with my residents, in sparse conversation, watching the video on repeat on CNN from the relative comfort of our sofa. A particular set of images burned into our collective consciousness: what became known as “The Falling Man” (Drew, 2001) was a photograph of an unknown man falling from one of the towers. This image captured the uncertainty and fear of the moment, the Falling Man’s suspended animation in that image capturing our suspended certainty and sense of safety. While extremely distressing and painful, we could not withdraw from watching these images on television, as though our continued observation of this man falling from a window dozens of floors above the streets of New York City would somehow change the outcome.

From the safety of my residence hall room, I talked with friends across the country, many who are people of color who were being subjected to White vitriol and nationalist sentiments seeking to “make right” the terror of the day. One friend, a student at a public university in California, told me on AOL Instant Messenger how he had been called a “towelhead” assumedly by White students who then threw rocks at him on campus based solely on the fact that his complexion matched what those students perceived to be a threat. While he identified as biracial, Black and White, he retreated to his room as many of the residents in the building had, concerned over mounting hatred for anyone who was not perceived as “American.”

There was a vigil that evening, a candlelit event at Kanley Chapel with various campus ministries and constituent groups presenting their thoughts and feelings about the morning’s tragedy. I stood among hundreds of students, collectively marking our confusion and pain with prayers from various religious traditions.
On September 19, then-President Dr. Elson Floyd, issued the following statement:

With sympathy, compassion and a new resolve
A message to the WMU family
from President Elson S. Floyd
Sept. 19, 2001

The events of September 11 were absolutely horrific for our nation and touched all of us in deeply personal ways. In the days since then, we have come to learn just how connected our University family is to the global community and, sadly, we have realized the extent to which those terrible acts have touched the lives of too many in the WMU family.

What we most feared has come true for some members of our family. One alumna, a cherished teacher for students in Nevada, lost her life aboard Flight 77 from Dulles Airport that day. The beloved brother of one of our current students is one of some 5,000 World Trade Center employees still listed as missing. Our hearts ache for both families.

But, as members of the larger human family, our hearts and minds also are with the thousands of others who have been touched by this tragedy. The sympathy of the entire Western Michigan University community is with all those who have lost loved ones, family members, colleagues and friends.

In the hours immediately following the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., during a vigil held at Kanley Chapel, I called upon the University community to epitomize our institutional and community values of civility, openness and compassion and to seek to understand what has happened at the same time we employ a spirit of unabashed love and respect for others. In the face of these hateful and violent acts, we can perhaps best remember those lost by renewing our personal commitment to tolerance and compassion for all people.

Finally, in these difficult days for all of us, I ask everyone in the WMU community to recognize and be sensitive to the needs of others to grieve this tragedy in their own ways and in their own time. All of us have a need for reflection and dialogue. We also have a need to set reflection aside from time to time and return some normalcy to our lives. Each of us struggle to balance those divergent needs for many weeks and months to come. (http://www.wmich.edu/wmu/news/2011/09/011.html)

I saw in the President’s statement my own internal struggle as I tried to balance the needs of my residents with my own emotional needs. I wanted to answer his call for “unabashed love and respect for others” as I saw in the weeks following the tragedy
extreme acts of violence, aggression, and racism enacted on campuses and in communities throughout the country. The vigil, the President’s statement, my conversations with colleagues and friends, and my own ruminations on the significance of the 9/11 attacks facilitated my own meaning-making process and served as a catalyst for the anti-racist and interreligious work I engaged in on campus for the remainder of my undergraduate career.

I also took the President’s call to connect with my larger human family. The reflective drawing above emerged in response to the prompt, what have I learned about myself through this crisis? Connection was a huge way I made it through the 9/11 tragedy. I learned that I could not do the work of crisis response without a strong support network, particularly as I was in crisis myself throughout the time I was expected to be a leader on campus. Our strength as crisis leaders is the people in our immediate circle of support, and it is imperative that we find people with whom we can process our grief. I found my connections with the residents on my floor section and other friends I made on campus. We were having a collective experience of grief within our collective experience of being college students. We came to rely on each other beyond the crisis itself. Figure 1 represents my illustration of how our community came together after this national crisis.
Figure 1.1. Response to reflective drawing exercise: “Connecting the pieces in the face of crisis” [Colored pencil on paper] by the author (July 31, 2018).

Second motif: Virginia Tech: April 16, 2007, began as many other days. I was a graduate assistant in the Gage Complex residence halls at Minnesota State University, Mankato, reviewing my calendar for the day and checking my Facebook feed, having only recently acquired the social media platform. It was then that I learned of the Virginia Tech attack. I told my supervisor, who had also heard online about the tragedy. We convened a staff meeting and began strategizing how best to support our residents.

I started a Facebook group called the VT Solidarity Project (now housed at https://www.facebook.com/groups/2310276381/?ref=br_rs). My goal was to create a cyber space where people could post pictures, articles, sentiments, and well-wishes to the Virginia Tech community. In our complex, we created a banner and encouraged residents to write messages to Virginia Tech. It felt like this would have as much benefit for the
students in my residence hall, who were all trying to understand how something like this could happen, as it could for other institutions. The banner was then posted online:

![Banner with messages of solidarity](image)

*Figure 1.2. “VT Solidarity Project banner at Minnesota State, Mankato” [Photograph] by Matt Ricke (April 19, 2007).*

The President of Minnesota State University, Mankato, Richard Davenport, released a statement acknowledging the shooting:

Virginia Tech Tragedy
From the President to the campus community
April 20, 2007

The entire Minnesota State University, Mankato community is deeply saddened by the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on April 16, 2007. The hearts of students, faculty and staff at Minnesota State University, Mankato go out to the students, faculty, staff, families and friends of Virginia Tech.

As our campus mourns with Virginia Tech, I invite you to participate in campus events and activities.
A Virginia Tech banner is located on the first floor of Centennial Student Union, where students, faculty and staff may post messages of condolence.

Ribbon pins representing Virginia Tech’s school colors are available in the Centennial Student Union next to the Virginia Tech Banner or at the Student Leadership Development and Service-Learning Office.

The St. Thomas More Newman Center will hold a candlelight prayer service Tuesday, April 17, at 9:15 p.m. near Memorial Library. The service will be near the site of the Kent State Memorial on the Campus Mall.

Join the VT Solidarity Project on Facebook. This collaborative project was launched by Minnesota State Mankato with more than 55 institutions currently involved. Student groups or departments can organize a display of support, upload a photo to Facebook, and a physical copy of the collection be made into a scrapbook and sent to VA Tech.

The April 17 Reporter includes a powerful editorial (page 6) that I recommend everyone read. No medium in the professional press has enunciated this tragedy better.

As always, if you notice someone that is distressed or having difficulty coping following this tragedy, please reach out and encourage them to utilize the many resources available for assistance and support www.mnsu.edu/vttragedy/counseling.html.

As this situation prompts us to reflect on measures taken to support safety on our campus, please remember the following:

When there are emergencies on campus, we work closely with the Mankato Department of Public Safety and other law enforcement agencies. Security would immediately contact police when notified of an emergency situation.

In a campus emergency situation, the President assembles the Campus Emergency Response Team, which discusses the emergency and assigns tasks for providing information to students, parents, faculty, staff, the community and state, alumni and other supporters of the university.

Our hearts go out to the families and friends of the victims of the Virginia Tech tragedy. We hope and pray that such a tragedy never happens again.

Thank you. (https://www.mnsu.edu/vttragedy/)
While I was proud that the page was getting attention at the institutional level, I was extremely disappointed that the page I had created and was managing in the days following the incident had become a university project, “launched by Minnesota State Mankato.” It was not so much that I felt the need to be credited with the project, but rather that my work had been subsumed into the institution itself, as though our entire university had created this response. My work had become something that was not my own, despite the fact that I created the page and the project itself in part to deal with my own grief in response to the Virginia Tech massacre.

This was the first time I experienced this type of organizational communication in response to a campus-based tragedy. I noted how President Davenport’s statement reiterated how individuals and the institution should respond to emergencies. In subsequent similar circumstances, I have noticed variations of a boilerplate response from colleges and universities: acknowledge the tragedy, discuss how the institution is responding, remind the community of emergency response protocols, and close with thoughts and prayers. I wondered as I read this if our institution was making any substantive changes to emergency response protocols as a result of the Virginia Tech shooting.

I continued to wonder as I read these statements if any institutions not directly affected by campus tragedy make any steps to diverge from business as usual. Statements such as these take on a quality of placating constituents and quelling concern, reminding campus constituents that the university is watching out for them. When an institution fails to respond to a crisis, whether on its own campus or beyond the campus itself, community members may call on the institution to respond or create their own,
community-based responses to tragedy, such as the creation of an online community for mourning or a remembrance event on campus.

**Third motif: Racial justice protests.** On April 27, 2015, I was walking to my car, poster in hand, I mentally prepared to present my poster for a doctoral course on culturally responsive pedagogies. I was already feeling somewhat raw about the presentation, critically reflecting on my own praxis as practitioner-scholar-activist and my engagement with the past few months of on-campus and community-based racial justice protests. I had served Naropa University as Director of Student Life and Title IX Coordinator for four years. Our small, private Buddhist-inspired university, serving only 1,100 students, had become a focal point for racial justice protests in the city of Boulder, Colorado. A dedicated team of students had occupied the main green on our Arapahoe Avenue campus to protest against racial injustice. The protesters had identified a list of demands of the university to address the students’ experience of racial bias in the fabric of our beloved institution. I had been reflecting on the protest daily since it began on April 21, each day presenting new challenges both professionally as the person responsible for campus life and personally as someone dedicated to racial justice work.

My rumination on the events of the past week was interrupted by loud voices - a fight? – heard across our small campus. I reflected upon this incident in a personal journal entry dated April 30, 2015:

*I was on my way to present my final project for Culturally Relevant Aspects of Transformative Learning with Dr. Chayla Haynes Davison. The course had been challenging for the past week or so due to the protests that were unfolding on our campus, the result of racial tension that had been brewing since before the Grand Jury in*
Ferguson, MO, failed to indict Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown. I found myself pulled in competing directions through competing roles: A Director of Student Life with obligations to protect the institution and also to ensure the welfare of the students, a White person who has struggled through my own racial identity issues since childhood, an advocate for social justice who wanted to be part of the conversation, and a faculty member who taught diversity coursework in an effort to make our world a more responsive, pluralistic place to live.

I had chosen to use my visual notetaking skills to create a large poster on butcher paper that represented my pedagogy through a wheel of three facets of myself: educator, activist, and learner. It was on these three facets that I was reflecting while crossing the parking lot. What was I going to say? How was I going to present this in a way that would land for the rest of the class? I wanted so badly to be respected as a culturally responsive pedagogue. I had that thought in mind when I saw a caretaker come running up to me, asking if I knew what was happening. I said I did not. He said I should go to Juniper Cottage because something was going down and they might need help. I put my poster in my car and hurried over to the cottage to see what was going on. I heard voices shouting loudly, though I couldn’t make out what was being said. As I came around the corner, I saw a few students outside the cottage. One was yelling. Kyle (pseudonym), the yelling student, had a manuscript of some kind in their hand. I asked the other students what was happening, and they explained to me they were protesting the racial injustice of the faculty member inside the classroom cottage. I snuck a peek in the window - the faculty member was crying, and there were probably six or seven students providing her comfort. I walked up to Kyle and told them that they were in violation of the student code
of conduct for disrupting class activities and respectfully requested that they stop. The shouting continued, louder this time, as though Kyle had not heard me. I did not raise my voice. I had worked with Kyle before and knew that escalating the incident was not the best option available, so in a direct but compassionate voice, I repeated my statement and my request. Still nothing. At some point in time, my boss, Bob, had joined us... or perhaps he was there before. In the heat of the moment, time slipped away, and I became intimately focused on my work - de-escalating this before it got any more out of hand.

I tried speaking with the three other students who were present, who were not shouting. I asked them to help me de-escalate the situation and to help calm Kyle down so that we could have a conversation. Bob was repeating the same statements I was making to Kyle as they were still shouting from the manuscript, which appeared to be about racism in the academy. The students helped to calm Kyle to a point where they could make eye contact with me and so that we could have a conversation.

I asked what was happening. They explained to me that a White faculty member in the room had done terribly racist things to one of the Black students who was present. I asked for more information, though I can’t remember exactly what was said because it was somewhere in that time frame that I became aware, out of the corner of my eye, of a police vehicle pulling up next to the cottage. I also noticed the director of safety and at least one member of the Cabinet across the alley, talking in hushed voices. The police officer got out of his vehicle and started walking toward us. He was large, and his hand was on his holster.

In order to explain fully what happened next, and why I reacted as I did, and how that reaction felt later, I have to explain my sordid relationship with law enforcement. I
have a number of really good friends who are law enforcement officers, who do their work in the world to protect those who cannot protect themselves. They are brave, and they are hardworking, and they put their lives on the line for the communities they serve.

I have also had a couple of really bad encounters with law enforcement officers as a queer person. I have been targeted by police during protest actions, interrogated without any charges or having been provided rights. I have been pushed and hit by officers who used the most atrocious slurs. I have also had a number of friends who have been brutalized, attacked, racially profiled and treated unfairly in front of me as a result of their lived, social identities. To say I have a paradoxical relationship with law enforcement is to put it mildly - I cannot predict how I may react in the presence of an officer of the law, though I usually try to swallow my reactions in order not to escalate a situation.

With that in mind, having seen the police officer out of the corner of my eye, hand on holster, walking broadly toward the group of students, I had what I can only describe as a moment of frozen time. I weighed the situation - one large, armed police officer was approaching a group of students of different races, including Black and Brown bodies with whom I had varying levels of rapport. I imagined that the cops were called by an administrator, and even remember thinking that it was likely that these students would be arrested. The students had also been protesting for a few weeks - they were tired, they were angry, and for being part of a resistance movement that was in part focused on the disproportionate cruelty faced by Black and Brown lives at the hands of law enforcement and were likely to be oppositional to the presence of this particular officer.
My frozen moment dissipated, and I reacted. I used my body as a shield. I felt myself as disembodied for a moment, not a person but rather a barrier between the students and the officer on approach. I heard his footsteps stop. I then turned to the officer who was standing too close behind me, hand still on holster, and clearly identified myself and my official capacity with the university. I stated that I had control of the situation at the moment and requested that he give me a perimeter of at least 15 feet to continue my work. I even pointed in the general direction that I wanted him to go. He blinked. I looked at the now larger group of administrators standing on the opposite side of the alleyway. They blinked as well. I did not. I stood my ground, pointing, and the officer said he couldn’t go because he had to stay in line of sight of the incident. I continued pointing, and said something like, “Well, go where you can see me, but go over there.” The officer, to his credit, backed up. My heart was beating out of my chest, but I exuded a calm exterior as I turned back to the students. I made eye contact with each of them. I silently communicated to them that everything was going to be alright, but that I needed everyone to stay calm. Another colleague had joined us, a Black man, who spoke to the protesters about the possible dangers of escalating with a LEO (law enforcement officer), namely getting arrested, or worse, killed. This colleague seemed to be heard in a way I could not.

This particular vignette exemplifies what happened on our campus. In December, 2014, there was a protest on highway US-36 in Boulder, staged by Naropa students and CU-Boulder students in conjunction with community activists. Naropa administrators had learned that the protest was meant to terminate on Naropa’s campus, and I was asked to help manage the situation as I had a rapport with the students leading the event because
of the deep student contact my role of Director of Student Life cultivated. Leading up to
the protest, I met with groups of students to inform them of their constitutional rights,
how to navigate their planned disruptions in a safe manner and coaching some groups of
students (particularly, international students) about the inherent risks in engaging in
protest actions.

"Figure 1.3. Response to reflective drawing exercise: “Naropa University after the
protest” [Colored pencil and marker on paper] by the author (August 1, 2018)."

In retrospect, it is clear to me that the protest event was deemed a crisis by
university administrators. Emotions were running high, and the response was frenetic.
The fabric of the institution and its way of doing business was being critiqued by
protesters. I felt myself torn between my own desire for racial justice and participation in
activism off-campus and my responsibilities to the institution. As a student affairs staff
member, I was positioned as a bridge between the students and senior-level administrators, caught in a liminal space where I was challenged to facilitate change, while also charged with maintaining the status quo. I struggled, and still struggle, to understand my place within these competing roles and desires. Building upon my prior engagement with crisis, however, I was able to do so with grace and composure and tried my best not to allow the internal struggle to manifest externally, lest it exacerbate the crisis at hand. I spent evenings and weekends during this crisis processing my feelings with friends and colleagues and engaging in my own contemplative practices with the hope of cultivating a deeper understanding of myself and my approach to managing this particular type of campus crisis.

My own reflective drawing about this experience (Figure 3) is a response to the question, what happened at the institution since the crisis? The university created the Office of Inclusive Community with a full-time director and support staff, which is now a space for social justice and community transformation work at Naropa. The development of this resource at the university is a direct result of the protests on campus, called Decolonized Commons. Now, this legacy is marked on the university website (https://www.naropa.edu/the-naropa-experience/inclusive/turning-point.php). Previously, I served as a chair of the university’s diversity committee and co-authored the position description for the director of the diversity office prior to the racial justice protests unfolding on campus. The students were able to create change to the institution, and my drawing represents the roots of the protest giving rise to a community of social justice practitioners and, eventually, to the Office of Inclusive Community and lasting change on campus.
Integration of Personal Experiences of Campus Crises

September 11. Virginia Tech. Campus protests. These three motifs represent a cross-section of my student affairs career, defining moments which have informed how I understand campus approaches to crisis management. In writing these narratives, I felt a visceral connection to the time and context in which the events took place. I found myself reliving the moments, with all the emotions and sensory impressions flooding back into my awareness as though the events were taking place in the present. I could not help but pause as I wrote, stepping away every few minutes to remind myself I was no longer there. Life had moved beyond the crisis. From conversations I have had with others, it seems this is how crises function for most of us. Crises become deeply rooted in our consciousness, on a national or communal level as well as a personal one. We memorialize crises and create anniversaries for them. We find ourselves struggling to make meaning in their midst. Campus crises can even propel us into our own crisis of meaning, such as how I struggled through understanding my own racial identity in the midst of our campus racial justice protests.

I reflected on why I chose these three motifs out of the innumerable crises to which I had responded as a college staff member. Each of the three represents a problematic dimension of crisis management, as well as hope that crises might bring communities closer together and unravel oppressive social structures. These horrific acts of violence, which disrupt campus operations, also shaped the broader social narrative of higher education. The terrorist attacks of September 11 shaped a narrative of security marked by a “War on Terror” in which we still find ourselves and our society mired. U.S. culture became increasingly concerned with being secure, locking out “the other,” and
preventing harm, even at the cost of civil liberties. Virginia Tech signaled a fundamental shift in the ways campuses discuss, attempt to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hostilities. While still rare occurrences, institutions of higher education have had to adapt to the new realities of campus violence and active shooters, particularly in light of the increasing frequency of active shooter incidents on K-12 and college campuses (Cannon, 2016). These incidents have an intense and lasting impact both on the institution affected by the violence and other institutions who see the devastating effects of mass casualty incidents and fear the worst could happen at their institution.

While IHEs have throughout history been a location for organizing and collective action around important social issues, we have seen renewed momentum for on-campus activism and organizing, particularly around racial and gender justice concerns and immigration (Broadhurst, 2014). University presidents in the 1960s found the institutions they served embroiled in the Civil Rights Movement and needed to use their executive platforms to address campus constituents and attempt to manage the crisis of the time with varying levels of success (Cole, 2015). Today, multiple social movements again have challenged IHEs to consider the ways in which they uphold oppressive social structures, as well as provide platforms for students to engage in campus activism. Millennials, raised in a digitally enhanced world, have found the effectiveness of addressing social issues via digital media technologies and use their digital identities to raise awareness and initiate social change movements such as Occupy Wall Street, protests of campus sexual assault, and support for Dreamers (Milkman, 2016).

As an example, Black Lives Matter, a movement dedicated to challenging systemic racism in U.S. society today, found a social platform in city streets, university
campuses, and through social media. As part of the movement, Black Lives Matter highlighted the lack of racial diversity at many predominantly White institutions of higher education, resulting in campus protests at UCLA, University of Michigan, and Harvard, among others (Leonard & Noble, 2018). In addition to reinvigorating a national conversation on race and racism, Black Lives Matter restarted dialogue on college and university campuses about their institutional histories and complicity in maintaining oppressive social structures. Institutions of higher education must be prepared to meet the challenges of supporting students in their social action as well as respond to the scrutiny these movements cast upon IHEs who are mired in oppressive histories.

Crisis has been a theme throughout my career, and also a topic upon which I have ruminated extensively. My master’s capstone paper explored the ways in which educational responses from outsiders during international crises, such as the Rwandan genocide, might be colonialist, and how we as educational first-responders might employ a more culturally responsive, experientially-based pedagogy. My approach to understanding crisis, as well as other subjects about which I write, is to try to understand the topic from as many vantage points as possible to challenge myself to think critically about the phenomenon of crisis. Sometimes, I find myself professionally needing to be an expert and needing to make definitive decisions, while my scholarly self recognizes the multiplicity of truths and the inherent complexity of life and most social phenomena.

Knowledge is a collage of stories painting a picture composed of particular cultural moments, ephemeral and fluid. I find myself seeking to understand power relations implicit in the language used to describe the experiences and constructions I share with others involved in crisis work in higher education. I see stories not just as the
experiences of the individual sharing those stories, but as mired within social, cultural, and political environments. Our stories articulate ourselves in connection to each other and to broader social systems (McAdams, 2008; Sandelowski, 1991). Our stories help us make meaning of life experiences, particularly difficult ones, and build the foundations of our relationships. Our stories also serve as scaffolding for future experiences as the stories we tell ourselves and others create the structure of our lives. Our stories are tools for liberation in resistance to oppressive social structures (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In short, our stories set us free.

**Roadmap of this Study**

In Chapter Two, I explore the extant literature in the broader field of crisis management and more specific literature from the higher education context. Specifically, I review literature on types of crisis, models used to understand and manage crises, and structural considerations for crisis management including leadership and team models. In alignment with a constructivist research approach, I discuss the social construction of crises as well as establish a case for meaning-making and collective sensemaking as essential competencies in higher education crisis leadership.

In Chapter Three, I share the paradigmatic and methodological assumptions that guide the construction of this study. I discuss the components of social science philosophical paradigms, including ontology, epistemology, and axiology, while specifically articulating the assumptions of a constructivist worldview. Imperative to the success of this constructivist study is the use of an emergent methodology. I have selected narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study in part because of the power of stories to facilitate meaning-making (McAdams, 2008) and for its alignment with a
constructivist paradigm. Detailed in this section are the data collection and data analysis methods to be used in this study, namely the use of semi-structured narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) and reflective drawing (Tracy & Redden, 2015) as tools for collecting data and crystallization (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000) as the analytical approach to making meaning of the data collected. I also describe authenticity criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2013), which are used to ensure rigor and judge the quality of this emergent, exploratory study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this inquiry is to better understand crisis management within a higher education context by exploring how campus leaders at institutions of higher education (IHE) make meaning of their experience managing an organizational crisis. The extant literature on crisis management was reviewed to establish the scholarly and practical need for this study. Existing bodies of literature within communication, management studies, higher education and student affairs leadership, psychology, and other disciplines were reviewed. Exploring current literature from myriad disciplines aligned with the interdisciplinary nature of the field of higher education and student affairs.

The first section describes what is and is not a crisis while addressing how crises are, at least in part, socially constructed phenomena. Rather than strictly defining crisis for the purpose of this study, the literature review demonstrates how understandings of crisis vary by discipline, and how the construct of crisis is both a personal and social endeavor. The review continues by discussing the types of crises, with examples, that occur within the context of higher education. The categories described are subject to overlap and interconnection, as crises fail to adhere to strict definitional boundaries. In the subsequent section, common stage models of crisis are examined. While helpful as a means of analyzing crises, stage models are inherently lacking. Stage models of crisis management can lead crisis leaders to adopt a “one size fits all” approach to the
management of crises on their campus. Of particular importance to crisis management in higher education today is how team structures are formed within IHEs and how these teams intersect and interface as their divergent missions intersect to effectively manage a campus crisis. Thus, the literature on crisis management teams as well as behavioral intervention and threat assessment teams, structures widely adopted in higher education following the Virginia Tech shooting, is reviewed. Personal and collective sensemaking as a post-crisis function is discussed, connecting to the research question guiding this inquiry.

Defining Crisis

To explore the nature of crisis management in institutions of higher education, it is important to begin by defining what is a crisis. There is no common definition of organizational crisis widely accepted in the literature (Coombs, 2012; Zdziarski et al., 2007). Yet, it is generally accepted that crisis is a state wherein some unwelcome circumstance has occurred requiring an immediate response to remedy. What constitutes an unwelcome circumstance, however, seems to vary by academic discipline, as does the type of remedy required. What constitutes an unwelcome circumstance may be influenced by perception and personal vantage point, as the experience of crisis is shaped by those interpreting the event or incident (Coombs, 2012). Defining crisis is further complicated by the colloquial use of the term to describe personal events, such as a mid-life crisis, and political events, such as the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2017; Zdziarski et al., 2007). The subsequent analysis of the literature focuses specifically on crises in the organizational context, within which “a crisis disrupts or affects the entire organization or has the potential to do so” (Coombs, 2012, p. 3).
There are varying levels of events which pose a significant risk or impact to a campus community. **Critical incidents** are those events which impact a portion of the campus community while not impacting the institution’s operations on the whole (Zdziarski, 2006). **Crises**, as possible escalations of critical incidents, have a campus-wide impact. While crises are bound to the campus community, disasters typically impact the surrounding community in which the IHE exists (Shaw, 2017). These definitions may be used interchangeably depending upon the perspective of those using the terms (Shaluf, Ahmadun, & Said, 2003). However, a crisis is generally understood to impact an organization or community with clearly-defined boundaries by posing a threat to the organization (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2017).

While no common definition exists across disciplines, literature on organizational crises describes certain salient characteristics. Rosenthal et al. (1989) identified five such characteristics in their exploration of crisis:

- the presence of a threat to basic structures,
- the existence of a threat to values and norms of a social context,
- time pressure to respond to the crisis event,
- the uncertainty experienced by a variety of stakeholders in response to the crisis event
- the need to make immediate, critical decisions

Within the context of higher education, crises pose threats to the institution’s ability to carry out its mission, to the wellbeing of people and property, to the financial stability of the institution, and to its reputation (Zdziarski, 2006). Crisis also has the quality of “ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution” (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 20),
meaning crises lack a singular, identifiable cause and a singular, effective response. Within this scope, a crisis can be anything threatening campus, from a human-induced crisis such as an active shooter to an environmental crisis such as a hurricane to a technological crisis such as a prolonged network outage. Each interferes with the daily operations of the institution and contributes to a state of chaos and uncertainty which requires active intervention by some entity to resolve. Within organizational crisis management literature, the terms crisis, disaster, and emergency are used somewhat interchangeably (Zdziarski, 2006), and therefore may be used interchangeably in this analysis (dependent upon the specific author’s use of the term).

**Social Construction of Crisis**

Any disruptive event can escalate a crisis. There are many factors contributing to the construction of an event as a crisis (Zdziarski, 2006) as “what is a full-blown crisis on one campus may be a critical incident at another” (p. 5), often mitigated by such factors as size and location of the institution of higher education. The same set of circumstances may transpire on one campus and be a non-event, while on another campus the disruption is so widespread as to be labelled a crisis. Contributing to the differential experiences of crisis on campus is the social construction of crisis itself. As previously articulated, the term *crisis* is used in various vernacular ways, each potentially representing what constitutes crisis to the individual. Clarke and Newman’s (2010) exploration of crisis as social construct argues a crisis is a crisis because of multiple discursive constructions by those experiencing the event. Common themes regarding what constructs a crisis involve drastic changes to organizational structures, potential loss of life, mental/psychological strain and distress experienced by both those inside and outside of the crisis, and
dislocation or relocation while the crisis is addressed. Context and experience are important, as these inform how individuals and groups understand and experience what comes to be known as a crisis. Crisis can also be a “breakdown in the social construction of reality” (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 64) as competing perspectives on the crisis may interfere with collective sense-making and impede individuals’ ability to respond effectively.

The role leaders play in the social construction of crisis is an attempt to meet their own political agendas (Edelman, 1977). Those who hold positions of power within organizations have more influence over the crisis narrative. As leaders label what is and is not a crisis, they hold the attention of the public and attain the public’s permission to act in response to the crisis. This is known as perceptual control (‘t Hart, 1993), wherein leaders who have vested trust from their publics are able to control messages, flow of information, and strategic decisions in a way that shape others’ understanding of the crisis. Since leaders have the ability to shape crisis discourse, political agendas of those in power play an important role. In fact, political alliances and collaborative relationships with community partners and external stakeholders may impact the effectiveness of both preparing for and responding to a crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Complicating the discursive construction of crisis phenomena is the news media. As news is an important way the public gets information, the news media shapes the way the consumers of that information understand the event (Altheide, 2002). News media shape the experience of events in a way that promotes or negates fear for the benefit of the news cycle. The recent advent of social media has also shaped the way crises are constructed. Social media, or Web 2.0 technologies offering open online communication
for anyone who wishes to participate (Coombs, 2012), provide unmitigated access to information which both stimulates crises and accelerates the evolution of a crisis (Pang, Hassan, & Chong, 2014) while complicating its aftermath. Organizations also use social media to monitor for potential crises and to shape the way in which crises are understood by their publics, but this requires active engagement by the organization in Web 2.0 technologies prior to an event escalating to a crisis (Coombs, 2012). Crisis, then, potentially involves essentially a discursive social process of meaning-making around a tragic or traumatic event.

**Crises Impacting Higher Education in the United States**

Institutions of higher education in the United States are complex organizations subject to a variety of crisis situations. Stafford (2014) identified three types of crisis impacting higher education organizations: natural disasters, human-made critical incidents, and political crises. *Natural disasters* are events beyond human control, such as hurricanes or fires, which disrupt the normal operations of the institution. *Human-made critical incidents* cover a wide range of human-induced crises, such as violent crimes or embezzlement, as well as crises of human error, such as poor contingency planning for an event. *Political crises* are those arising from external mandates such as political directives or external investigations, or from public scrutiny. Coombs (2012) included technical-error incidents, which are events occurring because of technological problems such as a collapse of information technology infrastructure causing major data loss (Hellwig-Olson, Jacobsen, & Mian, 2007), though these could be categorized as human-made critical incidents. These instances meet Rosenthal et al. (1989) framework defining crises as they create threatening and uncertain conditions which necessitate prompt
action. While these categories do not always stand as distinct and separate, the following are examples of each type of crisis as they have impacted college campuses in the U.S.

**Natural Disasters**

Natural disasters are often predictable natural events with the potential to cause extensive damage to infrastructure. Colleges and universities in locations prone to certain types of natural disasters, such as tornadoes in the Midwest or hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, should have crisis plans for those issues. The University of Alabama experienced a tornado on April 27, 2011 that devastated the university and the surrounding community (Nelson, 2014). The institution convened its Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning Group in the days leading up to the storm and began monitoring weather conditions prior to closing eventually due to severe weather. Since the University of Alabama already had trained crisis management groups on campus, as well as a clear emergency response framework, to minimize damage and respond to broader community needs such as providing emergency shelters to community members (Nelson, 2014). In anticipation of weather-related emergencies, it is important to develop relationships with off-campus partners who can provide resources and technical assistance to campuses experiencing natural disasters (Brown, 2014).

Even with strong community partnerships and extensive emergency procedures, institutions can experience challenges in the face of natural disasters. Events like Hurricane Katrina (which made landfall on August 29, 2005), and the subsequent flooding in New Orleans, can create prolonged closure of an institution and additional infrastructural challenges. Students at Tulane University and other area institutions were evacuated in response to the hurricane. The evacuation led to concerns regarding
recuperating enrollment as students matriculated to other institutions during the closures (Krane et al., 2007). Specifically, 590 institutions of higher education took on Tulane University students (Whitely, Felice, & Bailey, 2007). Additionally, damage to Tulane University and other colleges’ property was extensive and required federal intervention and funding to recover (Topper, 2011). Due to the timing of the event, Congress passed the Pell Grant Hurricane and Disaster Relief Act (P.L. 109-66) and subsequent bills (Mercer et al., 2005) under the auspice of the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (P. L. 93-288). The bills waived students’ Pell Grant and student loan servicing burdens (Copeland, 2005), which allowed students in affected areas to transfer and maintain financial aid eligibility and to waive repayment for the time of the disaster. With coordinated management, local and federal support, and strong partnerships, Tulane University and other institutions could resume some operations within a matter of weeks (Krane et al., 2007).

**Human-Made Crises**

Human-made crises are those incidents caused directly or indirectly by human beings. While these crises are generally considered to be caused deliberately by humans (Stafford, 2014), it is possible for human beings to cause crises both intentionally and unintentionally. Intentionally caused crises include violent acts perpetrated by human beings, issues emerging from negligence, or human resources issues such as drastic personnel reductions in response to budget constraints. Human-made critical incidents occupy a precarious social position due to often intense public critique and the perception that these incidents are preventable (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2001). In addition to tragedies such as the events at Virginia Tech, human-made critical incidents account for many of
the crises experienced by institutions of higher education. One example of a human-made critical incident involved the sex abuse allegations against Jerry Sandusky in 2011 at Penn State University. While many athletics and executive staff members knew Sandusky was sexually abusing minors (Kirk, 2012), multiple members of the athletics department at Penn State withheld information regarding Sandusky’s criminal sexual abuse of minors possibly to minimize reputational harm (Fahn, 2012). In addition to the grand jury investigation and its determination that key personnel failed to respond accordingly (Chappell, 2012), Penn State suffered substantial reputational harm due in part to its poor response to the crisis. The egregious sexual molestation in the Penn State case could have been curtailed had any of the personnel aware of the sex abuse reported it through appropriate response channels.

**Political Crises**

Political crises can be those where the institution “[fails] to handle an incident according to accepted practices or state/federal mandates” (Stafford, 2014, p. 49) or when internal politics create crisis conditions. While political crises are often seen as coming from external pressures, such as the publication of a list by the U.S. Department of Education naming those institutions under investigation for allegedly violating Title IX (Anderson, 2017), political crises can also arise due to conditions within the institution. When there is a gap between students’ expectations and the decisions made by institutional leadership, there exists the potential for an internal political crisis. An example of this type of crisis might be campus racial justice protests in the past few years which have escalated in some cases to hostility and necessitated campus closures (Svrluga, 2017). Notably, the University of Missouri student body engaged in protests,
including a hunger strike, to escalate the resignation of then-President Wolfe due to the campus racial environment. Ultimately, it was a strike primarily by Black members of the football team that helped the protesters meet their goals by putting financial pressure on the institution (Tracy & Southall, 2015). Within this example, there are multiple crisis scenarios, including the potential threat to the personal welfare of Jonathan Butler (the student on hunger strike), the campus climate of racial tension, and the national political attention brought by the protest and subsequent boycott by the football team.

Student protest has a long and rich history in U.S. higher education (De Groot, 2014), and yet little research has explored how protests or other political actions on campus may be deemed an institutional crisis. Boin (2004) explained crisis as a “state of flux during which the institutional structures in a social system become uprooted” (p. 168). During a political crisis, trust begins to diminish, and institutional legitimacy is lost. Various social justice protests on campus may highlight potential shortcomings of an institution, which in turn may increase public scrutiny. Discussing protests by Black students in institutions of higher education in the 1960s, De Groot (2014) stated that racial justice protests may be viewed as crises as they challenge institutional identity and ways of being, compelling the college or university to “justify its very existence” (p. 182).

The transparency of contemporary crises, due in part to the omnipresence of social media, may also fuel calls for accountability. Recently, the University of Virginia was scrutinized for its actions regarding White nationalists and Alt-Right protesters who came to campus on August 11-12, 2017. While the leadership of the institution claimed it could not have predicted the escalation of violence on campus, there were indications
university leaders could have taken actions to minimize violence due to the political climate regarding these types of protests and the foreseeability of violence based on reports from social media and online news sources (Stripling, 2017). Similar to the investigation at Virginia Tech in 2005, the University of Virginia assembled a team to assess the institution’s response. The five-page report identified key shortcomings in the actions taken leading up to the protest, including a failure to respond appropriately to pre-event intelligence, lack of clarity by police and administrators regarding university policy, and “judgments [made by university administrators] that were misaligned to the context and left [university police] insufficiently equipped to respond” (University of Virginia, 2017). UVA’s post-incident response is currently housed at the website https://response.virginia.edu/, and allowed community members to submit ideas for how the institution could improve its response to such incidents. U.S. institutions of higher education cannot hide from public attention, nor can they ignore their political context as they plan for crises on campus. While all crises stand the potential of becoming politically charged, institutions of higher education could do more to understand political crises, particularly those involving social justice movements, so they can ensure the welfare of the higher education community and the reputation of the institution.

**College Student Death**

College is commonly perceived to be a time of hope and new possibilities, so when a member of a college community dies, strong feelings and overwhelm may emerge (Cintrón, 2007). Death events on campuses could be the result of natural causes, homicide, suicide, or a mass casualty incident caused by a natural disaster or hostile incident. Just like in the world at large, it can be expected that at some point during a staff
or faculty member’s career, they will have to manage the death of one of their students (Rosenblatt, 2019). However, faculty and staff may be bound to grieve privately based on perceptions that “perhaps many people do not think of a faculty member as having an emotionally close relationship to a deceased student and hence do not imagine that the faculty member could be feeling much grief” (Rosenblatt, 2019, p. 9). This leads to a sort of disenfranchised grief where one cannot be open about their feelings (Doka, 1999).

Young adults, a primary population in a college community, may struggle in with death on campus in ways that are different than faculty and staff members. While college provides a close-knit community that can serve as a protective factor for students dealing with grief (Goldstein, 2011), there are steps a college can take to address grief in their student populations. Examples of action steps IHEs can take include, but are not limited to:

- Preparing research-informed educational materials and programs that address grief, death, and dying, and build resilience skills
- Developing policies for how the IHE should respond in circumstances of student or employee death, including notification procedures
- Reaching out to student and employee populations who are most impacted following the death of a student or staff member
- Creating support groups where community members can process their grief in safe spaces (Thai & Moore, 2018)

For instance, effective death response policies may involve delineating clear responsibilities, such as who contacts the parents of a student and how, as well as infrastructural considerations such as stopping university communications (such as
financial aid and registration reminders) to the deceased student and their families (Owens & Garlough, 2007). While prevention is critical, procedures must be in place to address these tragic incidents. By taking both a proactive and responsive approach to managing death events which impact the college community, student affairs administrators can be prepared for the inevitable, and respond in culturally sensitive and relevant ways (Owens & Garlough, 2007) to the needs of their community when the unthinkable happens.

**Crisis Management in Higher Education**

The purpose of crisis management is to address “broader impacts and consequences of a full range of events and issues” (Blue Moon Consulting, 2015, p. 3). Crisis management “has become an important aspect of leading higher education institutions” (Peters, 2014, p. xii) because the potential risks of harm are many, including responsibility to ensure the safety and integrity of the students, faculty, and staff at the institution. Crisis management involves the application of principles of effective management to either prevent or minimize damage caused by a crisis, and to protect stakeholders from adverse situations (Coombs, 2007). Coombs (2007) identified three priorities when managing a crisis, in decreasing order of importance:

1. the safety of the public or stakeholders

2. the financial stability of the institution

3. the reputation of the institution

First and foremost, a crisis management plan should focus on the maintenance of life and property as it pertains to the safety of members of the campus community.
While it may be tempting to create a strict model to ease the development and implementation of a crisis response, crisis management is more of a process than a set of steps (Zdziarski, 2006). Stages can clarify and explain the lifespan of a crisis, though there is no single model to address all crises. However, common models of crisis management divide the management process into three or four categories, depending on the researcher. Coombs (2012) identified three common phases or stages of the crisis management process across theories: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. A comparison of various stage models and how each articulates various conceptualizations of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis is found in Table 2. It is important to explore each of these stages and the activities therein to understand more fully the breadth and depth of crisis planning and response.

Table 2.1

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Note. The recovery phase often includes actions taken during the crisis as well as those actions taken post-crisis.
Stage 1: Pre-Crisis

Critical to the pre-crisis stage is detecting early warning signs of crisis (signals, if present), acting to address the signals prior to a crisis developing (prevention), and having an established plan to address various crises if they occur (crisis preparation). The importance of identifying organizational weaknesses and potential threats, as well as environmental scanning both internally and externally, are important facets of signal detection (Elsubbaugh, Fildes, & Rose, 2004). Most organizations do not institute early warning systems to detect crisis signals. In higher education systems, such processes as financial audits, review of incident and crime reports, and compliance reviews serve a signal detection function (Genshaft, 2014). However, higher education organizations, particularly large ones, lack the resources to engage in routine checks for potential crises, thus increasing campus vulnerability. Establishing communication channels empowering all constituents, including students and alumni, is a key component of crisis signal detection (Genshaft, 2014).

Crisis preparation or planning involves the development of a strategic plan for addressing various types of crisis events, particularly those with a high likelihood of occurrence (Zdziarski, 2006). Planning is arguably the most important part of the crisis management lifecycle, and involves such activities as tabletop exercises, drills, and policy review and revision (Bataille & Cordova, 2014). Tabletop exercises are common as they involve informal discussion about simulated incidents and include more cost-effective ways to plan for potential crises than full-scale exercises or simulations (Perry, 2004). Failure to plan for crises may increase the likelihood of negligence suits since institutions are liable for addressing foreseeable risks, and crisis planning is seen as a
form of due diligence (Coombs, 2012). Because plans themselves can only address so many contingencies, the process of crisis planning is potentially more important than the plans themselves (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). Practicing and working through various scenarios can increase institutional capacity to make nimble decisions in the face of diverse crises.

**Crisis planning and leadership.** Campus leaders have an obligation to place crisis management and preparedness as a strategic priority to ensure the safety of the campus. While they may have plans in place, many institutions of higher education choose not to test their emergency plans due to the low probability of a crisis event occurring (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015) as well as the cost and time to carry out emergency exercises (Rollo et al., 2007). Crises are seen often as anomalies, resulting in poor planning and poor response from institutional leadership (Booker, 2014). It is imperative to not have just a crisis plan in place, but also to work through the “denial of the occurrence of these low probability events, rationalization of the adequacy of present systems to deal with them should they occur, and the ‘positive thinking’ approach many leaders find effective” (Smits & Ezzat Ally, 2003, p. 5) as these characteristics are detrimental to crisis readiness. There is a need to have and test a crisis plan, but the plan itself need not address all possible crisis scenarios (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). Essentially, crisis plans are scaffolds for addressing a variety of crises, not a one-size-fits-all plan nor one which is overwrought to address all possible circumstances.

There is debate about whether crisis responses should be centralized or decentralized. In times of crisis, decision-making authority tends to be centralized; however, ideally crisis plans balance centralization and decentralization, particularly in
organizations as complex as colleges and universities (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). In a study of University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth’s response to the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, “key personnel felt empowered to make decisions, ensuring many of the unforeseen difficulties that arose during the campus response were dealt with in an efficient, albeit occasionally imperfect, manner” (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015, p. 204). If authority is not delegated to front-line staff, decision-making would be slow as it takes time for information to flow to the top during a crisis. Front-line staff, such as residence hall directors, department heads and crisis management teams, need to be able to execute discretion to allow for nimble and timely responses to crisis. If a member of the crisis management team is missing or unavailable, the institution must be able to delegate the member’s authority to another staff member who is trained in the crisis plan.

Another challenge with decentralization is when a staff member is delegated authority to respond and they may not communicate their decisions in a timely manner to the crisis team. This may lead to decisions being either duplicated or made in pockets, with those at the top being left unaware a critical decision has been made (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). Ultimately, it seems there is a “sweet spot” between centralization and decentralization allowing a crisis plan to function even in unpredictable situations such as the Boston Marathon bombing. In this crisis, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth centralized certain decisions, such as campus evacuation, while delegating authority to crisis management teams charged with making localized decisions within their areas of control (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015).
Stage 2: Crisis

The crisis stage covers the time from the triggering event to the time the crisis is resolved. Coombs (2012) broke the crisis stage into two sub-stages: crisis recognition and crisis containment. Recognition involves the acknowledgement the circumstances are indeed a crisis. Difficulty arises in recognizing a crisis in part due to the complexity of systems in which crises unfold and the lack of feedback mechanisms in place to identify crises early (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). As the technological and structural complexity of the organization increases, so too does its propensity to experience crisis. Crisis plans can increase the risk of not detecting a crisis by appearing “that risks can be normalized to the point where they become irrelevant” (p. 25), which causes a false sense of security. Risks associated with normalization of crisis plans highlight the importance of preparing crisis managers to respond to the crisis itself instead of relying on crisis plans which may not account for the nuances of each unique crisis.

Coombs (2012) discussed the need for situational awareness, or the ability to take in information about the situation and the context to make informed decisions about next steps. Since crises often involve information voids, substantial amounts of information are required to respond, meaning crisis management teams often become overwhelmed. Additionally, “because the amount of available information exceeds the human ability to make sense of it” (Coombs, 2012, p. 130), team members and crisis leaders rely on experience to inform current action. Since each crisis is unique, applying a previous action plan to a contemporary crisis may be a mismatch.

Crisis containment is the process of using the intelligence collected to make informed, prompt decisions about both how to respond and how to communicate
decisions to stakeholders as a means of mitigating the crisis (Coombs, 2012; Zdziarski, 2006). For the crisis response to be effective, all parties involved should have clear expectations of their roles and training to enact their role (Zdziarski, 2006). Success in this endeavor is predicated on success in the planning phase, so “participants become sensitive to problems that may emerge during a crisis” (Boin et al., 2005, p. 147) as well as building team unity.

**Stage 3: Post-Crisis**

The crisis management process ends with a period of crisis recovery, followed by critical reflection on the crisis management process in order to learn for future crisis events. Zdziarski (2006) noted the lack of preparation to recover from a crisis, and lack of awareness of how long it can take an institution to recover from crisis. The goal of crisis recovery is to “resume operations as quickly as possible” (Zdziarski, 2006, p. 8), the timing of which depends upon the type and extent of the crisis. Since crises are not static nor consistent from event to event, crisis learning is of paramount importance. Post-crisis is the stage in which institutions reflect critically upon the crisis response and recovery and make decisions regarding its effectiveness or ineffectiveness to make change to policies, procedures, or the institution itself.

**Crisis recovery.** Crisis recovery involves those “activities, both short and long term, which help return conditions to normal or improved levels” (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). If possible, this is also the time where plans are revisited to minimize future impact given similar circumstances. Crisis recovery, like crisis response, occurs at various levels. At the level of the crisis team, self-care is of paramount importance. It is the responsibility of the crisis leader to help the crisis team, who has been on the front
lines of the crisis response, tend to their emotional and physical well-being (Abraham, 2014). Deploying counseling resources, granting time away, or providing dedicated space for the team to process and debrief are often helpful.

Another layer of crisis recovery involves returning the campus to normal operations, known as business continuity (Coombs, 2012). Attending to the health and welfare of constituents is also included in the process. Damage should be assessed and plans to address infrastructural concerns triaged to facilitate the return to business. Depending on the extent of the crisis, the campus may need substantial time to recuperate. Shaw (2016) explored the ways in which campuses recover from, and are changed by, major disasters. Higher education organizations are changed irrevocably as a result of a major campus crisis, so achieving a state of equilibrium as opposed to returning to a previous norm is a more desirable outcome. As part of the recovery process, institutions should explore ways in which they must change, such as developing new policies or revising old ones, and ensuring changes are institutionalized sustainably.

In comparing the experiences of two universities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Shaw (2017) found that “a state of equilibrium is characterized not simply by resuming business, but by overarching stability in institutional operations interspersed with the small, incremental changes needed to maintain those operations” (p. 107). There are two goals during recovery, making the length of the recovery shorter and finding and accessing resources to aid in recovery (Shaw, 2017). Success in these endeavors is predicated on factors beyond the institution’s control, such as when the crisis occurred and the extent of damage, and on factors within the institution’s control, such as the extent to which the organization has cultivated beneficial external partnerships and
transfer and maintenance of organizational knowledge and institutional memory. In the case of damage following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, participants noted while extensive damage prolonged the crisis punctuation period, or the time between the crisis event and the recovery, being part of a state university system facilitated recovery and continuity. Proper planning prior to a crisis attending to those factors within the institution’s control can help speed recovery.

Memorializing. A longer-term aspect of crisis recovery involves remembering the event. Campuses memorialize tragic events in different ways. On May 4, 1970, four students were killed, and nine others injured, when members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed protesters at Kent State University. Twenty years later, following years of candlelight vigils on campus and the establishment of the Center for Applied Conflict Management, the university dedicated an on-campus memorial to the tragedy (Cartwright, 2014). Memorials and traditions such as these also bolster resilience. Resilience involves maintaining a positive affect in the face of crisis while aiding in recovery from trauma (Doherty, 2010). Community rituals, such as candlelight vigils and memorial services, can bolster students’ sense of community, safety, and togetherness by providing collective space to grieve and process events (Goldstein, 2011). These spaces afford community members the opportunity to express themselves, which is a powerful tool for healing (Wesener, Peska, & Treviño, 2010). Drawing on the sense of collective identity intrinsic to the university, memorials can lead to more robust cooperation among various campus constituents during crisis recovery. Collective identity affords universities a uniquely innate resiliency which may not be common in other settings (Goldstein, 2011). Institutions also provide other symbolic gestures to promote healing
and memorial, such as the posthumous awarding of degrees and the creation of memorial scholarships, all while balancing memorializing the tragedy and moving on from it (Wesener et al., 2010).

Organizational Frames and Crisis Leadership

Bolman and Deal’s (2017) model of organizational frames is one model which can be utilized to understand how crises influence and shape organizational responses to crisis. In this model, there are four frames through which leadership and organizational behavior can be analyzed and understood. Frames are mental models that guide leadership and decision-making. These frames develop over time and become instinctual, driving leaders’ approach to management. The four frames are human resources, political, structural, and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Leaders who operate from a human resources frame place personnel at the center of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The interplay between the organization and its personnel is crucial; organizations can only function if the people in it are healthy, effective, committed and well-trained. Organizations exist to improve the quality of life for those they serve, including internal and external constituents. When organizations are faced with a challenge, leaders will go to the personnel to attend to their needs and capitalize on their individual strengths to help the organization persist.

Those who operate from the political frame view organizations as battlegrounds or contests for power and influence (Bolman & Deal, 2017). They tend to approach leadership from a scarcity mindset, working to maximize the allocation of resources to meet their goals. With respect to decision-making, “Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own
interests” (p. 184). The political frame analyzes organizations through the coalitions of which they are composed, and the values and interests of these coalitions. Conflict can arise when divergent coalitions compete for resources or needs within the organization.

The structural frame views organizations as rational enterprises wherein the goals of the organization must align with its structures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Leaders operating from this perspective are driven by the mission and goals of the organization and place importance on rationality over emotion or personal needs. When tensions arise in the organization, one solution is to troubleshoot structural flaws and then restructure the organization accordingly. Structural frame leaders are often focused on the organization’s hierarchy and flow of information.

Finally, the symbolic frame is focused on “how myth and symbols help humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world in which they live” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 236). Leaders are driven by meaning, passion, and purpose, as well as developing a strong and cohesive organizational culture. When conflict emerges, leaders invoke the mythos of the organization, galvanizing its members through myth, ceremony, and stories. Organizational symbols (e.g. values, heroes and heroines, stories, or rituals) help guide personnel through challenging times.

While it is likely that individual leaders’ personalities inform their preferred frame, over time and through experience, leaders become more socialized into a particular frame. Tensions can emerge when the frames from which organizational leaders approach their work from divergent frames. For instance, with respect to decision-making, human resources leaders want to cultivate buy-in and get feedback from
personnel while those operating from a structural frame want to make decisions following a logical process of action steps.

In crises, people tend to operate from instinct and thus may invoke their preferred frame to navigate a crisis. This may augment the tensions that can exist between frames. However, in order to respond effectively to organizational challenges, organizations and their leaders must be willing to reframe, which “requires an ability to think about situations from more than one angle, which lets [leaders] develop alternative diagnoses and strategies” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 6).

In viewing crisis management from the four frames perspective, tensions can be identified which may be useful in understanding crisis leadership and provide insight into how to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of crisis responses. Finding ways in which to “[harmonize] the frames and [craft] inventive responses to new circumstances [is] essential to both management and leadership” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 298) and therefore also is also critical to developing oneself as a crisis leader.

**Campus Crisis Teams**

While relatively recent advents in student affairs and higher education, there are multiple types of teams that colleges use to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to crises (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). The use of teams to identify and address risks is becoming increasingly common in higher education, with three structures driven by divergent yet interlocking charges:

The first type serves as a platform for campus leaders to assess behavior and support troubled students. The second focuses primarily on crisis management. The third addresses both behavioral intervention and threat assessment… The mission and purpose of these teams have been based on history and culture of the [IHE], law enforcement models, and behavioral intervention models developed
Having multiple teams operating during a crisis may pose administrative challenges to IHEs, such as role conflict. While it is commonly understood that all crisis responses are subservient to law enforcement mandates, all teams should be vested with the authority to make decisions within their scope (Hephner LaBanc, Krepel, Johnson, & Herrmann, 2010). A basic exploration of two common types of teams, crisis management teams and threat assessment teams, follows.

**Crisis Management Teams**

When a crisis creates an impact on campus, one of the first entities to mobilize is the campus crisis management team. These teams are delegated authority and provided training to make decisions driving the campus’s response to a crisis (Bataille & Cordova, 2014). Since the process of managing a crisis depends entirely on the type of crisis unfolding (Boin et al., 2005), having a variety of crisis teams charged with responding to specific types of incidents as institutional capacity allows is advised. Teams should be equipped with members representing different essential functions on campus, including campus law enforcement, facilities management, chief administrative and financial officers, information technology specialists, residence life leadership, counseling services, communications and public relations professionals, and others whose roles would benefit the team’s response to an institutional crisis (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). Crisis teams also exist outside of higher education, involving local emergency services and government agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). To ensure an effective response to crises on campus, crisis management teams at colleges and universities should develop relationships with external crisis response
services such as law enforcement agencies, emergency response teams, and local and state government entities (Crandall, Parnell, & Spillan, 2013). The coordination of practice exercises, such as hostile intruder drills, is imperative to ensure a coordinated response.

Crisis management teams often use plans aligned with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which was mandated following the September 11 terrorist attacks by the federal government as a standard emergency operations guide (Hephner LaBanc et al., 2010). Training on this protocol is mandatory for coordination between agencies and resources, such as coordination between the crisis management team and off-campus law enforcement. Training on NIMS can be found online through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Coombs, 2012). In addition to developing standard operating procedures, teams should train on the content of procedures and their response to crises. Crisis management teams experience time pressure to respond, in sometimes high-risk environments, with dynamic and fluctuating flows of information (Coombs, 2012). If they have not trained effectively ahead of a real crisis, this can lead to conflict within the team. Training on communication and team dynamics, to include how the team may work virtually if they cannot assemble due to the crisis, can be as essential as training on the content of the response (Coombs, 2012).
Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment Teams

Another type of team employed by many institutions of higher education is the multidisciplinary behavioral intervention or threat assessment team (BIT/TAT). The need for these teams emerged following the Virginia Tech shooting (Van Brunt, 2012), and serve a crisis prevention function by identifying students who are exhibiting behavioral concerns which may lead to violence (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). These teams are composed of faculty and staff from various functional areas such as counseling, campus police, and student conduct officers (Zdziarski et al., 2007), and, increasingly, student case managers trained in evaluation of risk associated with threatening behaviors (Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011). These teams function best when information is directed to them from concerned constituents via reporting mechanisms such as online tools. Such threat reporting structures did not exist at Virginia Tech in 2007, and the presence of a reporting tool and threat assessment team may have led to early identification of Cho as a student of concern (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011).

Student case management is an important function both on threat assessment teams and in the institution at large. The case management function in higher education emerged following the Virginia Tech shooting, and since 2007 this type of role has seen a marked increase in higher education settings (Adams, Hazelwood, & Hayden, 2014). While the role resembles social workers in other settings, the case manager is responsible for “coordinating and brokering the resources necessary to intervene with a person or situation of concern to reduce the risk or threat posed, connecting the person with necessary help, and monitoring the progress of the intervention plan” (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009, p. 41). This sort of dedicated care provides students who may be
distressed the opportunity to regulate and continue in the educational environment. The case manager can also monitor progress and ensure compliance with TAT recommendations, including ongoing counseling (Shelesky, Weatherford, & Silbert, 2016; Van Brunt, 2012). The case management role may be dispersed among members of a TAT if a dedicated case management position does not exist (Van Brunt, 2012).

**Meaning-Making and Post-Crisis Learning**

Crisis involves circumstances posing a threat to the life and wellbeing of the organization and its constituents. These threats call into question existing beliefs and structures at both personal and organizational levels. Organizational crises “signal that pre-existing plans, policies, or organizational practices have failed” (Boin et al., 2005, p. 122), making a period of post-crisis learning and adaptation critically important to organizational growth. Similarly, leaders who manage crises are expected by the publics they serve to be highly visible and responsive throughout the duration of a crisis (Alden & Kafer, 2010). Two interconnected processes seem imperative following a campus crisis: personal meaning-making in the face of tragedy, and collective sensemaking resulting in learning and change. Once an individual has processed a crisis event for themselves, they may be able to help others do the same, thus contributing to collective sensemaking.

**Meaning-Making During and After a Crisis**

Meaning-making is a lifelong constructivist-developmental process which takes place both intrapersonal (psychologically) and interpersonally (socially) whereby human beings seek to organize and understand their experiences (Kegan, 1980). Meaning-making is both a personal, psychological process, and a public, collective process.
Collective meaning-making is culturally situated, as individuals draw upon cultural frames of reference to name and categorize their experiences (Drath & Palus, 1994). Meaning-making processes often begin with events which challenge previously held notions of the world, instigating cognitive dissonance which requires the individual to change or to reconcile this dissonance with their previous belief systems and worldview (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

Crisis events threaten the existence of those who experience them and shake the frameworks of their understandings of the world (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016). Thus, meaning-making is challenged due to the intensity and unpredictability of crisis events. However, crises also catalyze personal development as individuals, and changes emerging from crisis can be either positive or negative (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). Erikson (1993) noted each stage of development requires crisis, which propels or impedes developmental advancement as the individual seeks to answer existential questions in the face of life challenges, meaning that “each crisis lays one more cornerstone for the adult personality” (p. 254). Developmental changes may include deepening or rejection of faith commitment as a coping strategy (e.g. Ganzvoort, 1994; Peek, 2005) and grappling with moratorium and identity achievement (e.g. Josselson, 1973; Marcia, 1966). Early interventions to traumatic events, including restoring basic needs and addressing acute psychological concerns, can serve as protective factors for negative developmental and psychological issues (Watson, 2007).

Crisis management scholars refer to the collective organizational process through which crises are interpreted as sensemaking (Mallender, 2016). Sensemaking processes facilitate constituents’ making of meaning of the emotional and psychological impact of
As a strategic management function, sensemaking is a way for leaders to respond to the collective stress of a crisis event in order to prevent its escalation and to facilitate safety (Weick, 1988). Collective sensemaking helps those impacted by crisis start to understand what they need to do, and eventually frame what happened.

Crisis leaders are in highly visible and potentially vulnerable political positions when tasked with being the public face of a crisis (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). These leaders are tasked with facilitating the collective sensemaking of an organization following a crisis by synthesizing what is known about the crisis event with the values and ideologies of the organization to create organizational meaning (Weick, 1988). College presidents and other senior administrators act as the “public face of the institution, carrying a huge burden” (Abraham, 2014, p. 145) throughout a crisis. However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the personal meaning-making processes of campus crisis leaders. In a higher education context, senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) are often the public face of a crisis. The all-consuming role of being the public front for the IHE places a burden on those charged with protecting the campus, and as a result, SSAOs experience forms of posttraumatic stress as well as posttraumatic growth (Treadwell, 2017). Leaders may find themselves simultaneously questioning their existence and purpose. A crisis management plan should address the psychological dimensions of a crisis response not just for the populations directly affected, but also for the first responders and institutional leaders who work to manage the crisis itself.
Organizational Learning After a Crisis Event

Learning occurring post-crisis informs pre-crisis planning in anticipation of the next crisis (Lagadec, 1997), pointing to the cyclical and ongoing nature of crisis management. However, as with most learning processes, gathering lessons from the aftermath of crisis is not as simple as it may sound. Post-crisis learning occurs on the organizational as well as the personal level. Within these levels, post-crisis learning is influenced by the organizational context, cognitive factors, and political and social dynamics (Boin, 2009). Post-crisis learning is also impacted by the organizational context and the characteristics of the response (Chebbi & Pündrich, 2015). Those impacted by crisis can reframe crisis as a learning opportunity as they seek to make meaning of the event for themselves (King, 2003). Part of the meaning-making process for constituents involves determining who is responsible for the crisis and why the response unfolded the way it did. Organizational constituents make meaning of a crisis both during and after a crisis, drawing inferences on causation and response as well as how the organization is perceived by external stakeholders (Kovoor-Misra & Olk, 2015). Similarly, crisis learning is impacted by a sense of hopelessness resulting from the crisis as a lack of hope impedes one’s desire to put in the effort to engage in an organizational learning process. However, crisis learning did not seem to be impacted by views that the organization’s leaders were responsible for the crisis (Kovoor-Misra & Olk, 2015).

Post-crisis learning could occur as a result of a concerted internal effort to make meaning of a crisis event or as a function of an external mandate. Following the Virginia Tech massacre, then-Governor Tim Kaine appointed a review panel to conduct interviews and public meetings to understand what happened during the crisis and make
recommendations regarding policy and organizational changes (Wang & Hutchins, 2010). External pressures may increase the organization’s sense of pressure. When crises strike, organizations are prone to go on the defensive, which inhibits organizational learning and creates rigidity as organizations galvanize for post-crisis accountability (Moynihan, 2008). Post-crisis learning is informed by the political and social contexts of the crisis, namely dynamics of power and control that influence who makes meaning of the crisis and what meaning is made (Boin et al., 2005; Schiffino, Taskin, Donis, & Raone, 2017). Learning after crisis is also complex due to various layers of organizational structures involved in a crisis response. To mitigate future risks associated with or leading to crisis, Comfort (2007) advocated for “continuing organizational, interorganizational, and interjurisdictional learning” (p. 197), which requires involving constituents both within and without the organization in the post-crisis learning process.

Additionally, it is often unclear what lessons should be learned due to the complexity and variety of crises, in part due to how even similar crises may need to be managed differently (Moynihan, 2008). Ambiguity, paired with the fact that constituents glean different lessons from a crisis based on their vantage points and experiences, likely leads to competing narratives post-crisis (Boin et al., 2005). Understanding how these competing narratives work to inform organizational learning, and ultimately organizational change, after a crisis seems to be of critical scholarly and practical importance.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, various disciplinary and interdisciplinary literatures addressing the topic of crisis management in higher education was explored. Student affairs is an
interdisciplinary field, and thus literature representing the fields of communication, psychology, management studies, and others were reviewed in constructing this analysis. What became apparent through the review is that while extensive research has been done on the effectiveness of different models of crisis management, many of which are highly procedural, little scholarly attention has been paid to the role of personal meaning made by leaders during and after a crisis. Upon reviewing the literature available at the time of this study, it was deemed important to explore the nature of how crisis leaders in higher education make meaning of the experience of managing organizational crises.

The chapter began by exploring what is meant by a crisis. Organizational crises are highly disruptive situations impacting institutions and communities (Coombs, 2012; Zdziarski, 2006). Crisis events threaten physical and social structures while creating intense pressure to remedy the situation as promptly as possible to minimize potential damage to persons and property (Rosenthal, Charles, & ‘t Hart, 1989). While any disruptive event can lead to a crisis, factors such as the size and location of the IHE may impact whether a situation becomes a crisis (Zdziarski, 2006). Context and experience are important factors influencing perceptions of what is and is not a crisis as competing perspectives by different stakeholders interfere with individuals’ ability to understand what is happening and thus respond appropriately and effectively (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

In a higher education context, crises include natural disasters (e.g. hurricanes or fires), human-made crises (e.g. negligence or acts of violence), and political crises (e.g. campus protests). On a college campus, disasters may impact not just campus but the surrounding community as well (Shaw, 2017). Therefore, an effective crisis response
must consider both the needs of the campus community as well as the interplay between campus response and community response (Brown, 2014). When institutions fail to plan or respond to crises appropriately, IHEs may be subject to increased public scrutiny and calls for accountability (Stafford, 2014). Social media, a volatile news environment, and increased involvement by parents and stakeholders all augment an institution’s failings, though not necessarily its successes, in managing a crisis. Therefore, crisis management serves as an important leadership competency for all higher education leaders.

Current organizational crisis management models reflect highly procedural responses, often broken into three stages. The first stage, pre-crisis, involves the process of planning for various types of crises, developing strategic crisis plans, and testing the plans’ effectiveness (Zdziarski, 2006). IHEs failing to plan for campus crisis may be subject to negligence lawsuits, highlighting the importance of pre-crisis planning (Coombs, 2012). In addition to creating crisis plans, effective leadership systems must be established to carry out the plans. Two approaches to leading through crisis involve the centralization of authority and the decentralization of decision-making power (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). Ideally, crisis plans find a balance between centralization and decentralization which allows institutions to remain nimble in the face of a crisis.

The second stage of most crisis management models involves the crisis itself. From the moment of the triggering event to the effective resolution of the crisis, this stage involves first identifying a crisis is taking place then responding to the crisis by containing it (Coombs, 2012). If leaders do not promptly identify an incident as a crisis and enact plans accordingly, often due to a false sense of security based on existing crisis management plans, the triggering event can escalate to a more critical level (Boin, ‘t
Effective crisis leadership involves maintaining situational awareness (Coombs, 2012) which relies both on leaders getting accurate and timely information and on the leaders’ experience and intuition in managing crises.

The third stage, post-crisis, involves recovering in the days, months, or even years following the containment of a crisis event. In order to recover from a crisis, an institution needs the resources and aid necessary to rebuild so the recovery period is as short as possible (Shaw, 2017). It is at this stage that IHEs critically reflect upon the crisis response and improve policies, procedures, and culture to respond more effectively in the future. This stage also involves making meaning of and memorializing the crisis event. Memorializing a crisis involves rituals and collective gatherings to process the event (Goldstein, 2011) as well as creating symbols on campus to commemorate the event such as memorials, scholarships, and posthumously awarded degrees given to victims’ families (Wesener et al., 2010). Through these steps, an IHE can rebuild both physically and emotionally following a tragic event.

Many institutions adopt crisis plans involving various teams as a means of delegating responsibilities and contributing to more effective decision-making when crises strike (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). Two types of teams used at IHEs include crisis management teams and behavioral intervention and threat assessment teams. Crisis management teams drive the institution’s response to a crisis (Bataille & Cordova, 2014) while behavioral intervention and threat assessment teams seek to identify individuals of concern at the institution and respond effectively to mitigate escalation (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). Student case management has emerged as a functional area in higher education working with students of concern and helping them build support structures to
address their behaviors before they escalate (Adams et al., 2014; Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Both types of teams represent decentralized decision-making strategies to address various aspects of organizational crisis.

Central to this inquiry is the process of individual making meaning of organizational crisis. Crises threaten life and property as well as the wellbeing of the organization itself. After a crisis has impacted an organization, the post-crisis response must include learning from what happened and adapting organizational practices and culture to mitigate future harm (Boin et al., 2005). Post-crisis learning is an individual process as well as a collective one wherein individuals and organizations seek to make sense of the crisis event (Mallender, 2016). Challenging events disrupt an individual’s understanding of their world, resulting in cognitive dissonance (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Individuals may struggle to make meaning of a crisis if their welfare was threatened (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016). Organizations may also struggle to make sense of a crisis, particularly if the leadership of the organization cannot respond effectively to the emotional and psychological needs of students, faculty and staff (Gephart, 2007). As leaders in IHEs charged with responding to crisis, many student affairs professionals struggle with the burden of caring for others and failing to care for themselves, resulting in posttraumatic stress (Treadwell, 2017). Crisis management plans should build in ways in which crisis leaders can attend to their own needs to attend effectively to the needs of others.

While the aforementioned literature lays the foundation for this study, the study is not irrevocably bound to the literature. As this study is both emergent and exploratory in nature, part of this study is allowing space for the participants to create their own
meanings, define terms for themselves, and narrate their story irrespective of how it may
or may not fit into a prior established model. The following chapter addresses the
paradigm and methodology underpinning this inquiry. The ontological, epistemological,
and axiological assumptions of this inquiry, rooted in constructivism (Guba & Lincoln,
1994), are explicated prior to discussing the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology.
The chapter continues by discussing the use of crystallization (Ellingson, 2009;
Richardson, 2000) to weave together data collection and analysis to produce a deeply
narrative and rich study. The following chapter also shares the ethical and quality criteria
used in this inquiry.
CHAPTER III
PARADIGMATIC AND METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

To tell a “story,” whether real or invented, is to presume at least the possibility of rational understanding.

But catastrophe defies logic. It faces us with disruption and discontinuity, with the breakdown of order. The same can often be said of poetry itself. It operates outside the realm of “logic.” Rather, it obeys the logic of dreams, of the unconscious.


The purpose of this study was to explore how campus leaders at institutions of higher education (IHE) make meaning of an institutional crisis event. I approached this study seeking to understand the stories of senior student affairs administrators who had experienced a campus crisis and gather their insights, lessons, and reflections. The question which drove this inquiry was, how do campus leaders at an IHE make meaning of a campus crisis event? The exploration of individual meaning-making processes offered insight into the experience of crisis and the ways in which university crisis managers made sense of their work during and after a crisis event.

In order to frame the research study, in this chapter, I present my paradigmatic assumptions and discuss why they are best suited to this particular research question. I share the five aspects of a paradigm, namely alignment among ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology and methods, how I applied them throughout this study. Specifically, I share how the constructivist paradigm and its underpinning philosophical assumptions align with the research question. Constructivism, the paradigm I selected,
aligned with this study because one goal of this research was to better understand the plurality of leaders’ experiences during a crisis and engage in an interactive dialogue regarding these experiences. Constructivism also allowed me to get to the heart of participants’ meaning-making due the paradigm’s emphasis on the active co-construction of understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Throughout this chapter, I reflect upon the specific methodology that I selected for this study. Narrative inquiry is an appropriate choice, given that humans organize their lives and make meaning through the telling and sharing of stories (Gilbert, 2002). The storytelling process is a social one, wherein “we make meaning by creating and exploring our stories in concert with other interested parties” (Gilbert, 2002, p. 224). The social nature of storytelling and the implicit co-creation of meaning through the sharing of stories, whether through words or images, aligns particularly well with the constructivist paradigm underpinning this research.

**Paradigmatic Assumptions**

A paradigm is an overarching set of assumptions, or worldview, guiding the research pursuit (Crotty, 1998). Paradigms establish the metaphysical assertions set forth by a researcher under which ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods align to create cohesive research (Guba, 1990; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). In social science research, the use of a paradigm is important as it creates a coherent approach to a research agenda (Denicolo, Long, & Bradley-Cole, 2016). By clearly stating the assumptions guiding the research process, readers of the study can make sense of the choices made throughout the research study as those choices connect to the researcher’s philosophical understandings (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007).
The assumptions within a paradigm are hardly infallible. As human constructions, they guide researchers toward philosophical alignment but do not in and of themselves represent the only way to approach a research endeavor (Guba, 1990). In fact, there are multiple, competing paradigms used to inquire into social life and human relations (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). There are also multiple ways to engage research within a single paradigm as each researcher brings their own unique experiences, insights, and understandings to the research endeavor (Guba, 1990).

I approached this research endeavor from a constructivist worldview. Rooted in naturalistic inquiry, constructivist research is enriched by “engaging with a context or group long enough to understand its authentic depth and complexity” (Guido et al., 2010, p. 15). The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and may rely on tacit knowledge as well as propositional knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constructivist researchers resist a priori assumptions to allow space for active co-construction of meaning throughout the research process. Reality from a constructivist perspective is both personal to the individual and situated in a social context (Denicolo et al., 2016).

New knowledge and new understandings were created in this study through the active engagement between the participants and me, sharing and reflecting upon the experiences we both bring to process. I understand that I can never truly know the experience of another, but through the process of dialoguing about our experiences both the participant and I came to understand each other more fully. We were able to find common ground through our shared experiences and learn from the exchange of ideas regarding those things to which we had not been exposed. To further explicate the philosophical propositions of a constructivist worldview, it is important to understand the
ontology (i.e. the nature of reality) and epistemology (i.e. the nature of knowledge and knowing) of constructivism. Additionally, I address below both the axiological (i.e. research values) impressions of constructivism and the values I brought to this research process.

**Ontological Assumptions**

Scholars seek to answer fundamental questions about the nature of reality throughout the research process by specifying what can and cannot be known and knowable. Known as ontology, this philosophical construct frames what qualifies as true or real (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Constructivists by and large approach research from a relativist ontological position (Denicolo et al., 2016). Relativism rejects a grand narrative of reality or the notion that there may exist a singular, objective truth. In a relativist ontology, there exist “multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature...and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p, 110). Thus, the ontology of constructivism frames reality and truth at the individual and group level, insomuch as the social interactions between researchers and participants create truth.

Since reality is socially based, it can change as the social context changes and as new experiences lead to the development of new understandings. Ontological relativism does not mean that nothing is real; rather, constructivism contends that essentialist (i.e. positivist and post-positivist) assertions regarding the nature of reality and the social world are fallible and incomplete (Sayer, 1997). Reality is often understood through the lens of experience, rumination on the object of contemplation, and through the lens of
cultural, political and historical contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). What qualifies as real is relative to our social and emotional contexts and our lived experiences, and constructivist research embraces the tensions which exist as participants’ and researcher’s constructions of reality meld with one another.

**Epistemological Assertions**

Researchers use their epistemological assumptions to articulate how humans know what they know and what relationship exists between the knowers and what they know (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Epistemology is concerned with the ways in which researchers justify knowledge claims, as well as the role of the relationship between researcher and participant and researcher and topic (Creswell, 2013). Research conducted within a constructivist paradigm assumes that “the relationship between the knower and the knowable (to-be-known) is highly person- and context-specific” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 40). Knowledge becomes co-constructed in the social interaction of the researcher and the researched (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). Ultimately, knowledge is personal and created, and cannot be objectively understood (Schwandt, 1994). Such a construction of knowledge requires interaction. As the realities of a researcher and participants come into contact and interact, new understandings emerge. A more complete understanding of a context emerges, though that understanding is necessarily incomplete. Since knowledge is created within myriad personal, social, cultural, and political contexts, and these contexts overlap and intersect in new and sometimes unpredictable ways, knowledge is fluid rather than fixed.

In constructivism, it is inappropriate to assume all knowledge is perfectly subjective and all understandings equally valid. Thus, “one need not be an antirealist to
be a constructivist” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 237). Humans construct meaning both for themselves personally and within commonly held social frameworks around something outside themselves, such as experiences or objects. Experiences, for instance, can take on deeply personal meanings, as evident in divergent constructions of meaning emerging from the same experience. Yet, in order to function socially, humans must have common vocabularies to describe experiences and objects, so we can share and test our subjective understandings of our experience with others until common understandings emerge. Thus, in sharing experiences, we create new insights. Constructivists can (and do) acknowledge the social and personal nature of knowledge while acknowledging that the objects around which meanings are constructed exist independent of our constructions of them.

As the researcher in this study, the goal was to allow participants to share their experiences while trying my best not to preconceive how the participants have constructed their knowledge and understanding of the crises they experienced. Yet, I brought with me to this study my own experiences of managing crises on college campuses. These experiences shape the way I understand the world and my professional practice, and thus my understanding of this study. My experiences shaped me and my knowledge base entering space and time with participants. I knew my experiences would not be the same as those shared during the course of this research. I knew from my experience as well that my knowledge of crisis was not static. Each time I manage a crisis, even when I dialogue with others about crisis management, my thinking is challenged, and my understanding becomes deeper, richer, and more intricate. In Chapter One, I shared some of my own stories and images related to university crisis management
as a means of communicating my experience and perspective on the topic to the reader. I acted both as a researcher and a participant within this study, which is a dialogue about the participants’ understandings of their experience as well as my experiences managing crises on the various campuses I have served. My narrative was important to situate within this study not only because it shaped my approach to engage in this inquiry but because it was both the impetus of the research question and a response to it.

**Axiology**

Axiology as a social science research perspective is about values, both the values researchers bring to the research endeavor and the value of research itself (Creswell, 2013). For me, research is not a value-free endeavor. I bring my whole self into the research process, so it is important for me to show readers who I am and what I bring throughout the research process. I achieved this by addressing my own experience of the research topic in a reflective positionality statement in Chapter One. I also used my experience to engage with the research participants in active co-construction of meaning, thus mutually deepening our understanding of the phenomenon in this study. Similarly, I shared my own reflections through the use of research poems, found in Chapters One and Five.

There is no singular, superior way to engage in constructivist research so long as the researcher acknowledges the personal construction of meaning in a social environment and engages in active co-construction of knowledge between, and sometimes among, researchers and participants (Denicolo et al., 2016). Just as realities are myriad under a constructivist worldview, so, too, are the approaches to engaging constructivist research. In this sense, constructivist research can be emergent, inductive
and iterative (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers select a methodology that aligns with this paradigm and brings these values to bear in the research process. For this study, narrative inquiry aligned well, both for its compatibility with the philosophical assumptions of constructivism and for its applicability to answering the research question. Narrative inquiry aligns with my personal ways of knowing and expressing myself in the world as well and thus was most appropriate for this study.

**Methodology**

This narrative inquiry focused on understanding the phenomenon of organizational crisis, specifically exploring how meaning was created by participants through stories within and around a crisis. Fundamental to narrative inquiry is the assertion that human beings make meaning of their experiences through the creation and telling of stories, forming a narrative identity situated within a sociocultural context (McAdams, 2008). Stories shared by individuals provide insight into their experiences, as well as the organizations, systems, and societies in which they operate. Narrative approaches to data collection help participants express both the chronology of events and the meaning-making process within their stories by providing them an opportunity to recount and make sense of significant events in their lives (Sandelowski, 1991).

Narrative research can be deployed in either a descriptive or an explanatory fashion (Polkinghorne, 1988). A narrative approach allows participants to share their experiences - perhaps ones they have never shared before - and in the (re)telling participants explain the context, circumstances, feelings, inferences, and interactions of their lives while the researcher explores the social phenomenon under study. Collecting
narratives can help explain how and why something occurred as it did, as participants from different vantage points offer their insights about what they saw, heard, and smelled; how they felt affectively, emotionally, and spiritually; and how a life experience impacted and shaped them.

Narrative inquiry is not merely about recounting stories, but is a specific research approach allowing the researcher to understand and describe:

a) the individual and group narratives of life stories or particular life episodes; b) the conditions under which one storyline...prevails over, coheres with, or conflicts with other storylines; c) the relationship between individual stories and the available cultural stock of stories; and d) the function that certain life episodes serve in individuals’ emplotment of their lives. (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 163)

Instead of seeking the singular and definitive story of an episode, a narrative situated within a constructivist paradigm allows each participant’s construction of an episode to stand on its own while acknowledging the importance of the participant’s cultural and social locations. I provided an example of this approach in Chapter One through the use of thickly described narrative motifs of my own crisis stories.

Constructivism aligns well with narrative methodologies. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) argued that, “Narration is constructive, a way of fashioning the semblance of meaning and order for experience” (p. 166). Narrative constructions create order out of otherwise chaotic life experiences. In short, individuals make sense of their experiences via the stories they tell. Sharing stories is a means by which individuals share their constructions of their experiences with each other, and through dialogue construct new meanings and insights. Indeed, the creating and sharing of stories allows individuals to process their emotions and reclaim the power to author their own experiences and to create/re-create their identities (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). In this sense, each
narrative exploration, each moment of story-sharing between a participant and researcher, is a gift to be cherished and an opportunity for new understandings to emerge. Before engaging in this process, I needed to find participants who were willing to share their stories as part of this study.

**Participant Recruitment**

Since the purpose of this study was to learn how leaders in IHEs make meaning of crisis, I deliberately recruited study participants who had robust professional experiences from which to draw. This allowed participants the ability to draw on various examples, so they could discuss with me some of their most salient crisis management experiences.

In recruiting for this study, I sought participants who aligned with the following criteria:

- willingness to share their crisis story,
- willingness to draw,
- holding a position at the director level or higher in their IHE,
- having served as members of the campus crisis management team at the time of the crisis event, and
- having taken time to reflect upon changes implemented by the IHE after the crisis event.

Prior to participating in the first interview, participants were asked to select a specific crisis experience upon which to reflect.

I used purposeful sampling to recruit participants. Patton (2015) introduced the term *purposeful* sampling as a qualitative alternative to *purposive* (which is more statistically oriented). Purposeful sampling refers to deliberately and thoughtfully selecting cases or participants that “by their nature and substance will illuminate the
inquiry question being investigated” (Patton, 2015, p. 265), to diverge qualitative research from the quantitative history of the term *purposive*. In order to tell their stories reflectively and engage in the drawing exercise, participants needed to meet the aforementioned criteria. When I sent out information regarding the study, I told participants they could have experienced any type of crisis (e.g. a hostile or violent incident, a natural disaster, or a political or social incident) so long as it had an impact on the majority of the campus community. That is, the crisis needed to be an organization-level crisis. Participants were asked to have been members of their institution’s crisis management team at the time the crisis occurred, as this helped bridge the personal experience of the crisis to what happened afterward in terms of organizational-level response and post-crisis change. Additionally, it was critical that they had been affiliated with their IHE long enough to reflect upon changes occurring post-crisis and to reflect meaningfully on the experience.

I began by reaching out to specific colleagues who I knew had experiences which met the criteria for participation (the specific scripts I used for the recruitment are located in Appendices I and J). I asked them if they would be willing to engage in the study, and if not, if they would be willing to share the call for participants with others who were similarly qualified. Using informants to identify other participants who may fit the study parameters, as I did in this study, is a form of *snowball* or *chain* sampling (Patton, 2015). Fortunately, two of the participants were able to connect me to others who were qualified to participate. Thus, I was able to recruit the remaining three participants.

Ultimately, I was able to recruit and interview five participants, all of whom had substantial experience in student affairs administration and in crisis management. There
were many others to whom I had sent solicitation materials but who were hesitant to participate in the study due to a variety of factors. One participant insisted they were willing to complete “my survey” even after I had clarified the nature of the data collection process I was using. Others were hesitant to engage in any research process that involved creating drawings or art pieces, noting the discomfort they felt since they were “not an artist.” Still others were perhaps not the best match for the study, since they had minimal crisis leadership experience or had only managed what they described as crises that were “not that big a deal.”

I chose to stop collecting data at five participants since I ended up with approximately 200 pages of transcribed interview data (single-spaced) and eight reflective drawings. This felt like a sufficient amount of data from which to draw meaning and insight into the research question. Additionally, each of the five participants notably shared experiences managing a specific type of crisis on the campuses they served, namely the death of a student or employee. This common thread throughout the interviews added a layer of common context through which I could explore the research question.

Once participants agreed to partake in this endeavor, I scheduled an appointment for our first interview and emailed them the informed consent document (Appendix E) to ensure they understood the obligations and protections involved in participating in this study. At the beginning of each participant’s first interview, I reviewed the study parameters one more time and verbally discussed the informed consent. I also reminded participants of the informed consent at the beginning of the second interview, asking if
they had any questions that had come up between interviews. We then engaged in the narrative interviewing process in pursuit of answering the research question.

**Integrating Data Collection and Analysis: Crystallization**

Since “narrative inquirers frequently find themselves crossing cultural discourses, ideologies, and institutional boundaries” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 59), I chose to use semi-structured narrative interviews and a reflective drawing exercise as two means of collecting data. These methods complemented narrative inquiry methodology and facilitated storytelling through both spoken word and the creation of participant-generated images.

I focused the narrative approach to this study on the ideational and interpersonal aspects of story, or those aspects which lend meaning to the story and help describe the relationship between the storyteller and others in the story, as well as between the storyteller and the listener/researcher (Sandelowski, 1991). In constructivist interviewing, interviews take the form of a “conversation with a purpose” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 100) where the researcher and participant co-create meaning of the data through their conversation. The narrative data exist within and among the dialogue that occurs between the researcher and each participant. In addition to narrative interview data, I also asked participants to create reflective drawings as another way to make meaning of their experiences (Riessman, 2008).

Data analysis in this inquiry was an emergent, iterative, and inductive process. In constructivist inquiry, data analysis begins with the data itself rather than a theory or hypothesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection and data analysis are interconnected throughout the lifespan of the study. Data analysis is emergent and inductive in that the
researcher allows patterns and themes to emerge from the constructions within the data rather than imposing meaning on the data (Patton, 1980). Analyses were co-created between each participant and me throughout the interview.

Rather than waiting for the completion of data collection to begin analysis, data collection and analysis in this study were continuous and interwoven. The process of engaging with the participants during the interview was a form of analysis as I asked clarifying questions to ensure I understand the meaning behind the stories shared by participants. I also drew upon insights shared by participants in the interviews with other participants, thus connecting the narratives in a way among all participants. This served as a form of member-checking, wherein constructions were affirmed by the participant throughout the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We were actively co-creating understandings as we shared our experiences with each other. Additionally, the analyses and insights generated within each interview informed the subsequent interview in an iterative cycle where new insights and questions emerged from one interview to inform the next, and from one participant to the next.

To guide data collection and analysis, I selected crystallization as the overarching framework for this study. The use of crystallization in qualitative research was first proposed by Richardson (1992) as an alternative to triangulation as a validity criterion in qualitative research. She proposed that instead of the need to validate findings, researchers could instead use the metaphor of a crystal. The prisms of a crystal “reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963). Instead of triangulating among discrete points of information, researchers can crystallize, shifting
the way they look at the data to produce different understandings (Richardson, 2000).

Ellingson (2009) expanded on Richardson’s (1992) work, conceptualizing crystallization as an entire methodology by which researchers could conduct qualitative research, articulating crystallization as a process which:

- combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers’ vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p. 4)

In this sense, the crystallization approach aligns with a constructivist paradigm. Since all knowledge is situated, it makes sense that researchers challenge understandings of data by exploring the data from different vantage points. When researchers hold to one specific genre of analysis, they may miss ways of looking at and understanding what is found (Ellingson, 2009).

Principles for the effective use of crystallization include using thick description to situate findings within the natural context of inquiry; using data collection and analysis methods as well as representational forms from at least one constructivist or postpositivist approach and one interpretive, artistic, or analytical way of knowing; using multiple genres of writing; researcher reflexivity; and situated and partial truth claims (Ellingson, 2009). These tenets align with constructivist approaches to research as constructivism situates knowledge within a socially constructed context, with engagement by a reflexive researcher who challenges productions of knowledge that purport to be complete or objective.

Crystallization afforded me the opportunity to collect, analyze and present data in myriad ways, using traditional analytical and representation strategies (e.g. description of
themes and patterns elicited from data), as well as creative presentations of data (e.g. writing plays or poetry, or using drawings or photographs). Exploring the data from these different vantage points allowed me to understand different facets of the data and see new meanings and understandings within it. Crystallization requires various analytical approaches across the qualitative spectrum (Ellingson, 2009). While ultimately the analytical strategies in this study were dictated by the process of data collection, it is critical to spend prolonged time with the data and with the participants, revisiting the data throughout the entire research process and allowing the data to dictate the ways in which it is analyzed. Figure 3.1 summarizes the relevant framework of crystallization, demonstrating the qualitative continuum that underpins this form of scholarly practice.

As a part of the participant’s experience and situated within it, my approach to this study created space for them to share their individual stories through a semi-structured narrative interview (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Muylaert, Sarrubi, Gallo, Neto, & Reis, 2014), then engagement with a reflective drawing exercise, followed by a second semi-structured interview. The reflective drawing exercise, the creation of a metaphoric drawing in response to a specific prompt (Barry, 1996; lisahunter, 2017; Mannay, 2016; Tracy & Redden, 2015), helped participants deepen their exploration of the topic ahead of the second interview.
**Figure 3.1.** Crystallization along the qualitative continuum [Diagram]. From L. Ellingson (2009), Engaging crystallization in qualitative research, pp. 8-9. Copyright 2009 by SAGE Publications.
Each aspect of data collection was also a form of analysis. In the interviews, participants share their stories of their most salient crisis experiences and what those experiences meant to them. The drawing exercise allowed a deeper, nonverbal means of processing which then informed the second interview. During the second interview, we discussed the process of making and the meaning behind the drawings. Using two different data collection methods provided the participants space to process the crisis event both verbally and nonverbally. By using both semi-structured interviews and reflective drawing, I attempted to draw on methods from both the realist and impressionist ends of the qualitative continuum. Through the process of creating and sharing both stories and drawings, meaning was co-created in the interaction between each participant and me.

I engaged in a similar process throughout the study, so I could experience what participants were asked to do. While pondering those crises most salient to my professional and personal growth, I shared my own crisis stories and engaged in the reflective drawing exercises. Instead of participating in an interview, I journaled my experiences. I used the drawing exercise prompts to produce reflective images as well. These insights are similarly captured throughout this study. Situating myself, my stories, and my drawings in this study also aligned with a constructivist worldview since I was part of the research, not apart from it.

**Semi-Structured Narrative Interviews**

The primary source of data for this study were semi-structured narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Interviews are central to most narrative research, though they are not the exclusive means by which narrative data can be
collected (Riessman, 2008). Interviewing with the goal of listening to narratives rather than scripting questions and answers ahead of time differs from traditional notions of interviewing because it compels the interviewer to “give up control, which can generate anxiety” (p. 24). Relinquishing control of the interview both empowers the participant and helps the researcher see, hear, and feel more of what emerges during the interview because the researcher is less focused on anticipating the next step in the interview process (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

Narrative interviewing is also a co-creative process in which active listening and engagement is required of both the participant and researcher as a “unique story is told to the researcher in [a] particular way” (Gemignani, 2014, p. 129). The stories constructed and shared during a narrative interview are specific to the interaction between the researcher and participant, making a narrative interview both a dialogical process of co-creating narratives and socially situated in the time and space of the interaction (Beuthin, 2014). Thus, each interview transcript is a moment-in-time view of how the participant felt, processed, and shared in that moment. Since stories evolve over the lifespan, a similar interview conducted at a later date may elicit a different story, even from the same participant.

In order to conduct this form of interview appropriately, I needed to anticipate my anxiety (and perhaps any anxieties the participants may have felt) and strive to be fully present for each participant’s story. It was also important for me to minimize the structure of the interview to allow space for complete stories of crisis to emerge in all their messiness and chaos. A central tenet of narrative interviewing is when a story emerges during an interview, to allow the story to unfold completely, without interruption or
interpretation in the moment. This required me to employ truly open-ended questions and then yield the space to allow participants to fully answer the question. Only after the story was shared did I ask any questions that emerged from the story, and those questions were meant to clarify and better understand the story and its influence on the participant’s life (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). These questions continued to deepen and shape the narrative while demonstrating mutual interest in the subject matter, resulting in co-authorship of the story (Paredes & Cordella, 2011). Semi-structured narrative interviews lend themselves to narrative exploration as the researcher and the researcher’s experience become part of the storytelling process. The narrative interviewing process is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Narrative interviewing diverges from a typical question-and-answer approach to interviewing common of other methodological forms (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Narrative interviewing strategies, which are minimally structured, seek to minimize the role of the interviewer while allowing for the unmitigated, in-depth narration of the participant’s story (Muylaert et al., 2014). As mostly an unstructured approach to interviewing, it allows the participant to tell their story in their words without interruption to “avoid imposing any form of language not used by the informant during the interview” (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 61). By not over-structuring the interview in advance, the interviewer can remain nimble to what emerges in the storytelling process. This approach centers the storyteller’s construction of events and allows greater space for co-construction of meaning with the researcher.
Throughout my career, I have honed my ability to ask powerful, open-ended questions and to listen fully to the person with whom I am in dialogue. As a Title IX investigator and coordinator, as well as a threat assessment professional, most of the time I spend with interviewees is spent listening to their stories and asking clarifying questions to deepen my understanding and their own reflection. My approach in these professional spaces is always to seek understanding from the perspective of the interviewee. As a researcher who has primarily conducted research in a narrative fashion, I have developed skills both to build rapport and to allow the participant the space and time to share their stories.

Through these experiences, I have worked through the anxiety I felt this way previously.
when dead space – which I used to feel was an indication that I was un-interesting or misunderstood – was present. While I still have moments of anxiety attached to silence, I am more aware of the fact that silence is time for reflection, introspection, and contemplation, and should not be feared. These skills and experiences inform my approach to the use of narrative interviewing within this inquiry.

In the loose structure of the interviews, participants were first be asked to share their story of the crisis event. Keeping the interview loosely structured opens space for the participant to share their experience and explore its meaning and significance without interference or interruption. Follow-up questions, which were only meant to clarify content immanent in the narratives shared by participants, were conversational in nature, in alignment with the entire interview approach. The interviews were audio-recorded to capture the story in the participant’s own words. I then transcribed the interviews using Trint™, an online, artificial intelligence transcription service. Once Trint™ transcribed the interviews, I went back through the audio recordings and edited any incorrect transcriptions and added some additional verbatim transcription to try to remain as true to the original telling of the story as I could.

First narrative interview. The purpose of the first interview was to allow participants to tell their story of the crisis (see Appendix G for interview guide). During the first part of the interview, or initiation, I took time to get to know the participant. I asked them to tell me about their life and experience, how they came to be a student affairs professional, and how they came to occupy their current position. I reciprocated by sharing with the participants a bit about myself, my professional journey in higher education, and how I came to be interested in crisis management as a topic of inquiry.
During the next portion of the interview, which entailed the main narration, I asked the participant simply to tell me the story of the crisis they had chosen (I had asked them to select one or two ahead of the interview) and provided space for participants to simply tell their story without interruption. Asking this very open-ended question offered participants an opportunity to tell their story without judgment or interruption, which elicited deep sharing. Participants spoke at length, sometimes pausing in their stories as though anticipating a question from me. However, I left space to allow the story to continue to unfold. Only after they concluded their story did I begin to seek clarity through asking reflective questions. I focused the reflective questions on gaining a better understanding their story as well as how they made sense of their experience. At the conclusion of the first interview, I thanked participants for their willingness to share their stories. I then provided the prompt for the reflective drawing exercise, which I detail further in the following section. As this study was emergent by design, the interview approach for each interview changed as the study developed and new insights emerged from each interview (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I left space between the first and second narrative interviews so that participants could engage fully in the drawing exercise. Two participants had not completed their reflective drawings at the time of the second interview. For one of those participants, we took time during our in-person interview to complete the exercise prior to starting the second interview. The other participant chose not to engage in the drawing exercise.

**Second narrative interview.** As this study was emergent, the scope and approach to the second interview depended greatly on both the first interview and the drawing exercise. I also wove into the second interview insights that emerged during interviews
with other participants. I transcribed the first interview prior to engaging in the second interview so I could have time to sit with the story and develop a sketch of what I wanted to address during the follow-up. The focus of the second narrative interview was to continue to engage in co-creation of meaning around the stories the participant shared during the first interview and to reflect upon the drawing exercise. This served as another form of member-checking as well, where constructions from the previous interview were discussed and clarified in the second interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I began the second interview by asking participants if there were any new insights or reflections that emerged between the first and second interviews that they wished to share with me. We then discussed their reflective drawings. I asked about the process they used to create these drawings, and asked that they explain the drawing’s significance, what the images mean to them, and how the images connect to the story they shared during the first interview. Much like the first interview, the second interview was quite conversational in nature, which allowed for continued co-creation of meaning. The second interview guide is located in Appendix I.

**Ongoing narrative analysis.** As previously mentioned, the process of engaging in the narrative interview was itself a means of analyzing the constructions emerging from the data. There was an intuitive aspect of this process wherein I noted what emerged from the data, questioned why and how these ideas were emerging, sought clarity in the interviews, then returned to the data to continue this process. It was important that I remained open to the possibilities, not seeking confirmation or corroboration but rather a felt sense of worth in each narrative and among and between all the narratives. Throughout this iterative analysis process, I used reflective journaling (Guba & Lincoln,
1994) and drawing as a means of making meaning of the stories and images collected throughout the study while keeping track of my thought processes and research decisions. Aligning with a constructivist and inductive approach to analysis, this placed my own process as central to the inquiry, being transparent with the reader my own understandings of and the ways I engaged with the data (Hickson, 2016). Additionally, I used peer debriefers as a means by which to strengthen credibility of the study by engaging in reflexive dialogue with them regarding methodology and analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Spall, 1998). A description of the use of peer debriefers in this study is found later in this chapter.

**Poetic (re)presentation as data analysis.** Crystallization compels researchers to use arts-based approaches to analyze data. I selected poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997) as an analytical strategy in this study that aligned with the artistic end of the qualitative continuum. Poetic transcription is the use of transcribed interview data to create poems using participants’ own words (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1992). Poems are powerful tools for understanding experience and eliciting emotional responses from readers (Carr, 2003). Diverging from traditional forms of data analysis and presentation, I used poetic (re)presentation to explore meaning within the transcripts. (Re)presenting the data as poetry bridges analysis and art. I deliberately chose (re)presentation to problematize this form of writing while simultaneously embracing it. To (re)present is to acknowledge “a profound agnosticism towards the relationships between writing and reality” (Rhodes, 2001, p. 12). Eliciting poems from interview data is both a performative exercise and a way of representing meaning from the data (Prendergast, 2006). The poems become a representation of participants and their experience although the reduction, to a certain
extent, disconnected participants and their individual and collective experience. Thus, I have chosen to weave poems together with narrative passages and the reflective drawings to create a tapestry of understanding.

To create transcription poems (Glesne, 1997) I first began by reading and re-reading each transcript to identify salient passages. There was an intuitive aspect to this identification. Rather than seeking to code the data, I explored finding passages that had deeply emotional language, or were complete stories in and of themselves. Naturally, the passages-turned-poems needed to address an aspect of crisis or crisis management. Once I found the passages, I removed the filler text, then inductively spliced the remaining text into stanzas and verses, giving flow and rhythm to the resulting poems. This experimental form of data analysis allowed me to be playful with the data and to give artistic voice to the participants’ stories. as the resultant poems also created another angle from which a reader could see and make meaning of the data in alignment with the crystallization framework.

**Drawing in Narrative Research**

Drawing and other arts-based approaches are powerful tools for meaning-making (Cole & Knowles, 2008), allowing participants to tap into the unconscious while “slow[ing] down and re-evaluat[ing] their lives” (Mannay, 2016, p. 112). Arts-informed research praxis compels the “subjective and reflexive presence of the researcher” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61, emphasis in original) as the researcher takes on the role of artist-researcher and uses an artistic approach to the research process. Arts-based methods are not something that is done to the participant, but rather are tools for helping both participant and researcher express themselves in new ways, exploring their experiences in
playful and organic ways (Cole & Knowles, 2008). In this sense, arts-based methods align with constructivism’s call for researcher reflexivity as well as the co-construction of knowledge and insight.

While narrative research has historically focused on words and verbal stories as data, images can also be used to tell stories and facilitate story-making (Riessman, 2008). Images can be used in narrative research in a variety of ways, including the collection of pre-existing images, the researcher’s own creation of images as part of field work, and use of visual approaches to facilitate participants’ creation of stories (lisahunter, 2017). This inquiry uses the latter approach, embedding the creation of a visual piece as a data collection strategy, as well as the middle approach as the images I created are part of the data collection and analysis. Using visual forms of expression in constructivist research help participants “[convey] their world in ways they may have purposefully avoided or never thought to do” (Barry, 1996, p. 412). Creating images helps participants capture an idea that may transcend simple words or explanations and allows for a more holistic exploration of meaning than conversation may afford (Weber, 2008).

The use of drawings has been established as a valuable data collection strategy in organizational research (Tracy & Redden, 2015). Drawings are unique as they allow participants to connect to the emotional content of extremely difficult times in their lives. Drawings also “allow people to express unconscious aspects of their situation or identify what they would otherwise be unable to explicitly discuss” (p. 243), which makes this data collection method ideal for sharing about fragmented and traumatic events such as crises.
Reflective drawing exercise. In order to connect the first and second interviews, I asked participants to produce two 8.5” x 11” reflective drawings in response to the prompts found in Appendix H. These prompts offered participants another means by which they could explore their crisis management experiences. Assurances to participants were important as not all people are confident in their artistic abilities (Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith, & Campbell, 2011). This came to fruition throughout the data collection process, despite my efforts to offer encouragement in the reflective drawing prompts and reassuring language in the informed consent. It also meant that I needed to remain flexible with participants – two participants asked if they could use collaging instead of or in addition to drawing. Since the process was more important than the medium, I agreed to let participants use whatever visual medium felt good for them. Three of the four participants engaged remotely, so they sent me their images. One texted pictures of the images to me, one emailed their images, and one sent hers in the mail. The fourth participant who engaged this exercise created the drawings and provided them to me in person since we saw each other for the first and second interviews. While I had initially wanted the images ahead of the second interview to allow me time to reflect upon them, this only came to pass with two of the participants. One created her second drawing during the interview while the other sent hers to me following the second interview (though we discussed them during the second interview since she had completed them prior).

Situating drawings. Drawing was employed as a central data collection strategy, so I used both participants’ images and my own to illustrate the textual data. In narrative research, “visual representations of experience – in photographs, performance art, and
other media – can enable others to see as a participant sees, and to feel’’ (Riessman, 2008, p. 142). In Chapter Five, I situated the drawings adjacent to the transcription poems and narrative motifs provided by each participant, so the images could be connected to the context and process of the image-maker (Mannay, 2016). Since each participant was asked to share their process of creating the drawings, I included some of these process notes as well to guide the reader.

A Cohesive Whole: Data Presentation Using Crystallization

There are two broad approaches to presenting data in the tradition of crystallization. The first approach, *integrated crystallization*, weaves together diverse data interpretations and presentations into cohesive narratives that “reflect (and straddle) multiple points on the qualitative continuum” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 97). The diverse representations are located within a single text in either woven or patched form. The researcher portrays findings in a variety of ways, such as poetry, drama, photographs, films, or art within a cohesive, singular presentation. The second form, *dendritic crystallization*, is “an ongoing and dispersed process of making meaning through multiple epistemologies and genres, constituted in a series of separate but related representations based on a data set” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 97). The result involves creating multiple texts to reach a variety of audiences. The goal of dendritic crystallization is to create representations of data from diverse angles, not multiple representations of the same form (e.g. multiple poetic or dramatic representations derived from postmodern approaches to research).

For the purpose of this study, Chapters Four and Five each present a distinct analytical approach and thus the composite of both represents a dendritic approach to
crystallization. However, this dissertation in its entirety is an integrated crystallization project, where various uses of data and analytical approaches are woven throughout. By combining narrative passages, transcription poetry, and reflective drawings alongside my own reflections, drawings, poems, and analyses, I created a cohesive analytical project wherein the data and their analyses are not disparate but rather interdependent with each other form of analysis to create a profound research story.

**Ethical Considerations**

Researchers should not rely solely on institutional review to determine what merits ethical research conduct as these processes can emphasize protection of the institution over protection of participants (Lahman, 2018). Central to the ethics of constructivist researchers is respect for the autonomy and agency of research participants, consideration for the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits participation in the research endeavor may yield (beneficence), an ethic of do-no-harm (non-maleficence), and justice both in the research process and in the representation of participants within the research product (Denicolo et al., 2016). Constructivist researchers gain the trust of participants and thus are expected to share respectfully their insights into participants’ lives (Manning, 1997). We are duty-bound to do so in a manner that protects the identities of participants and respects their right to know.

Richardson (2009) articulated the central role of reflexivity in ethics within crystallization. Reflexivity goes beyond merely presenting who one is as a researcher to help the audience understand their approach to the research. Reflexivity involves constant reflection and assessment upon oneself, one’s actions and choices within the research process, and how participants and their stories are represented in the research product.
Member checking is often employed as a means to enhance the quality of the representation (Ellingson, 2009). I attempted to engage in member checking throughout the two interviews, checking my assumptions and interpretations with the participants as we went. Not only did this help to ensure the fair and non-exploitative representation of participants in the study, but also served as an analytical imperative. As this is a constructivist study, the active engagement and collaboration between me and each participant was an important part of the co-construction of meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

In order to maintain these ethical standards, I clearly articulated the research process and expectations of participants both in the informed consent document, before the initial interview, and in the debriefing at the conclusion of the second interview (see Appendix I for the script for the post-interview debriefing). I chose not to involve those populations determined to be vulnerable under law or policy (e.g. children, participants experiencing incarceration, participants with developmental disabilities). To protect the identities of the research participants, each participant was afforded the opportunity to create a pseudonym and identify those pronouns which they wanted used to represent them throughout the study. I tried to represent the participants’ contexts while also anonymizing the institution-specific information they provided which could be used to identify who they are. I also did this to protect their institutions’ reputations and to avoid causing harm to those who may have been mentioned in their stories, particularly the families of the victims. However, based on uniqueness inherent in the stories they shared, I was duty-bound to inform each participant that there were limitations to anonymity and that I could only do so much in pursuit of this goal.
It was also important that I was sensitive to the storage of the data, particularly in this day and age. Data collected during this study were anonymized and stored on a password-protected external hard drive in my home office to which I am the only person who has access. The list of participants’ identities, signed informed consent documents, and other personally identifiable information were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office to ensure the security of the data as well as protect the identities of participants. I never shared the names of participants or their personal information contact information with anyone else involved in the study, nor with the peer debriefers I entrusted to help me throughout this process.

**Peer Debriefing**

The use of peer debriefing is an important analytical strategy for researchers engaged in constructivist inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Peer debriefing bolsters the credibility of the study by engaging the researcher in a reflexive dialogue about their methodology, methods, and findings throughout the study. In her research on peer debriefing processes, Spall (1998) found that trust was imperative to a good peer debriefer relationship, as are knowledge of the context of inquiry and the methodology used by the researcher.

Peer debriefers offer not just analytical and methodological support (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), but also serve as an emotional sounding board with whom the researcher can discuss their challenges and obstacles and a support system to encourage the researcher on their journey (Spall, 1998). Using peer debriefers helps the researcher understand how their emotional responses may inform how they are engaging with the data. This became critical throughout the research process. This process was stressful,
both as I relived crises in which I was involved and heard about others’ experiences of crisis. Having a good peer support network with whom to work through the emotional content of the research process helped me attend to my own self-care and aided in the alleviation of compassion stress (Rager, 2005). Compassion stress emerges when a researcher is engaged in emotionally taxing subject matter (Rager, 2005). While researchers engaged in research on traumatic experiences often feel their scholarship is meaningful, they also experience secondary trauma based on the experiences shared by participants (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2018). This became true for me as I engaged in this study. I found myself struggling emotionally and energetically following each interview. While I found the interviews overall to be fascinating and learned much from the stories shared by participants, I also empathized deeply with the loss they encountered, with the interactions they had with families of victims and with their staff members, and with the personal process by which they made sense out of the tragedies that had occurred.

For the purpose of this study, I invited the aid of two peer debriefers with whom I have developed a trust relationship over the past 13 and 15 years, respectively. They are familiar with my work and research as well as the ways in which I process my emotions. They both are interested in the topic of inquiry (crisis management) from their own professional experiences and are familiar with narrative methodologies based upon their education and research. The first, a senior professional in higher education and student affairs and a Ph.D. holder, is a trusted friend who has been working in the field of student affairs and higher education for almost as long as I have. She has served on crisis management teams and has extensive experience working with people in trauma. She is a
friend and confidante who understands my methodology and has been a consistent source of support in this process. The second peer debriefer is a long-time friend who is engaged in her doctoral journey with both a master’s degree in college student personnel and a Master of Divinity degree. Her insight and counsel have helped me through numerous academic and personal challenges. Both of these amazing women are well-acquainted with the way my mind works and how I approach research, but better still bring divergent theoretical lenses to the research process. One is a poststructuralist with pragmatic leanings. The other is a liberation theologian and critical race scholar. Both are brilliant practitioner-scholars who, after careful consideration, agreed to serve in this important role.

**Authenticity Criteria**

Lincoln and Guba (1985, 2013) identified two sets of criteria for assessing the quality of constructivist research. The first, *trustworthiness criteria*, includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and was modeled in part after post-positivist validity and reliability criteria. These trustworthiness criteria, also known as methodological criteria, align more with positivist scientific traditions (Lincoln, 2001). The second set of criteria is called *authenticity criteria*. Authenticity criteria are intrinsic or paradigmatic fidelity criteria, and include fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. Authenticity criteria was developed with constructivist inquiry in mind (Lincoln, 2001), making these tenets ideal for application in this inquiry.

The fairness criterion “attempts to undermine and interrupt the dominant position representation and interpretation of research results as conventional science” (Lincoln,
A balanced presentation of the data is critical to a fair and well-reasoned research process. Fairness in this study involved checking different viewpoints and different constructions throughout the process within the data analysis, as well as being clear about my researcher positionality. In exploring my own understandings and being transparent about the ways in which those understandings shaped the research process, readers can understand the choices I made as a researcher. Crystallization as an analytical approach is also a way of achieving fairness as the divergent analytical approaches I used (i.e. active co-construction, poetic transcription, and situating drawings) allow readers to see data from different perspectives. Additionally, peer debriefers offered a sounding board and helped me to check my assumptions and discuss the constructions emerging throughout the process. In addition to my peer debriefers, I asked two additional colleagues to read through Chapters Four and Five to ensure they made sense and felt fair to participants. Both reviewers hold terminal degrees in education and in sociology and agreed that my choices herein were well-reasoned.

Catalytic authenticity involves “[stimulating] some form of action” (Seale, 1999, p. 469) as a result of the inquiry. Thus, the research process and product both must identify challenges within the stories shared which compel the reader to do something with the information presented (Lincoln, 2001). By using three different analytical strategies woven together into a cohesive text, I hope to engage the reader and keep their interest as they follow participants’ stories. Catalytic authenticity is addressed in the explicit description of implications for research and practice. I also hope that others will use these studies for future scholarly publications to impact graduate preparation and professional practice. I asked participants if they wanted a copy of the dissertation as well
all agreed they wanted to see the findings, so they could potentially translate the study to their institutional context. One participant even suggested I use these findings to engage in consulting work, helping to catalyze change on campuses by stimulating conversations about how IHEs plan for and manage crises.

Tactical authenticity in this study involves empowering participants to continue their exploration of crisis management and professional development through participation in the study. Tactical authenticity also involves building skills so that communities can become more self-sufficient (Lincoln, 2001). I shared the results with participants by sending Chapters Four and Five, so they can use the study to inform action on their campuses. The interview process itself was an opportunity for participants to deepen their understanding of organizational crisis through a co-constructive process wherein we shared our stories and understandings. I engaged tactical authenticity further by being transparent in how the data was to be used, both in the informed consent documents and in the wrap-up conversations with participants following the second interview. Member checking was used tactically to co-construct meaning with participants throughout the interviews, facilitating fair and authentic representations.

Ontological authenticity is achieved by presenting the findings of this research to those in higher education settings with a goal of raising consciousness around crisis management and potentially find more effective ways to engage in graduate preparation and professional practice around crisis management competencies. On a broad level, ontological authenticity involves helping people develop more complex understandings of themselves and the world (Seale, 1999). The research process itself implored participants to challenge their worldviews, increase self-awareness in relation to the
topic, and further develop their narrative in context (Lincoln, 2001). Since participants had the opportunity to engage in active co-construction during the interview process, the participants’ understandings and my own were challenged. The ontological authenticity criterion aligns well with a constructivist study as its goal is to help participants consider how they construct the world the way they do.

Finally, educative authenticity encompasses sharing constructions with others, both participants and broader audiences, as a means of helping people understand the various constructions and how they may vary from, and inform, their own (Manning, 1997). Educative authenticity is a broader imperative than the ontological authenticity criterion in that it encourages participants to construct meaning with the researcher, which encourages a more participatory approach to the research (Lincoln, 2001). Educative authenticity occurs in at least two ways within this study. First, when I asked clarifying questions of participants, these questions helped them to clarify their story and their understandings of the phenomenon under study. Second, participants have the opportunity to read and review the findings, which include the stories of other participants. They can gain insights from others’ experiences and compare and contrast their experience to those of others in the study.

Rather than using positivist or post-positivist criteria for validity and fitting them to the study, these authenticity criteria are derived from constructivist ideals of co-construction and naturalistic inquiry. The researcher and participants are active participants in the research process, facilitating co-construction of meaning throughout each phase of the process. These intrinsic fidelity criteria are predicated on the idea that
research should be conducted with and for participants, activating change in people and their organizations and communities (Lincoln, 2001).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explored the paradigmatic assumptions and methodological strategies underpinning this inquiry. The paradigm, or worldview, is an integral part of any study because the paradigm informs every aspect of the study design. Research is stronger when all aspects of a paradigm – ontology (e.g. the nature of reality), epistemology (e.g. the nature of knowledge), axiology (e.g. research ethics and values), methodology, and research methods – are aligned.

This study was situated within a constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constructivism asserts that reality and knowledge are respectively subjective and socially constructed (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010). Constructivist approaches to research assume that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and brings their experience and insight to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Human beings make meaning of their experiences through social interactions (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). In this study, understandings are co-constructed in the interaction between researcher and participant which aligns with a constructivist worldview. Additionally, research is not value-free. As knowledge is co-created between individuals, this study presupposes that both researcher and participant bring experience and insight to bear in the process of co-constructing new knowledge, and thus the researcher’s voice is present alongside the participant’s (Denicolo et al., 2016).

Narrative inquiry was selected as the methodology. Narrative inquirers assume human beings make meaning of their experience through the development and sharing of
stories (McAdams, 2008). This methodology aligns with a constructivist paradigm as well as with the research question: how do campus leaders at an IHE make meaning of a campus crisis event? Narrative identities, the ways in which individuals shape their lives through the stories they tell, are social and cultural phenomena (McAdams, 2008). In sharing our stories of crisis experiences on college campuses and describing our histories and contexts, participants and I develop new insights into crisis management. This narrative space, created through semi-structured interviews and reflective drawing, allows both participant and researcher to process their experiences and deepen their understanding of who they are (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007).

This inquiry employed crystallization (Richardson, 2000) as an approach to both data collection and analysis, which aligns with the emergent, iterative, and inductive nature of the study. Crystallization is an approach to research highlighting the need to explore data from various vantage points, like light refracted through a crystal (Richardson, 2000). Crystallization requires the use of diverse data collection and analytical strategies to weave together multiple genres representing of what is found (Ellingson, 2009). Thus, data collection and analysis occur simultaneously in this inquiry.

Prior to participation in the study, participants reviewed an IRB-approved consent form outlining the parameters of the study and had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. Participants, who must have experience managing crises and serving on crisis teams on their respective campuses, were asked to share their story of managing a crisis on campus during the first semi-structured narrative interview (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Additional questions were asked to seek better understanding of each participant’s story. Participants then engaged in a reflective drawing exercise (Barry, 1996; Cole &
where they responded to two prompts regarding what the participant learned through managing the crisis and what changed at their institution following the crisis. This exercise and the stories shared during the first narrative interview informed the second narrative interview. The second interview explored the reflections of the researcher and participant from the first interview and the reflective drawing exercise and continued active co-creation of their understandings of the crisis event.

Data analysis strategies, interwoven with data collection throughout the inquiry, included ongoing narrative analysis, transcription poetry, and situating the drawings produced by participants with explanations of their significance. Since the interviews themselves were active co-creations of meaning, the process of engaging in the narrative interview was data analysis as constructions emerging from the data are represented in the study. I used reflective journaling and drawing as an additional strategy for making meaning of the interviews and keeping track of research decisions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Poetic (re)presentation in this study involves the use of transcription poetry (Glesne, 1997) whereby passages from the interview transcripts are reduced to poetic verse as another representation of the data. Finally, since this study involved collecting reflective drawings from participants, which were then presented in the context of the interview data and poems in Chapter Five. These analyses were woven together into a tapestry using both dendritic and integrated crystallization (Ellingson, 2009), ultimately combining multiple genres of representation from along the qualitative continuum into a cohesive whole. This approach aligns with a constructivist approach which seeks to move
from specific constructions to a holistic and cohesive exploration of the phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The ethical integrity of this study was of paramount importance. Throughout data collection, analysis, and representation, I adopted an ethos of autonomy, beneficence, non-malfeasance, and justice as key philosophical and practical underpinnings of this constructivist inquiry (Denicolo et al., 2016). Authenticity criteria were implemented to ensure the inquiry’s alignment with the constructivist paradigm and the intrinsic quality of the study (Lincoln, 2001). These criteria, rooted in naturalistic inquiry, include fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). My own reflexivity played an important role in the achievement of each of these components, and thus my own insights and experience are represented throughout the inquiry. Peer debriefers (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) also are used to ensure fairness and educative authenticity while serving as the researcher’s sounding board regarding methodology and processing emotions arising from the study.

In Chapters Four and Five each, I used different approaches to the analysis and presentation of data. I chose to use a journal manuscript format in this study to further engage in dendritic crystallization. The first article, Chapter Four, was written in alignment with the standards of the Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice. This journal is heavily practitioner-focused and thus I ensured I presented implications for both graduate preparation and student affairs practice therein. Readers will find Chapter Four to be more middle ground in its approach, as this chapter is presented using a quite standard article format. Chapter Five, conversely, is situated along the
impressionist/artistic end of the qualitative continuum. This chapter, written to the standards of the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*, combines poetic transcription, motifs of the narrative data in participants’ own words, and the participants’ reflective drawings to create a tapestry through which readers can find their own meaning. I concluded Chapter Five with a methodological reflection which felt appropriate for this type of journal, problematizing the data collection and analysis processes so that others may gain insight into the methodological issues that arose for me throughout this study.
CHAPTER IV

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF EVERYBODY? NARRATIVE INSIGHTS ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT FROM SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTITIONERS

This chapter is formatted for submission to the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, a NASPA publication.

**Contributions of Authors**

Author: Matthew L. P. Ricke

Contributions: Conceived the study topic, designed the study, collected and analyzed data, and authored this manuscript.
Abstract

Crisis management is an essential competency for student affairs leaders (Holzweiss & Walker, 2018). The author draws upon two narrative interviews conducted with five experienced senior student affairs professionals as part of a larger arts-based narrative study which included narrative interviews and reflective drawing. Each participant reflected on a death event on campus and the lessons learned through this experience. Bolman and Deal’s (2017) work on organizational frames was used as a theoretical framework guiding analysis. Insights include connections with victims’ families, connections to crisis leaders’ own families, tensions between structure and intuition, adaptability as a necessary competency, memorializing tragedy, and applying lessons learned to new organizational contexts.

*Keywords:* crisis management; narrative research; organizational frames; student affairs; college student death
Did You Take Care of Everybody? Narrative Insights on Crisis Management from Senior Student Affairs Practitioners

On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), perpetrated a violent mass-casualty incident on campus. The attack lasted over two hours. Cho first shot two students in a university residence hall before moving on to a classroom in an academic building for Engineering Science and Mechanics, where he shot and killed five faculty members and 25 students before he turned his firearm on himself (Vicary & Fraley, 2010). The incident resulted in 32 deaths, 17 injuries, and extensive psychological harm to students, faculty and staff (Hughes et al., 2011).

Though hardly the first campus tragedy, the Virginia Tech incident may have served as a tipping point in how higher education institutions understand and manage crises (Jablonski et al., 2008; Treadwell, 2017). Characterized by acts of violence, these types of campus tragedies have influenced the development of a new professional discipline within higher education administration, Institution of Higher Education (IHE) emergency management (Farris & McCreight, 2014). Other crises, such as the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse scandal in 2011 (Giroux & Giroux, 2012), highly publicized campus protests (Tracy & Southall, 2015), and governmental intervention into campus sexual misconduct cases regarding Title IX (Kingkade, 2016), and environmental catastrophes (e.g. Hurricane Katrina; Brown, 2014), have compelled IHEs to review their crisis management procedures to improve effectiveness and to reflect upon the role of crisis leadership in navigating critical incidents on campus.
Statement of the Problem

Crisis management is an important facet of leadership within an organizational context (Baumann, 2011; Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005; Lawson, 2014; Mishra, 1996). Specifically, organizational leaders are expected to detect the early warning signs of crisis, help their constituents make sense of crisis during and after the event, ensure the continuity of business and academic operations in the wake of crisis, minimize the damage caused by a crisis, and learn from and reflect upon the crisis management response to improve organizational effectiveness in future events (Wooten & James, 2008). Understanding the latter, the process by which leaders reflect upon crisis and make meaning of their experience, is a crucial and understudied component of effective crisis leadership.

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and NASPA: Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education have identified crisis management skills as essential to the effective practice of student affairs. Specifically, these organizations developed professional competencies in the areas of Organizational and Human Resources as well as Advising and Supporting which directly articulate crisis management dispositions for professionals in the field (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). These competencies (e.g. understanding campus emergency protocols, creating campus crisis management plans, responding to students in crisis) compel practitioners to develop deep understandings of crisis management systems as well as learn crisis skills for interpersonal and organizational crisis management. It is the overwhelming need to maintain the integrity of the mission of institutions of higher education and the safety of
students, faculty and staff that makes the study of crisis management compelling for student affairs educators and other higher education professionals.

To date, scant empirical exploration of the personal meaning-making process of higher education leaders who have managed crisis on campus has been conducted. By expanding understanding of the role of meaning-making in organizational crisis leadership, the field of student affairs and higher education can facilitate more effective training for future higher education leaders as they encounter campus crises. If higher education leaders do not understand how crises change them and their organizations, they may continue to manage crises as they always have without improving themselves and the crisis response. Therefore, through this study I sought to address this dearth in the higher education literature.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this constructivist narrative inquiry was to explore how higher education leaders make meaning of their experience with an organizational crisis on campus. Through narrative interviews (Riessman, 2008), as well as arts-based narrative methods (Riessman, 2008; Tracy & Redden, 2015), I sought to develop a deeper understanding of the issue of crisis meaning-making. Thus, this study contributes to a richer and more contextualized understanding of crisis management as a leadership competency as well as how leaders then use the meaning they glean from the management of a crisis to inform personal growth and organizational change. To this end, the following research question was addressed: how do campus leaders at an institution of higher education (IHE) make meaning of a crisis event?
As I was collecting data for this study, a common thread emerged: the death of a person or persons is perhaps one of the most salient, recognizable, and trying crises one can manage on a university campus. Each participant found themselves in a crucible as they sought to navigate the crisis, drawing upon their experience, institutional infrastructure, and personal and professional resources to facilitate the resolution of the crisis and help the community heal. They each spoke to how these types of crises informed their practice, sharing along the way valuable lessons for student affairs professionals who may find themselves in similar situations in the future. In this article I draw upon the data provided by the participants to explore important facets of crisis response that may inform both graduate preparation and professional practice in student affairs.

**Literature Review**

The purpose of crisis management is to address “broader impacts and consequences of a full range of events and issues” (Blue Moon Consulting, 2015, p. 3). Crisis management “has become an important aspect of leading higher education institutions” (Peters, 2014, p. xii) because the potential risks of harm are many, including responsibility to ensure the safety and integrity of the students, faculty, and staff at the institution. Crisis management involves the application of principles of effective management to either prevent or minimize damage caused by a crisis, and to protect stakeholders from adverse situations (Coombs, 2007). There are three priorities when managing a crisis, in decreasing order of importance:

1. safety of the public or stakeholders
2. financial stability of the institution
3. reputation of the institution (Coombs, 2007)

First and foremost, a crisis management plan should focus on the maintenance of life and property as it pertains to the safety of members of the campus community. The safety of the public could arguably include both physical safety and emotional wellbeing.

While it may be tempting to create a strict model to ease the development and implementation of a crisis response, crisis management is more of a process than a set of steps (Zdziarski, 2006). Stages can clarify and explain the lifespan of a crisis, though there is no single model to address all crises. However, common models of crisis management divide the management process into three or four categories, depending on the researcher. Coombs (2012) identified three common phases or stages of the crisis management process across theories: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. A comparison of various stage models and how each articulates various conceptualizations of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis is found in Table 4.1. It is important to explore each of these stages and the activities therein to understand more fully the breadth and depth of crisis planning and response.

**Stage Models of Crisis Management**

Multiple stage models of crisis management have been developed. These frameworks offer a useful roadmap for the prevention of, response to, and recovery from a crisis. While each framework approaches organizational crisis management from a different vantage point, each essentially divides crisis management into three phases – pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis – and identifies the actions needed by crisis managers and constituents during each phase.
Table 4.1

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**Pre-crisis stage.** Critical to the pre-crisis stage is detecting early warning signs of crisis (signals, if present), acting to address the signals prior to a crisis developing (prevention), and having an established plan to address various crises if they occur (preparation). The importance of identifying organizational weaknesses and potential threats, as well as environmental scanning both internally and externally, are important facets of signal detection (Elsubbaugh et al., 2004). Most organizations do not institute early warning systems to detect crisis signals. In higher education systems, such processes as financial audits, review of incident and crime reports, and compliance reviews serve a signal detection function (Genshaft, 2014). However, higher education organizations, particularly large ones, lack the resources to transcend routine checks for potential crises, thus increasing campus vulnerability. Establishing communication channels empowering all constituents, including students and alumni, is a key component of crisis signal detection (Genshaft, 2014).
Crisis preparation or planning involves the development of a strategic plan for addressing various types of crisis events, particularly those with a high likelihood of occurrence (Zdziarski, 2006). Planning is arguably the most important part of the crisis management lifecycle, and involves such activities as tabletop exercises, drills, and policy review and revision (Bataille & Cordova, 2014). Tabletop exercises are common as they involve informal discussion about simulated incidents and include more cost-effective ways to plan for potential crises than full-scale exercises or simulations (Perry, 2004). Failure to plan for crises may increase the likelihood of negligence suits since institutions are liable for addressing foreseeable risks, and crisis planning is seen as a form of due diligence (Coombs, 2012). Because plans themselves can only address so many contingencies, the process of crisis planning is potentially more important than the plans themselves (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). Practicing and working through various scenarios can increase institutional capacity to make nimble decisions in the face of diverse crises.

Campus leaders have an obligation to place crisis management and preparedness as a strategic priority to ensure the safety of the campus. While they may have plans in place, many institutions of higher education have chosen not to test their emergency plans due to the low probability of a crisis event occurring (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015), as well as the cost and time to carry out emergency exercises (Rollo, Zdziarski, & Dunkel, 2007).

Denial impacts planning. Crises are seen often as anomalies, resulting in poor planning and poor response from institutional leadership (Booker, 2014). It is imperative to not have just a crisis plan in place, but also to work through the “denial of the occurrence of these low probability events, rationalization of the adequacy of present
systems to deal with them should they occur, and the ‘positive thinking’ approach many leaders find effective” (Smits & Ezzat Ally, 2003, p. 5) as these characteristics are detrimental to crisis readiness. There is a need to have and test a crisis plan, but the plan itself need not address all possible crisis scenarios (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015). Essentially, crisis plans are scaffolds for addressing a variety of crises, not a one-size-fits-all plan nor one which is overwrought to address all possible circumstances.

**Crisis stage.** The crisis stage covers the time from the triggering event to the time the crisis is resolved. Coombs (2012) broke the crisis stage into two sub-stages: crisis recognition and crisis containment. Recognition involves the acknowledgement the circumstances are indeed a crisis. Difficulty arises in recognizing a crisis in part due to the complexity of systems in which crises unfold and the lack of feedback mechanisms in place to identify crises early (Boin, ‘t Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). As the technological and structural complexity of the organization increases, so too does its propensity to experience crisis. Crisis plans can increase the risk of crises going undetected as “risks can be normalized to the point where they become irrelevant” (p. 25), which causes a false sense of security. In other words, when crisis managers become overly reliant on the plans and do not train to engage with various complex scenarios, they may lack the capacity to adapt to the nuances unique to each incident.

Coombs (2012) discussed the need for situational awareness, or the ability to take in information about the situation and the context to make informed decisions about next steps. Because crises often involve information voids, substantial amounts of information are required to respond, meaning crisis management teams often become overwhelmed. Additionally, “because the amount of available information exceeds the human ability to
make sense of it” (Coombs, 2012, p. 130), team members and crisis leaders rely on experience to inform current action. Since each crisis is unique, applying a previous action plan to a contemporary crisis may be a mismatch.

Crisis containment is the process of using the intelligence collected to make informed, prompt decisions about both how to respond and how to communicate decisions to stakeholders as a means of mitigating the crisis (Coombs, 2012; Zdziarski, 2006). For the crisis response to be effective, all parties involved should have clear expectations of their roles and training to enact their role (Zdziarski, 2006). Success in this endeavor is predicated on success in the planning phase, so “participants become sensitive to problems that may emerge during a crisis” (Boin et al., 2005, p. 147), as well as building team unity.

**Post-crisis stage.** The crisis management process ends with a period of crisis recovery, followed by critical reflection on the crisis management process in order to learn for future crisis events. Zdziarski (2006) noted the lack of preparation to recover from a crisis, and lack of awareness of how long it can take an institution to recover from crisis. The goal of crisis recovery is to “resume operations as quickly as possible” (Zdziarski, 2006, p. 8), the timing of which depends upon the type and extent of the crisis. Since crises are not static nor consistent from event to event, crisis learning is paramount. Post-crisis is the stage in which institutions reflect critically upon the crisis response and recovery and make decisions regarding its effectiveness or ineffectiveness to make change to policies, procedures, or the institution itself.

Crisis recovery involves those “activities, both short and long term, which help return conditions to normal or improved levels” (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). If
possible, this is also the time where plans are revisited to minimize future impact given
similar circumstances. Crisis recovery, like crisis response, occurs at various levels. At
the level of the crisis team, self-care is critical. It is the responsibility of the crisis leader
to help the crisis team, who has been on the front lines of the crisis response, tend to their
emotional and physical well-being (Abraham, 2014). Deploying counseling resources,
granting time away, or providing dedicated space for the team to process and debrief are
often helpful.

**Operational continuity.** Another layer of crisis recovery involves returning the
campus to normal operations, known as business continuity (Coombs, 2012). Attending
to the health and welfare of constituents are also included in the process. Damage should
be assessed and plans to address infrastructural concerns triaged to facilitate the return to
business. Depending on the extent of the crisis, the campus may need substantial time to
recuperate. Shaw (2016) explored the ways in which campuses recover from, and are
changed by, major disasters. Higher education organizations are changed irrevocably as a
result of a major campus crisis, so achieving a state of equilibrium as opposed to
returning to a previous norm is a more desirable outcome. As part of the recovery
process, institutions should explore ways in which it must change, such as developing
new policies or revising old ones, and ensuring changes are institutionalized sustainably.

In comparing the experiences of two universities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina
and Rita, Shaw (2017) found that “a state of equilibrium is characterized not simply by
resuming business, but by overarching stability in institutional operations interspersed
with the small, incremental changes needed to maintain those operations” (p. 107). There
are two goals during recovery, making the length of the recovery shorter and finding and
accessing resources to aid in recovery (Shaw, 2017). Success in these endeavors is predicated on factors beyond the institution’s control, such as when the crisis occurred and the extent of damage, and on factors within the institution’s control, such as the extent to which the organization has cultivated beneficial external partnerships and transfer and maintenance of organizational knowledge and institutional memory. In the case of damage following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, participants noted while extensive damage prolonged the crisis punctuation period, or the time between the crisis event and the recovery, being part of a state university system facilitated recovery and continuity. Proper planning prior to a crisis attending to factors within the institution’s control can help speed recovery.

Memorializing. A longer-term aspect of crisis recovery involves remembering the event. Campuses memorialize tragic events in different ways. On May 4, 1970, four students were killed, and nine others injured, when members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on unarmed protesters at Kent State University. Twenty years later, following years of candlelight vigils on campus and the establishment of the Center for Applied Conflict Management, the university dedicated an on-campus memorial to the tragedy (Cartwright, 2014). Memorials and traditions such as these also bolster resilience. Resilience involves maintaining a positive affect in the face of crisis while aiding in recovery from trauma (Doherty, 2010). Community rituals, such as candlelight vigils and memorial services, can bolster students’ sense of community, safety, and togetherness by providing collective space to grieve and process events (Goldstein, 2011). These spaces afford community members the opportunity to express themselves, which is a powerful tool for healing (Wesener et al., 2010). Drawing on the sense of collective identity
intrinsic to the university, memorials can lead to more robust cooperation among various campus constituents during crisis recovery. Collective identity affords universities a uniquely innate resiliency which may not be common in other settings (Goldstein, 2011). Institutions also provide other symbolic gestures to promote healing and memorial, such as the posthumous awarding of degrees and the creation of memorial scholarships, all while balancing memorializing the tragedy and moving on from it (Wesener et al., 2010).

**Post-crisis learning.** Learning occurring post-crisis informs pre-crisis planning in anticipation of the next crisis (Lagadec, 1997), pointing to the cyclical and ongoing nature of crisis management. However, as with most learning processes, gathering lessons from the aftermath of crisis is not as simple as it may sound. Post-crisis learning occurs on the organizational as well as the personal level. Within these levels, post-crisis learning is influenced by the organizational context, cognitive factors, and political and social dynamics (Boin, 2009). Those impacted by crisis can reframe crisis as a learning opportunity as they seek to make meaning of the event for themselves (King, 2003). Part of the meaning-making process for constituents involves determining who is responsible for the crisis and why the response unfolded the way it did. Organizational constituents make meaning of a crisis both during and after a crisis, drawing inferences on causation and response as well as how the organization is perceived by external stakeholders (Kovoor-Misra & Olk, 2015). Similarly, crisis learning is impacted by a sense of hopelessness resulting from the crisis as a lack of hope impedes one’s desire to put in the effort to engage in an organizational learning process. However, crisis learning did not
seem to be impacted by views that the organization’s leaders were responsible for the crisis (Kovoor-Misra & Olk, 2015).

**Methodology**

This narrative inquiry focuses on the phenomenon of organizational crisis, specifically exploring how meaning is created through stories within and around a crisis as well as how can inform organizational change. Fundamental to narrative inquiry is the assertion that human beings make meaning of their experiences through the creation and telling of stories, forming a narrative identity situated within a cultural context (McAdams, 2008). Stories shared by individuals provide insight into their experiences, as well as the organizations in which they operate. Narrative approaches to data collection help participants express both the chronology of events and the meaning-making process within their stories by providing the opportunity to recount and make sense of significant events in their lives (Sandelowski, 1991).

Narrative research is both descriptive and explanatory (Polkinghorne, 1988). It allows participants to share their experience—perhaps one they have never shared before—and in the (re)telling helps participants explain the context, circumstances, feelings, inferences, and interactions of their lives while exploring the social phenomenon under study. Collecting narratives can also help explain how and why something occurred as it did, as participants from different vantage points offer their insights about what they saw, heard, and smelled; how they felt affectively, emotionally, and spiritually; and how a life experience impacted and shaped them. Narrative inquiry is not merely about recounting stories, but is a specific research approach allowing the researcher to understand and describe:
a) the individual and group narratives of life stories or particular life episodes; b) the conditions under which one storyline...prevails over, coheres with, or conflicts with other storylines; c) the relationship between individual stories and the available cultural stock of stories; and d) the function that certain life episodes serve in individuals’ emplotment of their lives. (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 163)

Rather than seeking common threads that would indicate a singular and definitive finding, I instead allowed the narratives shared by participants to stand on their own merits. While some common concepts emerged, each participant’s lessons, shared here in their own words, are significant.

Constructivism aligns well with narrative methodologies. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) argued that, “Narration is constructive, a way of fashioning the semblance of meaning and order for experience” (p. 166). Narrative constructions create order out of otherwise chaotic life experiences. In short, individuals make sense of their experiences via the stories they tell. Sharing stories is a means by which individuals share their constructions of their experiences with each other, and through dialogue construct new meanings and insights. Indeed, the creating and sharing of stories allows individuals to process their emotions and reclaim the power to author their own experiences and to create/re-create their identities (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). In this sense, each narrative exploration, each moment of story-sharing between participant and researcher, is a gift to be cherished and an opportunity for new understandings to emerge, rather than a data point to be triangulated.

Since “narrative inquirers frequently find themselves crossing cultural discourses, ideologies, and institutional boundaries” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 59), using varied methods of data collection was important to understand these various discourses and ideologies. In this study I employed two data collection strategies: semi-structured
interviews and prompted drawing. These methods complement narrative inquiry methodology and facilitate storytelling through both spoken word and image.

**Data Collection**

Participants were recruited for this study using purposeful and chain sampling (Patton, 2015). Each participant met specific study criteria and were recruited based on their experience and were then offered the opportunity to refer other similarly qualified participants. The participants were asked for the names and contact information of others who may be qualified to participate. Solicitations were sent via email and phone calls. While many individuals expressed interest in the study, five participants—all of whom were senior-level student affairs practitioners with more than 20 years of experience in the field—engaged in the study, sharing their stories of crisis management and insights. Each participant engaged in two semi-structured interviews bridged by a drawing exercise. All interviews were recorded and transcribed first using Trint™, then manually reviewed for fidelity. Drawing exercises were submitted either electronically or directly (in person or by mail). All five participants participated in both a first and second interview, and four of the five participants engaged with the reflective drawing exercise.

Participants were asked to share the story of the crisis they helped to manage. Follow-up questions were asked during the second interview to deepen understanding of lessons each participant had learned through and after the crisis. The results presented in this article are part of a larger study and draw upon the narrative interview data, with specific focus on the lessons learned by each participant and how those lessons translated into both personal growth and organizational change.
**Data Analysis**

Data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). Analysis in this study was an emergent, iterative, and inductive process. In constructivist inquiry, data analysis begins with the data itself rather than a theory or hypothesis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection and data analysis were interconnected throughout the lifespan of the study. Insights and themes emerged from the constructions within the data rather than having meaning imposed on the data (Patton, 1980). Rather than waiting for the completion of data collection to begin analysis, data collection and analysis in this study were continuous and interwoven. During the interviews, I engaged with participants by asking clarifying questions to ensure I understood the meanings behind their stories. This is a form of member-checking, wherein constructions are affirmed by the participant in the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the interview, understandings of participants’ and the researcher’s experiences are co-created. The analyses and insights generated within each interview informed the subsequent interview in an iterative cycle where new insights and questions emerged from one interview to inform the next. Themes were induced from the individual stories rather than seeking to find commonalities among all stories (Riessman, 2008).

**Analytical Framework**

To guide data analysis and deepen understanding of crisis management in a higher education context, I selected Bolman and Deal’s (2017) model of organizational frames. In this model, there are four frames through which leadership and organizational behavior can be analyzed and understood. Frames are mental models that guide leadership and decision-making. These frames develop over time and become instinctual, driving
leaders’ approach to management. The four frames are human resources, political, structural, and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Leaders who operate from a human resources frame place personnel at the center of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The interplay between the organization and its personnel is crucial; organizations can only function if the people in it are healthy, effective, committed and well-trained. Organizations exist to improve the quality of life for those they serve, including internal and external constituents. When organizations are faced with a challenge, leaders will go to the personnel to attend to their needs and capitalize on their individual strengths to help the organization persist.

Those who operate from the political frame view organizations as battlegrounds or contests for power and influence (Bolman & Deal, 2017). They tend to approach leadership from a scarcity mindset, working to maximize the allocation of resources to meet their goals. With respect to decision-making, “Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests” (p. 184). The political frame analyzes organizations through the coalitions of which they are composed, and the values and interests of these coalitions. Conflict can arise when divergent coalitions compete for resources or needs within the organization.

The structural frame views organizations as rational enterprises wherein the goals of the organization must align with its structures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Leaders operating from this perspective are driven by the mission and goals of the organization and place importance on rationality over emotion or personal needs. When tensions arise in the organization, one solution is to troubleshoot structural flaws and then restructure
the organization accordingly. Structural frame leaders are often focused on the organization’s hierarchy and flow of information.

Finally, the symbolic frame is focused on “how myth and symbols help humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world in which they live” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 236). Leaders are driven by meaning, passion, and purpose, as well as developing a strong and cohesive organizational culture. When conflict emerges, leaders invoke the mythos of the organization, galvanizing its members through myth, ceremony, and stories. Organizational symbols (e.g. values, heroes and heroines, stories, or rituals) help guide personnel through challenging times.

While it is likely that individual leaders’ personalities inform their preferred frame, over time and through experience, leaders become more socialized into a particular frame. Tensions can emerge when the frames from which organizational leaders approach their work from divergent frames. For instance, with respect to decision-making, human resources leaders want to cultivate buy-in and get feedback from personnel while those operating from a structural frame want to make decisions following a logical process of action steps.

In crises, people tend to operate from instinct and thus may invoke their preferred frame to navigate a crisis. This may augment the tensions that can exist between frames. However, in order to respond effectively to organizational challenges, organizations and their leaders must be willing to reframe, which “requires an ability to think about situations from more than one angle, which lets [leaders] develop alternative diagnoses and strategies” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 6).
In using the four frames to analyze the stories and insights of these five higher education leaders, tensions can be identified which may be useful in understanding crisis leadership and provide insight into how to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of crisis responses. Finding ways in which to “[harmonize] the frames and [craft] inventive responses to new circumstances [is] essential to both management and leadership” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 298) and therefore also is also critical to developing oneself as a crisis leader.

**Participants**

**Jaymie**

Jaymie has been working in various roles in student affairs for over 25 years. She was a joy to interview, so energetic in sharing her wisdom with a sarcastic sense of humor that mirrored my own. Crisis had always been part of her portfolio, whether facilitating conversations in the hallway with residents after a critical incident or coordinating campus-level emergency response as a dean. Jaymie has worked at almost all levels of higher education organizations and has an earned doctorate. She shared many stories, but the one most salient to her was when she got a phone call from one of her residence hall directors after a former student staff member had jumped from a window in an apparent suicide.

**Kavort**

Kavort was a kind and genuine person to speak with. He had come to his current position as a dean of students following a few interim appointments and stints as a consultant and faculty member. He also holds a doctorate and had worked in higher education for more than 35 years. Kavort struck me as the consummate philosopher.
Meaning-making was important to Kavort as he reflected on what keeps him in the profession. He chose to share with me the story of the transformative effect of one student’s death. This student had died following a night of binge-drinking after being hazed by members of his fraternity at an off-campus event. I knew this was a pivotal moment in Kavort’s career as I could hear the emotions in his voice as he shared this painful memory.

**Michaela**

Michaela was logical and to-the-point, but also deeply compassionate, which I felt reflected in her stories to how she approaches crisis management. Michaela occasionally couched her answers in her Myers-Briggs type. She, too, is a dean of students, and has served the years in her recent career at community colleges. Her 35-year career in student affairs has taken her through almost every role one can imagine, which has given her a well-rounded background for her current work. While she shared multiple experiences, the first and most salient story she shared involved the death of a student on a small rural community college campus – in his residence hall – after his roommate found him unresponsive.

**Iain**

Iain described himself as a first-generation college student whose mother put him through college. He had worked his way through various positions across the country, starting out in residence life. In his current role, he serves as a vice president of student affairs. He was structured in his approach to sharing his story, which no doubt came from years of presenting to audiences about crisis management and the specific crisis responses he had led. While he now works in private, nonprofit higher education, his
crisis story involved a tragedy at a larger public institution. He shared the story of a mass casualty incident, the collapse of a bonfire that resulted in the loss of twelve lives.

**Trilobite**

Trilobite came to this study in the role of associate vice president of student affairs. He had been working in the field of student affairs for over 35 years, and like many others came to the profession by way of residence life and housing. Like Iain, Trilobite has spoken and written about crisis management. While Iain alluded to responding to multiple homicides one summer at his then-institution, he shared instead about responding to the death of a staff member from an apparent suicide. I could tell how emotional this was for him to share, even years later, and he noted he is probably more sensitive than he exudes.

**Findings and Discussion**

Each student affairs professional interviewed shared both the story of the most salient crisis they managed as well as insights gained over their robust careers. As previously noted, each of these crisis narratives involved the death of individuals on campus. Table 2 provides a brief synopsis of the crisis shared by each participant. The findings below capture some of these insights and connects those insights to the organizational frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These insights include the impact on family, tensions between structures and crisis response, the need for adaptability, the importance of memorializing, the role of student affairs professionals in crisis response, and organizational change.
Connections with Victims’ Families

Trilobite shared a tension that exists for some student affairs practitioners wherein “there’s still the perceived *in loco parentis* that we have as institutions, and whether the law says we do or not, the families say we do.” While no longer a matter of common law, the notion that institutions should act as parents to their students still persists, most notably in calls for accountability following a catastrophe on campus. He noted how following a crisis, blame can be placed on senior administrators, and of late this has resulted in the suspension or termination of directors, deans, vice presidents, or presidents who are perceived as liable for the loss of life. Trilobite noted that “every time I talk to a parent on the phone, there’s this higher standard or expectation for us than they would be seeing elsewhere.”

For Jaymie, she reflected on two occasions in which she had the terrible responsibility of identifying the body of the student who had died. During the second incident, Jaymie waited with the student’s body for six hours while the parents travelled to the hospital. She noted the student’s father’s reaction when he arrived to identify his son:

> We told Dad he was deceased. But in the six-hour trip he forgot. And so, when he arrived, he was like, “I want to see [my son],” and I’m like, “OK.” And he walked in and the noise he made – I’ve only heard this noise twice, the same noise. It’s only in the situation of seeing a dead kid. Like seeing the kid. It’s a totally different noise. It’s guttural. .... He looks at me, and he goes, “He’s dead.” And I’m like, “Mmmmm.” And he gets so scary angry. .... He said, “Have you been here the whole time? You’ve been here with my dead son?” And he just fell out.

Jaymie remains in contact with this father, periodically exchanging text messages. She was scared when the father became angry but knew that his anger was not directed at her. Rather, she made a choice to stay with his son’s body for six hours and be there
when the parents arrived. She noted this was an opportunity to share space with this father, who was suffering, and be part of his experience. She further shared, “There were not words. I did not try to use them. I just was. And that’s where I get frustrated in the crisis management stuff. All we have to do is just be.”

Kavort reflected upon a moment when he crossed paths with a family member while he and others were packing his son’s belongings. His son had died during a tragic hazing incident involving alcohol. Kavort heard the student’s stepfather talking on the phone with the student’s mother. She was on an airplane flying to the campus and heard her son’s music play over the intercom. She had a felt sense that he was communicating with her. Both parents were in tears. Kavort reflected, “that just causes you to think beyond just, how do I pack up this box?” He went on to share how this interaction shaped his professional practice:

What it taught me is that one of the ways I communicate with parents now when their kid has died, is if there is an opening and the person seems open to it, I ask them: How do you make sense of this death in your own beliefs? Just because we say separation of state and religion, doesn’t mean that people don’t have a religious or spiritual experience when that happens. And so, I’ll often ask, how do you experience this from a spiritual perspective?

This type of moment, according to Kavort, is not one that happens often in student affairs professional practice. This speaks to the tension between perceptions of public higher education as purely secular and nonspiritual environments and the desire to respond holistically in the moment to the needs of the individual. Part of that holistic approach is attending to the spiritual or religious needs of someone who is suffering. Kavort noted that this is a critical moment wherein practitioners can help someone make sense of things regardless of their religious ideologies simply by asking the question, how do you make sense of this from a spiritual place? If practitioners are uncomfortable with that
language or with their own spiritual journey, they could refer to a chaplain or other religious leader who is equipped to respond. This support could also come from religious student organizations that already exist on campus and have community connections to faith communities.

**Connections to Family Life**

Some participants noted how their roles as crisis managers influenced their interactions with their immediate family. Friends and family can provide both a buffer and support structure to those who manage difficult situations, increasing overall resilience (Seville, 2016). Having a good familiar support structure seems critical to the success of any crisis leader.

Jaymie noted the impact of her crisis management responsibilities on her family. While she had not intended for her children to pick up on what she deals with on a daily basis, they nonetheless recognize the difficulties inherent in her job:

My family does this job, too. And my family manages crisis, too. And I would say that when there is a sexual assault and/or a dead student, my kids know. They... they know. And I don’t tell them. But they’ll come in and be, like, “Somebody died last night, right?” “Yep.” “Did you take care of everybody?” “Yeah.” “Are you good?” “Yeah.” I’m like, “How did you know that?” “We just know.” And they can’t tell me why they don’t know. But I must do something.

Not only did her crisis responsibilities shape her interactions with her family members, they shaped the family members’ perceptions of college as a dangerous place:

So, several of us have kids that are going off to college, and we’re super excited about them going off to college. And one of them, speaking, I believe, for the others, said, “We’re not all that excited about college. College is a scary place.
You talk about college as being, like, the best time of your life. College is a scary place where people die, and people get in trouble and people get raped and, like, really scary stuff happens in college.”

... And that’s when I started to realize that my kids do the job, that my family does this job, and that to some extent, if you’re going to be a crisis manager, the others around you manage you. And there’s some guilt associated with that. And there is some perspective that gets warped in them because of that.

There is a tendency for crisis leaders to shut down their own emotional process and attend to the needs of others. Trilobite noted that he tends to internalize his emotions instead relying on a linear and sequential approach to managing crisis. However, he recognized the importance of his significant other as someone with whom he could process, particularly considering she knew the individual who had passed away as well. They were able to talk through their feelings which helped ease the physical and psychological stress. Trilobite noted that stress can build if one internalizes their emotional response to a crisis.

Similarly, Iain noted how all-encompassing the management of a crisis can be. He shared a common response which follows, namely that “there’s that moment after, where it all kind of comes flooding back in. And you’ve got to deal with it.” He reflected upon a moment following his 20-hour-long response to the bonfire collapse, where he associated what had happened on campus to his own family connections:

After 20 hours, I went back to the scene. [The last victim] was brought out, and I went home. And my daughter was probably eight years old at the time, and she was already asleep. But I went into her room and literally just curled up with her and hugged her, because it hits you pretty hard.

That evening was, you know... clutching my daughter and thinking, you know, that... you know, 10 years from now, that could be me, losing my son or daughter at something at college.
Both Jaymie’s and Iain’s narratives highlight a human resources disposition in that family is a central theme, while Trilobite’s story juxtaposes the structural considerations that often take the forefront, and one’s own self-care can then suffer. Those who manage from a human resources lens tend to view their organizations as families (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It makes sense that family would play an important role in how they process and understand their crisis management responsibilities. Trilobite noted the central role his wife plays in processing the emotional content of crises. For Jaymie, she felt remorse for inadvertently creating fear of college for her children, who seem able to pick up on the types of crises Jaymie addresses without her naming them. Iain paralleled his own children with the victims he worked with during the bonfire collapse, which is evidence of his empathy for the student victims of that tragedy. He placed himself in the shoes of the parents of his students. This undoubtedly shaped his interactions with both students and parents as he sought to address their needs. This theme is further explored in how these leaders interacted with the families of victims.

**Tension between Structure and Intuition**

There seemed to be a tension between adhering to structural considerations such as liability and protocol while trying to use one’s experience and intuition to just do what is right. From an organizational frames perspective, this tension appears to emerge from a structural versus human resources frame. Additionally, there may be a dilemma of centralization versus decentralization, wherein centralization could be seen as a structural/hierarchical approach to crisis management while decentralization would provide more autonomy and agency to individuals to respond in ways that they saw fit. In times of crisis, decision-making authority tends to be centralized; however, ideally crisis
plans balance centralization and decentralization, particularly in organizations as complex as colleges and universities (Jenkins & Goodman, 2015).

In his story about being part of a team that managed a mass casualty incident on campus, Iain shared how he had the ability to make decisions without fear of micromanagement. He discussed the importance of simply doing the right thing while relying on one’s training:

[The President] didn’t want to interfere ... sometimes presidents or other leaders would just step in and want to take things over and direct things, but he let us do our job. And he said, “I don’t care what it takes. I don’t care how much it costs. We need to do what’s right for each of the people here.” And that kind of became our motto. Instead of questioning, should we do this – it was, do the right thing. ... We were tasked with that responsibility to do the right thing and it made our response a whole lot easier honestly.

However, doing the right thing is not always easy. Iain noted that doing the right thing may put a crisis leader at odds with university counsel, who are concerned with actions which may increase the institution’s liability. Fear of incurring personal or institutional liability could impede a leader’s willingness to make difficult decisions, even when those decisions feel most appropriate. Iain reflected upon how the shifting landscape of higher education law and calls for public accountability create an external pressure and scrutiny that did not exist to the same extent previously. In the back of one’s mind now is the risk of being sued or losing one’s job. This creates tension between a crisis leader’s desire to provide care and compassion and the risk that one’s response could be construed as liability. However, it seems clear that a balance must be struck between these two frames which allow leaders to address crisis holistically. Both a structural approach involving strong protocols and clear lines of communication and a human resources approach
drawing on individuals’ strengths and the need to care for the human element of the community are of paramount importance.

**Adaptability as Necessity**

One critical insight from this study was the need to be flexible and adaptable to meet the unique aspects of each crisis. While protocols can assist crisis leaders in responding cohesively to a crisis, often crisis protocols fall short of addressing every nuance a crisis may present. During the bonfire collapse, Iain noted a lack of specific protocol for the bonfire collapse and the need to adapt:

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Obviously, we did not have a crisis response protocol for bonfire collapse, but we did have a portfolio of other protocols that we used and adapted to respond to the situation. I already mentioned the missing student protocol. We also had a student death protocol of what we needed to do and who we needed to notify and how that would work.
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Specifically, they used their death notification protocol to inform how communication happened after a student victim was identified from the wreckage. The university needed to set up a make-shift morgue to deal with a mass casualty incident, something they did not have a protocol to address. However, their underlying protocols and the training they received created a scaffolding upon which they could build. Adaptability appears to be a key element of effective crisis leadership. In this specific example, if leadership had not been willing to build upon their existing protocols in the moment, then their response may have been less effective.

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One could spend significant mental bandwidth planning for every possible contingency, but as Iain noted,
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You can never plan for everything. If you plan for a good set of things, then your mind is freed up a bit, so that when there is something that doesn’t fit one of your plans, you’re able to focus all your energy on that and not be overwhelmed by the situation and all the unknowns.
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Michaela similarly reflected upon another crisis she managed, the death of a new student’s parent during new student orientation. This parent was found dead, likely due to natural causes, in his vehicle following the new student orientation program. Michaela noted:

I can’t cookie cutter – I can say, make sure you do this and this, right? Deploy a care team. Get counseling in. Offer it a lot the first month, and then offer it every couple of weeks. We can put a good plan in.

But the written plan is not a lock-step instrument, rather a guide which can be drawn upon to ensure a good response can be implemented. Jaymie identified that at a certain point in the process, one may find themselves at an impasse. For instance, if a key decision-maker in the process does not answer the phone, what then does one do? She shared that for crisis leaders to be truly effective, they need something beyond training and protocol awareness, such as resilience and flexibility and intuition, which cannot be trained and which not all student affairs professionals have. She said,

if you can’t, somehow internally... rejuvenate and be ready for whatever the next wave [of the crisis] is, it’s going to crush you. And that part I can’t train. ... there are parts of it that are at the crux of what it means to manage it, that has got to be who you are – the crisis itself has to give you energy.

If one becomes burned out during a crisis response, they may not be equipped to innovate and adapt, and are more likely to fall back on their protocol training.

**Memorializing Tragedy**

Memorializing occurred for the participants in two senses. First, in the traditional sense, crises on campus were marked by the campus community through ceremony and ritual. This type of memorializing can facilitate collective meaning-making (Wesener et al., 2010). Second, in the personal sense, participants memorialized these crises for
themselves in personal ways. This is a space in which crisis leaders can make their own meaning during and after a crisis, and thus promote resilience (Doherty, 2010).

Trilobite noted the importance of writing letters and personal notes as part of post-crisis meaning-making. He shared that this was his way of becoming more personal in his response to death contrasted to how earlier in his career he may have responded. He connected his response to the two death crises he shared to this process, sharing,

I think I’m much more empathetic. You know, I visit with parents. I’ll visit with sibs and roommates. I write letters. I write notes. I wouldn’t have done that previously. So, I’ve just become a little bit more personal about the death of somebody than I had before.

He went on to share how made himself available to groups of four or five who may have needed him to help process, but now he brings in someone from the outside, such as a counselor, to facilitate those conversations so he, too, can partake in the debrief. He shared that after the second death crisis he explored during his interview, he could not get through leading the group discussion. This critical moment of awareness helped him realize that he could show emotion, and that he did not have to be the person to hold space for others but rather participate actively in the memorialization. This gave him the space and permission he needed to process his own reactions as opposed to having to compartmentalize. Through this, he could be part of the group process instead of apart from it.

Kavort spoke about the organizational response to memorializing tragedy. In his story, he shared how one chaplain and members of a student organization coordinated a memorial service in a public space on campus. The family was present for the event and was invited to speak:
It gave a chance for the campus to recognize the tragedy but also the gift of life because a lot of what came out of it was: We miss him. Here's the message about him. Here's we're so glad you all came together. And let's learn from this. Let's watch out for each other. Let's support one another. So, this symbolic ritual healing and meaning-making of tragedy was very present during the ceremony.

These types of ritual markings of the death of a member of the campus community serve both a symbolic and human resources purpose. Rituals and other symbolic constructions, such as memorials, scholarships, and posthumously awarded degrees given to victims’ families (Wesener et al., 2010) help an institution and its constituents make meaning of a tragic event and rebuild, both emotionally and physically, thereafter. Community rituals, such as candlelight vigils and memorial services, can bolster students’ sense of community, safety, and togetherness by providing collective space to grieve and process events (Goldstein, 2011). These spaces afford community members the opportunity to express themselves, which is a powerful tool for healing (Wesener et al., 2010).

As a structural consideration, some form of memorialization should take place as part of the post-crisis phase. Drawing on the sense of collective identity intrinsic to the university, memorials can lead to more robust cooperation among various campus constituents during crisis recovery. Collective identity affords universities a uniquely innate resiliency which may not be common in other settings (Goldstein, 2011). However, it is imperative that a structural approach to embedding memorials into a crisis response not be formulaic – an organic approach, such as the one described by Kavort which comes from within the community and makes sense for the needs and wishes of the family and friends, is critical. An overly formulaic approach may come across as cold and unfeeling, merely another checkbox on the road to resolution of a crisis. The human
resources perspective, with its focus on caretaking, should be centered in the
development and implementation of such rituals.

**Applying Lessons Learned to New Organizational Contexts**

Every campus has its bonfire. Every campus has that event or that activity that is steeped in tradition and has happened for a long time. ... never you go to an institution, you have to stop and ask yourself, what’s their bonfire?

Here, Iain shared the transferability of crisis lessons. When he moved to other roles in other institutions and discovered a tradition that was potentially high-risk, he reflected upon the lessons he learned managing the bonfire incident to strategically address issues that this new event in this new context may present. He noted that sometimes institutions cannot see a risk that could evolve into a crisis because they have never experienced a crisis-level incident before, or they are so emmeshed in the way things have always been done that they cannot see another way. However, preventing a crisis from occurring is as important, if not more so, than being able to effectively mitigate and resolve a crisis. Effective crisis leaders have an obligation to prevent crisis from occurring and can use the lessons they have learned, plus the courage of their convictions, to question the status quo.

**Implications and Future Directions**

Crisis learning is not simply a one-time occurrence, but rather should reflect a continual commitment to becoming a more skilled crisis management practitioner. The crisis stories shared by senior student affairs professionals in this study have multiple implications for both graduate preparation and professional practice. Additionally, these stories point to potential research which could be conducted in the area of crisis
management which could then inform professional practice. Table 4.2 summarizes the relevant implications discussed in this section.

Table 4.2

| Implications for Student Affairs Graduate Preparation and Professional Practice |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| **Graduate Preparation** | **Professional Practice** |
| Use experienced crisis leaders as instructors for courses on crisis management | Promote role clarity by embedding crisis management training into new employee onboarding |
| Create opportunities for students to learn from real crises (e.g. case studies, interviews with professionals) | Continue crisis training throughout the employee lifespan |
| Embed crisis management competencies throughout the curriculum (e.g. legal issues) | Provide opportunities for new employees to share their crisis management experiences and critique institutional practices |
| Develop resiliency skills to help students cope with critical incidents | Continue to develop resiliency skills and provide opportunities for processing after critical incidents |
| Expand the existing ACPA and NASPA (2015) professional competencies framework to more robustly address crisis management competencies, which can then be used as a framework for graduate preparation and professional development |

Preparing Next Generation Student Affairs Leaders for Crisis Management

Student affairs graduate preparation programs find themselves competing internally to determine what curriculum should be taught. Some of this dilemma is shaped by the slow pace of curricular change in many graduate programs. Crisis management, as a key competency and increasingly critical skill set for student affairs leaders (Holzweiss & Walker, 2018; Shaw, 2018), should be addressed throughout a graduate preparation program, either as a standalone course or, more preferably, woven throughout the curriculum. Since this is a very experiential skill set as well, as noted by
the participants in this study, professional experience should run parallel to the curriculum and allow students to apply what they learn to managing crises in their assistantships. Since not all graduate programs require assistantships or concurrent practical experiences in student affairs, this may pose a challenge.

Crisis management competencies should be taught, at least in part, by practitioner-instructors who manage crises regularly and currently. Some participants noted there may be an experience and timeliness gap when a full-time faculty member who has not served as an administrator for some time is teaching this body of knowledge. Full-time faculty could also bring in guest speakers to share their current experiences of crisis management and the nature of crises impacting higher education today. Case studies, drawing upon relevant and realistic fact patterns, are often the best pedagogical approach to teaching crisis management skills as they provide a safe container for experimentation while allowing educators to present various scenarios (Shaw, 2018). One area of curricular importance is legal issues that emerge during and after a crisis. It is important for new professionals to understand how the law shapes how crises are managed, and how the law may impact the professional during and after a crisis. Participants noted a clash between student affairs practitioners and legal counsel for institutions. This may result from a lack of skills training on topics related to crisis management. This may reinforce the need for teaching an understanding of crisis from a systems perspective rather than simply a job functions perspective (Treadwell, 2017). Student affairs graduate preparation programs lacked education on critical areas to crisis management, such as construction codes and legal issues relevant to the crisis, and formative knowledge on student development or history of higher education may not
provide sufficient background to understand the intricacies of a crisis situation (Treadwell, 2017). Finally, it may be advisable to find ways to further cultivate resiliency skills during the graduate program to help new student affairs professionals cope with the realities of managing a complex crisis situation.

Crisis management will continue to be a critical professional competency in student affairs management, and thus additional exploration of how critical dispositions are taught is warranted. Additional research on what and how crisis management competencies are taught within graduate preparation programs could help identify gaps in curriculum which then translate to gaps in practice. Since effective crisis management draws upon various skills from across the curriculum (Treadwell, 2017), holistic approach to understanding graduate preparation, exploring how crisis management dispositions are socialized throughout the curriculum, may facilitate deeper understanding while allowing graduate programs to develop more explicit through-lines in their curricula.

**Implications for Student Affairs Professional Practice**

Graduate preparation alone is insufficient to prepare a student affairs professional to effectively manage a crisis. New professionals are often critical to the implementation of crisis management plans (Treadwell, Lane, & Paterson, 2020). However, new professionals often lack the necessary experience or skills to feel confident to respond to a crisis (Holzweiss & Walker, 2018). Specifically, many new professionals may feel ill-equipped to deal with a student death (Holzweiss & Walker, 2018), though they may be the first responders on scene to assist (e.g. residence hall directors).
One solution would be to normalize crisis management as part of onboarding and ongoing training and development. One participant shared that training on crisis management should be as salient as training on setting up one’s phone or email. Regardless of the level of crisis management responsibility one has, all staff members should receive crisis management training during the initial onboarding phase as well as throughout one’s tenure in their position. This training should cover one’s role in a crisis, the level of responsibility and autonomy they have to make decisions, and their lines of communication and reporting. Given the increasing frequency of crisis events on campuses, it is likely that all student affairs professionals at all levels will be called upon to respond.

Student affairs practitioners must also understand that crisis experience is transferrable. When new student affairs practitioners join an institution, they should be asked to share their relevant crisis experience. They should also be encouraged to share when they note potential risks in their new institution based upon prior experiences. These critical lessons can benefit intuitions which may have become accustomed to doing things particular ways, ways which may pose risk unseen by those within the institution. Additional research is warranted on the transferability of crisis leadership experiences and its influence on institutional prevention and mitigation.

Another participant noted a gap in the literature regarding crisis management budget, infrastructure, and personnel allocations. This echoes findings in other studies which suggest that new professionals lack understanding of applicable legal principles, infrastructural considerations, and contingency planning (Treadwell, 2017; Shaw, 2018). Further research is needed to identify how crisis management responsibilities are written
into student affairs job descriptions and how those responsibilities are operationalized. Additionally, further research is needed on if and how institutions budget for crisis preparation as well as crisis response and recovery.

Given the clear need for crisis management education in both graduate preparation and professional practice, there may be a need for ACPA and NASPA to revisit how crisis management competencies are integrated into the student affairs professional competency framework. Only a few specific mentions of crisis management dispositions exist within the current framework (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). As crisis management is a necessary and mission-critical aspect of higher education management, the underlying competencies necessary for effective crisis management should be more robustly reflected within these competencies. The findings in this study may point to other competencies to include in the framework, such as understanding of legal issues specific to risk and crisis management, knowledge management and transfer following a crisis, and facilitation of post-crisis learning.

**Conclusion**

Through this study I sought to identify how higher education leaders make meaning of their experiences managing campus-wide crises. The participants graciously shared their stories, focusing their attention on the death of persons on campus. These tragic narratives offered valuable insights into the ways in which crisis management shapes the practice of student affairs administration and these leaders’ lives more broadly. Using an organizational frames approach (Bolman & Deal, 2017) facilitated understanding how the lessons shared by participants can be contextualized into broader organizational considerations.
One participant shared that there are select crises, such as the Kent State massacre or Virginia Tech, that are “very key incidents that have happened that have driven the conversation in crisis management.” He shared how recent events involving Richard Spencer acting as a speaker at Penn State and the University of Florida, as well as hazing deaths on various university campuses, have driven policy change and resulted in reallocations of resources. He noted that “we can’t even speculate what that next incident is going to be and it’s very easy to look [back] on Monday morning over the armchair.” However, based on his experience, campuses can and should be planful and purposeful, ensuring they have trained their staff members well so that they can respond to myriad crisis events.

Ultimately, we learn from major crises that occur on our own campuses as well as others so that we can all be better prepared to address issues in the future. As crises seem to impact universities more frequently, it is imperative that student affairs professionals at all levels learn from the experiences of those who have come before so that institutions can be better prepared to prevent crisis and, if they occur, address them effectively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community. Studying the crises that have come before, and doing so from a cross-disciplinary approach, may facilitate the development of this critical skill set in student affairs graduate preparation programs and in professional practice. Most important, though, is the need to build crisis management skills and competencies that balance the tactical with the emotional, while allowing student affairs practitioners to attend to their own emotional wellbeing. As Iain astutely noted:

I don’t know that we can ever fully prepare [staff members] for that kind of situation. But how do we engage people in the conversation and get them to be
prepared? How do you begin to build that flak jacket, so to speak, that some of
that [traumatic stress] can bounce off you and not take it quite so hard? Yet, at the
same time, our jobs in student affairs call for us to be in that moment, to be in that
place, to empathize with others, to understand the hurt and pain so you can truly
help them, not only deal with it, but overcome it and be successful themselves.
CHAPTER V

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS FAMILY RIGHT NOW?
STORIES, POEMS AND DRAWINGS
ABOUT WORKING THROUGH
DEATH ON CAMPUS

This chapter is formatted for submission to the *Qualitative Inquiry*, a SAGE journal.

**Contributions of Authors**

Author: Matthew L. P. Ricke

Contributions: Conceived the study topic, designed the study, collected and analyzed data, and authored this manuscript.
Abstract

This article draws upon both visual and textual data from the author’s research on personal meaning-making in campus (organizational) crisis management. Engaging with a narrative methodology situated in a constructivist paradigm, each of the five participants were asked to share their stories in two narrative interviews and participate in a reflective art-making exercise. What came about were poignant reflections on one of the most intense campus crises one can manage – the death of members of the campus community. The author drew upon transcripts of the interviews to create transcription poetry. The poetry is situated adjacent to the participants’ drawings and vignettes (short excerpts from participants’ stories) to create a tapestry of narrative, artistic and poetic meaning. Following the presentation of the poems, prose, and images, the author reflects upon the methodological process.

Keywords: crisis management, narrative research, transcription poetry, arts-based research, reflective drawing
What is Going on in This Family Right Now? Stories, Poems, and Drawings About Working Through Death on Campus

At some point in the night, he died

I got a call:

_We’ve just lost a student._

An alcohol celebration, end of rush, up in the mountains, a pile of alcohol bottles and cans:

and they said,

_You can’t leave until that pile is empty._

So, they all drank, obviously, to excess.

He was asleep on the couch; they had drawn all over him because he was unconscious.

At some point in the night, he died.

They tried to avoid calling, tried to resuscitate him on their own, and couldn’t do it – finally called for an ambulance.

He had passed away.

- Kavort
Kavort shared how he processed through his grief following the death of a student on his campus. He created a collage (Figure 5.1) using marker and images cut out of magazines. He shared how:

I found a lot of the work I was doing with those that were affected was taking their mass of emotions and helping them make sense of what had happened and recover from it, not always by telling them what to do, but by listening more deeply and reflecting back.

This is represented by the image to the top and left of the collage. The mountain represents his learning through stories, the emotional impact (heart) of his interactions, and a desire to protect his students from harm. In producing this image, Kavort noted:

I was thinking about how I changed, I realized I hadn’t really reflected on that ‘til you asked. And I realized that for me, part of this [crisis] was an important incident in growing as a leader and the pathway up the mountain of leadership. . . It really brought the heart of the work to the surface.
Figure 5.2. Kavort’s drawing about organizational change following a crisis. Parts of this image have been redacted slightly to remove personally-identifiable information to protect Kavort’s confidentiality.

Kavort was part of many of the conversations on campus to instigate culture change – conversations with student leaders, with faculty, with athletics, with Greek organizations. There was so much movement in this drawing, I could feel the push and pull between stakeholders and how each wrestled with wanting to create change. This image was created by Kavort in marker:

What does that mean for how we grow up in the United States, and the role of substance use and abuse in the United States? And what is the role of higher education in raising kids into adults? And how much in loco parentis do we actually practice legally versus in the day-to-day reality? And what is the political nature and the symbolic nature of the event that cause [the university] to go through such dramatic changes while this whole thing was taking place? And when you change so many things, or at least try to, does anything really change? Does the underlying risk management or the way people perceive life, actually
change? I’m not so sure it does, even though the surface changes. For example, we changed – the drawing of the diagram for how [the university] changed – I realized there were multiple efforts that came out of this one death. Yet, they still struggle with alcohol [there] and fraternities and sororities [there] and students drinking too much alcohol and how fraternities and sororities get magnified as the problem when they’re not the only problem. (Kavort)

My staff was heartened he had a breath

A student came back to his hall to find his roommate unresponsive

9-1-1 was called.
They called me

The hall director and an RA trying to perform CPR on an unresponsive student thank goodness – firefighters and ambulance arrived

It got around what was going on

All of a sudden, many students were at the hospital

We needed to deploy someone to manage the flow of information to protect the family to let the students feel comforted, and staff

I knew the students better
So, I went

Just sat with a gathering liaisoned between the family and the students

When we knew the family was going to take off life support
we had to figure out
what to do
in the moment
long-term, in-the-moment

My staff was heartened
he had a breath
when he left

they didn’t want to tell people
he died
in the hall

he did die
later that day

His roommate
didn’t want to sleep
in that room.

We left that room open
for the rest of the school year.

- Michaela
Michaela chose to use collage materials (Figure 5.3) instead of following the strict reading of the prompt, which was to draw. She expressed repeatedly that she was not an “artist.” The maps evoke planfulness and preparation.
This collage (Figure 5.4) was made with scrapbooking supplies and stickers. In these two collages, Michaela reflected upon the personal character strengths she felt were critical to sound crisis leadership. She commented that the image in the center of the first collage – which appears as a list – refers to the crisis management protocol, and “lists things in order, and I feel really good about, I know the order.” This same image moves
from the foreground of the first collage to the background of the second, representing that “as we go through it, that order goes out the door.” These collages (Figures 5.3 and 5.4) together signify that the process in place to address a crisis is as important as possessing the dispositions to implement that crisis response effectively and compassionately.

**What is going on in this family right now?**

Everyone was just... bitchy
y’all are just
salty, like rock salt

What is happening?
this is not exhaustion
this is not frustration
this is something else

We are not having this meeting.
everybody sit
in the circle

I said:
*what is going on in this family right now?*

and I said nothing else
and we just sat there

And all of a sudden...
everybody shares
in the middle of the circle:

emotion...
exhaustion...
disappointment...
sadness....
yuck...
anger... resiliency...
annoyance... support...
defeat... connection...
anguish... genuine authentic dialogue,
pain... like actual, real talk.

that conversation
solidified relationships
that sustained
for sixteen years
they see each other
intentionally come together
it’s fascinating what happened
that day

- Jaymie

It’s fascinating what happened that day. [...] these [points to drawing] represent the people that were in that room that day - I like stopped the staff meeting and was like, What the hell's going on? And these [points to drawing] are all the tables that were otherwise in front of us in like a conference style, and they just got immediately moved to wherever they landed. So, there was like this cacophony of tables, like, everywhere, just like pushed out of the way because people couldn't get to the center in their chairs fast enough.

That was my experience of it, is, the people were... not... scrambling to have this time together, but the people were motivated to have this time together. So, it was the most un - for a housing group that's like - everything must be put away and then we put it back together - it was like - push everything out the way and let's go!

And then this kind of huge conversation happened, where everybody kind of shared, including people that don't talk at all. And the person who started is... is someone who is a... a voice, but not... would not necessarily have been... emotional in that place, and was wildly emotional, which I think made people go, Oh shit, like, this is a big deal, and gave permission to the rest of the group to be super genuine.

It immediately went to a deeper place versus being what could have been a really, potentially, surface conversation. This was not going to be a surface conversation. This is going to be a real deal. (Jaymie)
Jaymie drew this image (Figure 5.5) during our second interview. She had only completed one of the two drawing prompts, and so we improved. I asked her to draw what happened that day. She told the story of bringing her team together. The poem is derived from her recollection of that meeting, while the drawing is her illustration of the group dynamic in the space.

**I feel more grounded, the more crises I manage**

This is, theoretically, me.

These are my legs:

cement blocks on my feet,  
in a soft, somewhat muddy,  
surface.
But it’s not:
It’s something you could
sink into
more -

a good place to be.

Crisis:
The more I deal
The more solidly I feel
In my shoes
The more I sink
into the ground

I feel more
grounded,
the more crises that
I manage

this is a much bigger block
that’s already down
but there’s more block
to go.

I don’t feel
scared
I don’t feel
nervous
I don’t feel
alone

I feel solid in the ground
I’m standing on

Sinking in terms of
Being grounded,

not sinking in terms of
being enveloped in it

Solidly
in something
I feel
grounded in.

- Jaymie
Jaymie’s second drawing: It’s something you could sink into.

Jaymie drew this image (Figure 5.6) ahead of her second interview using pen on paper. The poem adjacent is from her reflections on the creation and significance of this image as it pertained to who she is as a crisis leader. She was reflecting upon the ways in which crisis had shaped her. Jaymie noted how concrete, seen here as rectangles upon her feet, is impenetrable. This visual, while to some may feel reminiscent of concrete blocks on the feet of Mafia targets (as it did for me), was to her symbolic of strength. She noted that her work is “really horribly grey” but while she is managing crisis, there is a compression of options that take some of the shades of grey and ambiguity away. Crisis management has led her to feel more grounded in her whole career, which she identified as the ground at the base of the picture. She described the image carefully, thoughtfully, slowly drawing her words together as she thought through her drawing’s significance.
**What better way to support them?**

I ask them:  
*How do you*  
*make sense*  
*of this death,*  
*in your own beliefs?*

They go:  

*I believe that he’s in heaven.*  
*I believe he’s around me now.*  
*He’s there. She’s there. They’re there.*

A real sense,  
almost every family:  

*I know it.*  
*I feel it.*  
*Here’s why.*

It’s really a moment  
that we don’t often see  
in student affairs,  

of that deeper dimension  
to life  
and death.

Just because we say,  
*separation of state and religion,*  
doesn’t mean that  
people don’t have a  
religious or spiritual experience  
when that happens.

We all want to  
make the world  
a better place,  

when someone is  
experiencing that level  
of grief,  

what better way  
to support them?
It’s not me
proselytizing;
it’s me surfacing

so they can enter in there with me -
if they feel comfortable
as part of the healing
and transition
process

- Kavort

One of my roles was to be liaison with the religious campus organizations. They were having a meeting, so I go. What I’m expecting, you know, five or six people sitting around the table talking about the spiritual needs of students. Well, there were about thirty-eight people around the table each representing a different sect or religion or belief system. And there were people that were missing, that weren’t there at the time, so I think about 42 or 43 members. I was sitting there shocked by it all. I had no idea about the rich array of campus religious organizations present, and almost all of them had student organizations working with them. I was struck by the support that could be there. And I started talking to them, how do you want to handle student deaths on campus and what do you want to do to support families? And have you all done that in the past? Can we work together to create a more formal response system?

This symbolic ritual healing and meaning-making out of tragedy was very present during the ceremony. (Kavort)
Trilobite chose to surround himself with symbols in this image (Figure 5.7): a heart x 3 to represent his family and how his primary emphasis is on his family; a book to represent his writing and publishing on the topic of crisis management; a saw to represent the need to keep his skills sharp; a rocket to represent his love of space memorabilia; and a shell for his love of geology, and the namesake he chose for this study. It became clear that his hobbies were an outlet through which he could process the difficulties of his professional life:

I might think I have too many hobbies, but [the dollar bill] is a hobby as well. I collect coins and currency, so I have a coin collection of several different things. And then I have a collection of one-dollar notes going back to 1923 and collecting all the districts and the cities that the notes are printed in, all in crisp, uncirculated condition. I have hobbies that are finite, if that make sense. There are only so many of these bills. There are only so many Lincoln pennies, you know, proofs for each year. You collect them all, then you have them. I like to have some

Figure 5.7. Trilobite’s symbols of change.
hobbies that are finite. I do not go to the woodshop to de-stress, though – there’s too many dangerous tools in there. [laughs] I’m still thinking about things but trying to occupy my time with other actions.

Having that conversation is most difficult

Standing in front
of your colleagues,
having to facilitate
a conversation,
trying to find the words -
no right words, of course -

trying to find the words
help the staff find comfort
in talking
or sharing
their thoughts -

Hesitant to get up,
say something -

In suicide,
everybody knows
how the person passed away,
there’s some level of
sensitivity.

You don’t have an answer
but can help them understand
or help them relive
the good moments –
express those good moments -

that helps people
to be there and
listen
as much as
to speak.

Some want to say something,
others want to listen:
I tried to
find that balance;

No question,
having that conversation
is most difficult.

Like I said,
I don’t do that anymore.

- Trilobite

*Figure 5.8. Advancement – Moving Forward – Industry Leading.*

Trilobite believed in the importance of having multiple, interlocking structures to respond fully to crisis (see Figure 5.8). He took pleasure at working for an institution that had made a concerted effort to develop structures to address various issues, and in his own contributions to making those efforts happen. He discussed how his institution responded to issues that had occurred elsewhere, such as the sex abuse issues at Penn State, by creating new structures to ensure the safety and welfare of the community. It was critical for Trilobite that his institution remain on the cutting edge of crisis management and secure its place as an industry leader.
Some people started to sing *Amazing Grace*

It was about noon of that day
suddenly, I can hear
this noise outside

come here, come here, look at this!

thousands of students
gathered outside
around a fountain

an impromptu prayer vigil

I get a little choked up now,
and I literally cried then;
one of my first reactions

twenty-two hours, in the response

these students from student government,
and some other folks from the university,
coordinated a memorial

the governor and all kinds of people came and spoke

I was still in the middle of
working with the situation
we would watch some of that going on

a point during that ceremony
when they finished, and they said it was over
and people were supposed to leave

and people didn’t want to go

some people started to sing Amazing Grace,
a *cappella,*
and the whole place began –

put all their arms together
put their arms on each other’s shoulders
and were just singing Amazing Grace

to this day,
when I hear the song
Amazing Grace –

it can be 20 years later, but those memories still affect you.

- Iain

You talk about post-traumatic stress, [other colleagues of mine] have that. Because they were out there, and they were helping, there were helicopters flying above and, you know, shiny lights and stuff. I’ve got a colleague that was there that when they – they kind of freak out a little bit when a helicopter flies above. It just brings back the sounds and smells and, you know, the images of that night. You know, while we talk about that with soldiers and with the police officers and stuff, it can – the same stuff happens to us. A really important piece of this is making sure that we care for the caregivers. And that’s just a really, really important piece, I know, for me. Like I said, after 20 hours, I went back to the scene. [The last victim] was brought out, and I went home. (Iain)

Ten years from now, that could be me

I went home.

My daughter,
Probably four years old –
No, eight years old at the time –

I went into her room and literally just curled up with her and hugged her.

It hit pretty hard.

Clutching my daughter, thinking:

ten years from now, that could be me, losing my son or daughter, at college.

- Iain
I solicited participants for this study on campus crisis mostly by word-of-mouth. I communicated with probably 20 individuals who initially expressed interest in the study. Ultimately, there were five who were willing to share their stories with me. Strangely, or perhaps serendipitously, all five shared stories about people who had died on or connected to their university campuses and discussed the process by which they managed this crisis as student affairs professionals. While some of these tragedies took place quite a long time ago, in terms of their careers, I could tell through their interviews that when they spoke, they were transported back to those moments.

**Jaymie**

Jaymie has been working in various roles in student affairs for over 25 years. She was a joy to interview, so energetic in sharing her wisdom with a sarcastic sense of humor that mirrored my own. Crisis had always been part of her portfolio, whether facilitating conversations in the hallway with residents after a critical incident or coordinating campus-level emergency response as a dean. Jaymie has worked at almost all levels of higher education organizations and has an earned doctorate. She shared many stories, but the one most salient to her was when she got a phone call from one of her residence hall directors after a former student staff member had jumped from a window in an apparent suicide.

You just have to be human, like just be... like, what would a human being do in this situation that’s reasonable and normal and thoughtful and caring and not hysterical? To me, it’s just about being present. I don’t know that it’s ever occurred to me that [crisis management] takes a lot of skill, but I know that it does take skill because I don’t feel like it was something... it’s something you can learn to do better.
**Kavort**

Kavort was a kind and genuine person to speak with. He had come to his current position as a dean of students following a few interim appointments and stints as a consultant and faculty member. He also holds a doctorate and had worked in higher education for more than 35 years. Kavort struck me as the consummate philosopher. Meaning-making was important to Kavort as he reflected on what keeps him in the profession:

I think it’s because it’s meaningful. So, the sleepless nights, you’re usually trying to get something done to help a student or improve the system or manage a problem in some way that adds value to people’s lives. And it isn’t always that long term – sometimes, you just help a faculty and a student get along better so they can both relax, and the student can learn, and the faculty member can teach, and other times you have a transformative effect on someone’s career direction and how they see the world.

He chose to share with me the story of the transformative effect of one student’s death. This student had died following a night of binge-drinking with members of his fraternity off-campus. I knew this was a pivotal moment for Kavort as I could hear the emotions in his voice as he shared.

**Michaela**

Michaela was logical and to-the-point, but also deeply compassionate, which I felt reflected in her stories to how she approaches crisis management. Michaela occasionally couched her answers in her Myers-Briggs type. She, too, is a dean of students, and has served the years in her recent career at community colleges. Her 35-year career in student affairs has taken her through almost every role one can imagine, which has given her a well-rounded background for her current work. The first story she shared involved the
death of a student on a small rural campus – in his residence hall – after his roommate found him unresponsive.

We didn’t have tabletops to prepare us for what we feel. I’ve been in residence halls long enough – residence life – and at work long enough that I would lose a student to suicide several times a semester. So, I knew that my response – even though I’m an “NFP”1 – I can compartmentalize while I’m in a crisis, and I think crisis management is one of my strengths. So, I was – I was fine. I felt so bad. I mean, it was the student’s choices, right, with substance abuse. We don’t know if it was a suicide or not. We think it was an O.D.

Iain

Iain described himself as a first-generation college student whose mother put him through college. He had worked his way through various positions across the country, starting out in residence life. In his current role, he serves as a vice president of student affairs. He was structured in his approach to sharing his story, which no doubt came from years of presenting to audiences about crisis management and the specific crisis responses he had led. While he now works in private, nonprofit higher education, his crisis story involved a tragedy at a larger public institution. He shared the story of a mass casualty incident, the collapse of a bonfire that resulted in the loss of twelve lives.

It was a situation in which I was still a fairly young professional at that time, just getting my feet wet with crisis management in higher education. Much like you, I was working on my dissertation at the time. And, you know, it was probably one of the most difficult personal and professional experiences of my career. It was... it... I don’t know how you want to go into it. I mean, clearly, just the experience itself for me was one that I found myself in a situation where I was, in some ways, quarterbacking the institution’s response. I was an associate dean, saying to associate vice presidents and the president and other people, I need you here, I need you there, kind of thing. And that was kind of an interesting experience.

1 “NFP” refers to “iNtuitive, Feeling, Perceiving,” which are typology indicators from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument.
Trilobite

Trilobite came to this study in the role of associate vice president of student affairs. He had been working in the field of student affairs for over 35 years, and like many others came to the profession by way of residence life and housing. Like Iain, Trilobite has spoken and written about crisis management. While Iain alluded to responding to multiple homicides one summer at his then-institution, he shared instead about responding to the death of a staff member from an apparent suicide. I could tell how emotional this was for him to share, even years later, and he noted he is probably more sensitive than he exudes.

There were four of us – our dean of students, a counselor, a minister, and myself were tasked by the vice president at the time to create a death response team. Nice title, huh? And so, we spent that year putting together what we thought was a good death response team because we’d have – you know, at an institution of thirty thousand – a handful of students who passed away every year, and we needed to find some kind of consistent response to those both academically as well as student affairs. And that was put into play during a series of student murders. So, we had the death response team in place and we used it for the first time during [those student murders] - who would have known I was in the middle of all of that? Every meeting - every planning meeting and policy meeting and response and presidential press conference. And I kept notes on everything that was happening at the time, you know: how we were responding to it in housing and as an institution and just sort of ... soon after that our group got back together, and we changed the name from death response team to trauma response team - a little bit more applicable - then over time that became the crisis response team.

Methodological Reflections

I chose to situate this study in a constructivist paradigm. Rooted in naturalistic inquiry, constructivist research is enriched by “engaging with a context or group long enough to understand its authentic depth and complexity” (Guido et al., 2010, p. 15). The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and may rely on tacit knowledge as well as propositional knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A researcher using a
constructivist approach resists *a priori* assumptions to allow space for active co-construction of meaning throughout the research process. Reality from a constructivist perspective is both personal to the individual and mired in a social context (Denicolo et al., 2016). New knowledge and new understandings were created in this study through the active engagement between participants and me and the experiences we both bring to process.

I can never truly know the experience of another, but through the process of dialoguing about our experiences both the participant and I came to understand each other more fully. When I decided to research campus crisis management, I wanted to do so from a narrative perspective, since stories are powerful vehicles for making meaning. I strove to answer the question, how do campus leaders at an institution of higher education make meaning of a campus crisis event? Gubrium and Holstein (1998) argued that, “Narration is constructive, a way of fashioning the semblance of meaning and order for experience” (p. 166). Narrative constructions create order out of otherwise chaotic life experiences. Individuals make sense of their experiences via the stories they tell. Telling stories is a means by which individuals share their constructions of their experiences with each other, and through dialogue construct new meanings and insights. Indeed, the creating and sharing of stories allows individuals to process their emotions and reclaim the power to author their own experiences and to create/re-create their identities (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). In this sense, each narrative exploration, each moment of story-sharing between the participant and me, was a gift to be cherished and an opportunity for new understandings to emerge.
Opening the Way through Narrative Interviewing

Interviews are central to most narrative research, though they are not the exclusive means by which narrative data can be shared by participants (Riessman, 2008). Interviewing with the goal of listening to narratives differs from traditional notions of interviewing because it compels the interviewer to “give up control, which can generate anxiety” (p. 24). Relinquishing control of the interview both empowers the participant and helps the researcher see, hear, and feel more of what emerges during the interview because the researcher is less focused on anticipating the next step in the interview process (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Narrative interviewing is also a co-creative process in which active listening and engagement is required of both the participant and researcher as a “unique story is told to the researcher in [a] particular way” (Gemignani, 2014, p. 129). The stories constructed and shared during a narrative interview are specific to the interaction between the researcher and participant, making a narrative interview both a dialogical process of co-creating narratives and socially situated in the time and space of the interaction (Beuthin, 2014).

It was important to me that the five participants who were willing to share their deeply personal stories with me could do so unimpeded. Too often, research interviews become a call-and-response, overly scripted and deliberate (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). I believe this is reflective of how so much research is still situated within a post-positivist paradigm. There is a need to prove something, to create a generalizable result or theory, rather than allowing the space for stories to breathe. The goal here was not to theorize or generalize, but rather to allow the participants’ stories and images to stand on their own. It is my hope that readers will draw their own inferences and meaning from the
text and accompanying drawings and collages. In narrative interviewing, particularly from a constructivist approach, only after the story has been shared did I ask any questions that emerged from the story, and the purpose of those questions was to clarify and better understand the story and its influence on the participant’s life (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

My work with each participant involved three phases. The first was a semi-structured interview focused on hearing the particular crisis story the participant chose to share. I then asked some follow-up questions, loosely scripted, to better understand the context, events, and participants’ reactions. Following the first interview, I asked each participant to engage in a reflective art-making project.

To begin the first interview, I asked each participant, simply, to share the story of a crisis they have managed, one that was most salient to them. Then, I waited and listened. I had little in the way of prescribed questions, instead allowing questions to emerge from the stories they shared. This was challenging, since this approach to interviewing was loosely structured and I had to clear my mind to remain fully present for the duration of the interview. By not over-structuring the interview in advance, I could remain nimble to what emerged in the storytelling process. This approach centered the storyteller’s construction of events and allows greater space for co-construction of meaning thereafter. When I felt a follow-up question coming to mind, I had to set it aside to regain presence in the interview. I also had to determine when it was appropriate to share my own experiences with the participants. Sharing my own perspectives and stories contributed to building empathy and rapport with each participant. I was one of them, not apart from them. We’ve fought in similar trenches, and shared similar struggles.
Nonetheless, I struggled through both data collection as a candid and emotional process and data analysis as a crisis of (re)presentation.

**Poemishness and Dilemmas of Poetic (Re)presentation**

Crystallization compels researchers to use arts-based approaches to analyzing data. I chose to use transcription poetry (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1992) as an analytical strategy in this study. Poems are powerful tools for understanding experience and eliciting emotional responses from readers (Carr, 2003). Diverging from traditional forms of data analysis and presentation, I use poetic (re)presentation to explore meaning within the transcripts. (Re)presenting the data as poetry bridges analysis and art. I deliberately chose (re)presentation to problematize this form of writing while simultaneously embracing it. To (re)present is to acknowledge “a profound agnosticism towards the relationships between writing and reality” (Rhodes, 2001, p. 12). Eliciting poems from interview data is both a performative exercise and a way of representing meaning from the data (Glesne, 1997). The poems become a representation of participants and their experience although the reduction disconnects participants and their individual and collective experience.

There is no singular way of creating poetry from transcripts. In this analysis, I used poetic transcription, or “creation of poemlike compositions from the words of interviewees” (Glesne, 1997, p. 202). I first began by allowing salient passages to emerge from within each narrative. This approach involved “extraction of phrases that illustrated a particular theme, idea, or situation to one participant’s transcript at a time” (Carr, 2003, p. 1324). To extract these verses, I removed portions of the text to begin structuring a poem. In this case, I sought passages with emotional resonance and a clear connection to
the theme of crisis and crisis management. In so doing, I made a deliberate choice of 
(re)presentation, using my intuition to guide me to those portions of the text I feel most 
aligned to the meaning of the stories shared by participants. I then reorganized the 
remaining portions of text into stanzas and verses, giving flow and rhythm to the 
resulting poems. Presenting these segments of the participants’ stories as poems gives 
artistic voice to the data, as well as another angle from which the reader can see and make 
meaning of the data in alignment with the crystallization framework.

Qualitative research is a contemplative practice in that researchers “train the 
mind, the eye, and the soul together as a habit” (Janesick, 2016, p. 4). To live with our 
data and work in this way requires daily practice, reflection, and examination of self and 
other. In preparing to write this article, I struggled to be with the data as I wrestled 
through my own anxiety of “not poet,” that I lacked the classical training (whatever that 
may be) that defines a poet. I feared that my work would not make sense. More so, I 
feared that I would inadvertently make light of the difficult subject matter of death by the 
verses I derived.

I almost gave up on the notion of being good enough to produce research poetry. 
This is why, rather than adhering to a specific set of rules for the form and style of the 
poems herein, I adopted the notion of poemishness (Lahman, Richard, & Teman, 2019) 
where “research representations [are] characterized by features of poetry and an effort to 
blend the aesthetics of poetry and science of research into something which may be said 
to be poem-like, a resemblance of a poem, ish, or poemish” (p. 215). So, I spent time 
with the data, and let the data speak to me, finding poems within. Certainly, I did not 
throw all caution to the wind. I strived to maintain the integrity of the participants’ stories
while gently brushing away the content between the poetic lines, the filler, leaving only what I saw as the essence of the narrative as a poem. I took creative liberties in reorganizing, shaping, and presenting these poems, but the words and the essence belong to the participants themselves.

To alleviate my fears of downplaying the significance of these death narratives by crafting poetry from transcripts, I asked some colleagues who work with trauma to review my poems. One colleague noted that she was very moved by the poems. She was intrigued with the process of transcription poetry and had expressed her desire to read some of what I came to in my study. Interestingly, she shared that she found this form of expression more meaningful than if I had simply presented the text of the interview, or a summary of the content the participant shared.

The beauty of poetic (re)presentation is that poetry is necessarily succinct, free of fillers and focused solely on the words and reflections of the participants (Ward, 2011). These poems are (re)presentations in the sense that while the words are those of the participants, I had discretion as to what stories to share and how best to organize them into poetic prose. Thus, the words have been re-purposed, re-organized, and re-presented. However, in this (re)presentation, there is still presentation that honors the stories of these professionals: I used their own words and experiences, which “conveys a reality” (Ward, 2011, p. 360) while presenting a text which is emotionally powerful and allows the reader to connect with the emotions of their experience (Ward, 2011).

**Dilemmas in Generating Participant-Driven Reflective Images**

Drawing and other arts-based approaches are powerful tools for meaning-making (Cole & Knowles, 2008), allowing participants to tap into the unconscious while
“slow[ing] down and re-evaluat[ing] their lives” (Mannay, 2016, p. 112). Arts-informed research praxis compels the “subjective and reflexive presence of the researcher” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61) as the researcher takes on the role of artist-researcher and uses an artistic approach to the research process. Arts-based methods are not something that is done to the participant but are tools for helping both participant and researcher express themselves in new ways, exploring their experiences in playful and organic ways (Cole & Knowles, 2008). In this sense, arts-based methods align with constructivism’s call for researcher reflexivity as well as the co-construction of knowledge and insight.

While narrative research has historically focused on words and verbal stories as data, images can also be used to tell stories and facilitate story-making (Riessman, 2008). This inquiry used a prompted drawing exercise to facilitate participants’ creation of stories (lisahunter, 2017). I asked each participant to create an image (initially, I asked for a drawing) in response to two sets of prompts:

1. What did you learn about yourself or your experience managing this crisis? How have you changed as a person because of your experience of the crisis?
2. What changed at your institution since the crisis? What role did you play in the change that happened?

I used this form of exploration because visual forms of expression in constructivist research help participants “[convey] their world in ways they may have purposefully avoided or never thought to do” (Barry, 1996, p. 412). Creating images can also assist participants in capturing an idea that may transcend simple words or explanations and allows for a more holistic exploration of meaning than conversation may afford (Weber, 2008).
However, artmaking as a data collection strategy is not without its challenges. Not all people are confident in their artistic abilities (Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith, & Campbell, 2011). Artmaking is an anxiety-provoking activity for many adults since most people’s last experience making art was when they were in the second grade. Their experience was often disappointing, if not humiliating, because of initial lack of facility at art making or because a teacher or parent pointed out that giraffes are not purple. After several disappointments, unfortunately all art-making activities had been abandoned in favor of more “practical” pursuits. (Heath, 2005, p.124)

In recruiting for this study, I was upfront with participants about the requirements: I asked that they each participate in two narrative interviews, bridged by a reflective drawing exercise in response to two distinct prompts. Multiple prospective participants withdrew their consideration, citing discomfort with drawing or a fear of lacking “artistic ability.” This seemed a common concern in the literature, but not one that I had considered at length when developing this study. I am more comfortable in my artistic expression, though I am by no means an “artist.” I had the sense that student affairs professionals are generally creative, so it surprised me somewhat to hear so much resistance to this form of participation.

Even the five participants who ultimately agreed to the study felt similar uneasiness. Initially, I had asked them to draw, but when two of the participants asked if they could “collage” instead, I agreed – what was important to me, and ultimately to the study, was that they take time to reflect upon the prompts, not the medium in which they chose to reflect. I tried to allay any concerns the participants may have expressed, downplaying the need for any artistic ability or logic behind the images they chose to create. I probably spent too much time doing so in hopes that their anxiety about
artmaking would not impede their ability to use the art-making process for reflection. All told, only four of the five participants engaged the creative exercise.

**Wrestling with Death: My Own Process of Making Meaning**

I am not without a position in this research. I, too, am a student affairs administrator, and like the participants herein, I have also responded to the death of persons on campus. I felt deep empathy for the participants as they wrestled through recalling these poignant moments, and often their stories evoked for me recollection of my own experiences. Having a good peer support network with whom to work through the emotional content of this research process helped me maintain my self-care and alleviated compassion stress (Rager, 2005). My emotional processing was critical to this research process and knowing I would be discussing difficult situations with participants gave me the foresight to prepare as best I could for what would likely be difficult conversations.

Like many researchers engaged in research on traumatic experiences, I felt that my work and this research were meaningful, and we can also experience secondary trauma based on the experiences shared by participants (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2018). We often discuss protection of research participants through our Institutional Review Board processes, but seldom do we discuss the need to protect ourselves as researchers as well (Rager, 2005). In a constructivist research endeavor, the researcher is the instrument through which research occurs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order for the research process to work, researchers must make sure the instrument – that is, ourselves - is rested, well-equipped to cope, and aware of our own triggers and growth edges. For me, this meant taking time before each interview to ground myself, usually through a
brief period of mindfulness meditation, so that I could remain fully present during the interview. I also needed to debrief following the interviews and leaned on trusted colleagues who knew me and understood the toll of crisis management work. Surprising to me was the amount of energy that this process required. I found myself physically exhausted following many of the interviews, perhaps over-empathizing with the stories that participants shared. I also did not realize initially that all five participants would be sharing stories involving death. Had I known this fact I may have prepared differently.

Since two of the participants shared stories involving suicide, I also recalled both family members and students who I had lost to suicide. I lost my brother when I was a junior in college after he took his own life. This fundamentally shaped my desire to work in student affairs and has continued to inform the ways I engage with students and colleagues. Suicidality is also a pervasive social issue. I have worked and continue to work with students who share their pain with me, who ideate suicide, and who unfortunately felt they had no other choice but to take their own life. I have become passionate about this work. The passion is not vocational love, per se, but rather a feeling that someone must be willing to take this on, to be a resource for students – and frankly colleagues – who feel their lives no longer matter. I believe it takes a particular skill set to be able to sit with someone who is feeling that way, and to respond to the needs of others in the midst of the loss of a friend or family member by suicide. Nonetheless, staying present during an interview when someone shares a painful story of suicide was challenging.

To help work through the emotions that were arising in me following these interviews, I reflected back on my own experiences managing similar crises. I journaled.
I drew, and I painted. Engaging in a process similar to what I asked participants to engage with me was cathartic as it provided me an outlet to process the emotional content that was coming up for me, and I think it made this research more fulfilling personally and professionally. To conclude, I share a poem and a painting/drawing that I made as I reflected on the death of one of my students many years ago, when I was living on campus and working as a residence hall director.

![Figure 5.9. My reflective painting/drawing in response to a death on campus.](image)

As I reflected upon this tragedy, responding to the death of a student in the residence halls on my campus, I was surprised how quickly creating this image (Figure 5.9) brought back the emotions of that day. To create this image, I used a grey marker, then filled in with acrylic paint and watercolor. The blue is pervasive: Everything felt blue that day. It was isolating. While I was there, responding to the needs of our
community members, I couldn’t express my own feelings, my own reactions. That happened later, behind closed doors.

I felt good about the work I did that day, but after I was reprimanded for calling in resources for the students (which apparently was outside the protocol), I felt the pain rush in all over again. It was very lonely. In public, I felt like I had to be fully together, as to me leadership was strength. Later, I was able to connect with my colleagues outside of the university, who were able to put things into perspective: you can be a leader and show emotion. The two things are not mutually exclusive.

**I called 9-1-1 – what do I do now?**

I got the call
A colleague, almost deadpan,

> He’s blue, like really blue.
> I called 9-1-1.
> What do I do now?

It took a moment,
as it was morning, early,
Sunday, as I recall,
unaccustomed to receiving calls
at this hour; still waking:

*Are you OK? Where are you?*

> I’m in the hallway,
> I think he’s dead.

*I’m on my way.*

I tell my colleague to hold tight,
and rush to find clothes,
call my boss,
let her know what I knew,
which was very little.

Ambulances, a fire truck,
campus police cars, at least three;
Students start congregating in the hallway we need to usher them away give space for responders to do their work.

The students were crying out:

I know him!
He’s my friend,
was my friend.
What happened?
He was only 18!
I literally just saw him last night!

I sat with them, Since others were responding to the student, and this was not my building, but these were all my students, our students.

What do you need?

I need someone to talk to. Can you call a chaplain?

Yes.

I want my mom.
I can’t – I can’t be here.
I don’t know... I...

I do the best I can, in the moment, to respond to their needs, to find resources, to talk, to listen.

Later reprimanded for some of my decisions, for calls I made, but no regrets.

I knew him, too. He was one of mine, And he died: likely suicide,
by cyanide.

The blue was cyanide.

I didn’t cry until
I was alone,
far from where anyone
could see.
They couldn’t see.

- Matt
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this constructivist narrative study was to better understand higher education crisis management from the perspective of leaders who had substantial experience leading through campus crises. Specifically, I sought to answer the question, how do campus leaders at an institution of higher education (IHE) make meaning of a crisis event? Through their participation in two narrative interviews and a reflective drawing exercise, five senior student affairs leaders, each sharing their experiences of leading through the tragic death of community members, helped me to answer this question. Their generosity in agreeing to participate in this study helped deepen my understanding of campus crisis management, and I hope that it does so for others. Their stories, presented herein, also lay the groundwork for additional explorations regarding how crises are managed on college campuses and the necessary skills and training professionals need to effectively respond when the campus community is tested by a critical event. It is through their experiences and our own that I hope we can all learn so that we can create safer, more resilient campus communities.

I chose to collect and analyze data using crystallization, an approach that encourages drawing upon various methods along the qualitative continuum (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000). This continuum encompasses post-positivist and realist approaches, constructivist and cultural approaches, and artistic/impressionist approaches. By collecting and analyzing the data in this way, we are able to see different
facets of an experience and come closer to a holistic understanding. This prompted my desire to collect both stories and images from the participants, offering both verbal and nonverbal means by which they could convey meaning in this study. Using crystallization also afforded me the opportunity to analyze this data in different ways, creating distinct genres represented here as two manuscripts.

The accounts of crisis events in this study are inherently partial (Richardson, 2000). This is because the nature of reality is incomplete and subjective. We each craft our reality through the lens of our own experiences. Similarly, our realities are co-constructed in the stories we tell each other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Crystallization reinforces this concept through analyzing data using different qualitative lenses demonstrates that the “existence of contrasting genres implicates the other forms as not objective, as not the only way to present findings” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 33). Thus, while I did not initially set out to do so, I decided to conduct distinct forms of analysis in Chapters Four and Five so that the data could be understood from these different perspectives. This (re)presentation of the data in the form of two articles aligns with a dendritic form of crystallization, an “ongoing and dispersed process of meaning making through multiple epistemologies and genres, constituted in a series of separate but related representations based on a data set” (Ellingson, 2009, p.126). Using distinct genres to explore participants meaning-making after a crisis allowed me to meet my goal of reaching a broader audience. Some readers will gravitate toward a more logical and analytical piece which is Chapter Four, while others may find themselves drawn to the more artistic form of representation embodied in Chapter Five.
In Chapter Four, I used a more traditional form of analysis reflective of the more realist-to-constructivist end of the qualitative continuum. I utilized a theoretical framework to analyze data, developing links between my chosen theory – four organizational frames (Bolman & Deal, 2017) – to better understand how the participants’ experiences could be understood from an organizational frames perspective. I relied solely on the narrative data collected during the participants’ interviews and situated the findings in their own words whenever I could. I wanted to make clear how this analysis led to specific implications for student affairs professional education and practice. Using the structural, political, symbolic, and human resources frames (Bolman & Deal, 2017) as a theoretical framework, I unpacked how the participants’ crisis lessons could inform our preparation of the next generation of higher education and student affairs leaders.

Specifically, it became clear to me that crisis management must be a critical element of a graduate preparation program. However, merely teaching about crisis management is insufficient; graduate students must be exposed to practitioners who manage crisis and be given practical opportunities to engage in crisis management experiences. This could be accomplished through case studies or tabletop exercises as well as interviews with professionals who lead through crisis regularly. A transdisciplinary approach to crisis education is critical as well as crisis management builds on skills learned in all facets of the curriculum (Treadwell, 2017). Graduate preparation is not the end, though – rather, it serves to build skills which will be needed throughout the career. Crisis management must be a consistent part of new employee onboarding and regular training. Student affairs leaders at all levels hold some piece of
crisis management within their responsibilities, and thus it is important that each professional in the university understand their role and level of autonomy if a crisis were to occur and be given the appropriate training and skill-building to operationalize their role effectively. A deep review of employees’ job descriptions could further illuminate gaps and facilitate effective crisis planning. Finally, across the professional lifespan, student affairs leaders need to understand the legal principles, infrastructural and facilities management issues, and contingency planning and coordination necessary to ensure the safety and integrity of the educational mission, even when faced with disaster.

In Chapter Five, I chose to engage with arts-based methods and representation clearly situated on the impressionist end of the qualitative continuum. In this representation, I combined both the transcription data and the images produced by the participants to weave a tapestry of participants’ stories, poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1992), and the images with some analysis and context. The goal was to produce an experience whereby a reader could see the interplay between the images generated by the participants and their words expressed both as prose and poetry. It is incumbent on the reader, by and large, to derive their own meaning from this experience.

That said, there were many insights one could glean from the prose, image, and poetry presented therein. The death of a student on campus is often the result of an intricate web of circumstances that led to a critical moment. In Kavort’s case, there were policy, cultural, and personal issues that led to the death of a fraternity member who, as part of a hazing ritual, was forced to literally drink himself to death. The issues did not end there – creating lasting culture change on campus felt like pulling on different strings and receiving both push and pull from various stakeholders on all sides of the issue. From
the outside looking in, I think that student affairs leaders are often lumped together with the institution itself. We become part of the bureaucracy. What is often unseen by the public is the very personal and emotional toll campus crises take. Jaymie’s story of how her staff members wrestled through their pain and grief following the death of a student staff member is relatable, and the poem *What is going on in this family right now?* takes the reader on the emotional journeys of the individuals sitting in that room in a way that straight prose may not. Poetry evokes in the reader a deep emotional resonance that aligns with the profoundly emotional journeys of each of the five participants.

The point of Chapter Five was not only to build a level of empathy with the reader. There are important practical insights to be gained from the presentation of data. A simple question can open up so much space for processing and need not be overly complicated. Experience is sometimes the best teacher, and even if those lessons are painful we can rise up to embrace them and become more competent and effective leaders as a result. Having a procedure in place to address crisis is important, as is the ability to be. We cannot forget the importance of the spiritual dimension of those who have experienced profound loss and respond as we feel moved to attend to that need. Teams and services, such as threat assessment teams and behavioral intervention programs, take time and resources to cultivate and are critical to ensuring a campus can respond fully and effectively to crisis.

This study presented a tapestry of insights into the nature of managing crisis on campus, specifically the death of beloved members of our communities. These profound events can fundamentally alter the fabric of campus and require expert care and response from student affairs leaders and others entrusted with the care of students, faculty, and
administrators. The magnitude of this responsibility was articulated by Kavort during his final interview:

The impact of one student death on the whole system, it’s not just who’s at the university. It’s families and friends. And the ripple effect is huge. And [leading through crisis] really brought out that side of protecting students that, yes, students are at the university to take risks. Also, someone has to look out for them because sometimes they take risks that they can’t recover from. They go too far, and they can’t come back, and we need to do our best to prevent that or at least inform them that that’s likely to happen if the keep going down a certain road.

And it taught me that you never stop learning after the incident. . .
REFERENCES


http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940691401300103


https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-1338.2009.00389.x


https://scholarworks.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1049&context=articles


https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222819846398


https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12128


APPENDIX A

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES – JOURNAL OF STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND PRACTICE
Submission Guidelines – Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice

The following journal submission guidelines, which guided the formatting of Chapter Four, were retrieved on November 3, 2019 from https://www.naspa.org/journals/journal-of-student-affairs-research-and-practice.

Vision of Journal

The vision of the Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice (JSARP) is to publish the most rigorous, relevant, and well-respected research and practice making a difference in student affairs practice. JSARP especially encourages manuscripts that are unconventional in nature and that engage in methodological and epistemological extensions that transcend the boundaries of traditional research inquiries.

Purpose of Journal

- Publish and make accessible the highest quality articles on research and practice in the student affairs field.
- Expose the NASPA membership and JSARP readers to unique commentary and scholarship from multiple methodological forms and perspectives.
- Support and encourage scholarly contributions from a wide variety of theoretical and conceptual frameworks.
- Build and extend the literature and knowledge of the student affairs field.
- Encourage and engage open and critical discourse within and across disciplines from the perspective of student affairs in higher education.
- Encourage research and scholarly writing by faculty, administrators, and students through editorial feedback and development of current and future authors.

Submission Guidelines

Theory to Practice

JSARP seeks to publish practice articles that are firmly grounded in research and literature and research articles that speak to practice. We seek to review manuscripts and publish articles that are innovative, imaginative, and forward thinking regarding issues that impact the student affairs field.

While the JSARP Editors appreciate traditional scholarship, we also welcome and will publish articles that move audiences beyond the commonly accepted or expected discourses. Especially encouraged are manuscripts that are unconventional in nature, as well as those that blend conventional and unconventional scholarly approaches that challenge the traditional paradigm of research methods, analyses, and presentation of data. We will experiment with scholarship that interrupts the traditional higher education dialogue; publish unique and sometimes unsettling ideas; and discuss topics that challenge the traditional higher education perspectives.
Areas of Emphasis

Authors are encouraged to consider the foci outlined below as they prepare and submit manuscripts to *JSARP*:

Innovations in Research and Scholarship Features: Manuscripts submitted for review in this area may include qualitative and quantitative manuscripts that clearly provide a theory-research-practice connection. The manuscripts should be methodologically sound with a clearly defined practice section in which the author(s) shares how the research relates to college or university functioning (e.g., policy issues, community engagement, management, organization, student engagement) and/or how the findings can be used in the practice of administrators, faculty, and students. The manuscripts should provide a unique perspective on current issues impacting our institutions and students. Literature reviews and essays that connect current issues with practice, propose creative models for student affairs practice, or discuss innovative uses of theory are welcome.

International Features: The traditional boundaries of the higher education and student affairs field are rapidly expanding with international trends and developments. Definitions of internationalization and globalization are evolving in complexity and perspective, demanding a continual examination of how students are prepared to work and thrive in ever-changing climates. Manuscripts submitted for review in this area should include cutting-edge research on current international issues impacting higher education and student affairs. A clearly articulated relationship among theory, research, and practice is encouraged. Findings and recommendations should provide new knowledge on ways to internationalize campuses. We invite manuscripts that challenge readers to examine and embrace global competencies and skills needed to become active participants in the worldwide transformation.

Innovations in Practice Features: Manuscripts submitted for review in this area of emphasis should describe high-quality illustrations of effective, creative, and collaborative practices, programs, or policies. These illustrations are to be grounded in theory, research, and/or pedagogy as well as convey relevance beyond the institution(s) of the author(s). Evidence of innovation must go beyond simple measures of satisfaction and, instead, illuminate effectiveness and usefulness. Connections to and implications for student learning outcomes, campus missions, strategic plans, and government/governing board mandates or initiatives are especially helpful. We invite manuscripts offering bold vision that challenge readers to think critically and reflectively about student affairs practice.

Media Features and Reviews: An evolution of the book review format, manuscripts are invited by the Associate Editor and solicited directly from authors that comment on the wide variety of media currently available to student affairs educators. Authors are encouraged to comment on the implications for practice of Internet resources, blogs, newsletters, books, films/videos, presentation materials, and other available media resources.
Audience

The NASPA membership represents a broad constituency of entry-level, intermediate-level, and senior-level professionals who are practitioners, scholars, policy makers, faculty, and executive leaders, among others. These educators have responsibility for a wide variety of institutional responsibilities. JSARP seeks to publish articles that speak to student affairs educators across this broad range of levels and experiences.

While the Editors recognize that published articles must be relevant and useful to practitioners, JSARP also serves faculty, researchers, scholars, and academic leaders. Not all articles will speak to all constituencies all the time. But the Editors are committed to publishing an array of articles that, at some point, will speak to all educators who work in student affairs and higher education.

Types of Manuscripts

JSARP is interested in publishing innovative, interesting, and relevant articles that span the full range of possible forms. Please consider the following suggested manuscript types* to convey your topic. Any and all of the following manuscript types can be utilized in any area of emphasis. This delineation of manuscript types is not meant to limit but rather assist you to craft a manuscript that is successfully reviewed and published.

Theoretical Manuscripts are papers in which the "authors draw on existing research literature to advance theory" (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 10) in student affairs and higher education. Similar in structure and form to review manuscripts (see below), theoretical manuscripts are different in that they rarely present data or findings. Theoretical manuscripts may be a review and critiques of existing theories or research findings; extension of existing literature; theoretical critique of practice; or innovative and forward-thinking expositions of current or future state(s) of student affairs and higher education.

Review Manuscripts "are critical evaluations of material that has already been published" (APA, 2001, p. 9). These manuscripts can be meta-analysis of qualitative or quantitative research, policy analysis, or compilations of existing theories or models in student affairs practice. Review manuscripts often include a) issue being considered, b) summary of previous research and literature, c) identification of relationships, "contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies" (p. 7), and d) implications for practice, policy, and next steps. Review manuscripts that speak to practice in the student affairs and higher education field at large are particularly welcome.

Reports of Empirical Studies are "reports of original research" (APA, 2010, p. 10). The standard form for empirical reports is introduction, method, results, and discussion but authors may adapt that form to fit the parameters of their research method. Reports of Empirical Research manuscripts submitted to JSARP must stress the link between research and practice. Several ways authors can achieve this is by addressing the
underlying issues or problem related to practice that inspired the research; reveal the methodology (i.e., name and describe the specific methodology used) and discuss its relevance to the student affairs and higher education field; and/or offer a full discussion of results, implications, and conclusions that relates to practice in student affairs and higher education.

Methodological Manuscripts discuss new, modified, or applied methodologies in the context of student affairs and higher education. These manuscripts can discuss methodological procedures that are practice-oriented (e.g., assessment, evaluation) or theory-oriented (e.g., research). Data are discussed in these manuscripts only as a way to illustrate the use of the methodology in theory and/or practice.

Case Studies are "reports of case materials obtained while working with an individual, a group, a community, or an organization" (APA, 2010, p. 11). This type of manuscript is often used to present qualitative research findings, discuss an issue or problem in practice (e.g., policy analysis) and solutions to the same, reveal the use of or potential for a research approach, apply theory to practice, or analyze and/or apply an innovative practice. Case studies, whether they are analyzing data or illustrating practice, are grounded in theory.

Media Reviews summarize and analyze the full range of resources (e.g., blogs, websites, video, books, reports) available to student affairs educators. Media Review manuscripts, informative and critical, allow student affairs educators to learn of media useful to their work. Media reviews, invited and solicited by the Editor, should not exceed 1,200 words, and are to be discussed with the Associate Editor for Media Reviews in advance of submission. NASPA members are invited to suggest cutting edge and novel media to be reviewed in JSARP.

*See the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010), 6th edition, for further discussion of these manuscript types.

The Editorial Review Process and Criteria

Exclusive journal review: Manuscripts under review by JSARP should not be under consideration by other journals.

Blind review: Any identification of the authorship MUST be removed prior to submitting the manuscript. To assure blind review, ALL identifiers must be removed: names on the cover page, identification embedded in the electronic document properties, references to institutional affiliations, and citations that identify some or all of the authors. The cover page must include only the title of the manuscript. Manuscripts with obvious and/or subtle identifiers will be returned to the author for redaction prior to beginning the review process.
Review criteria: Manuscripts will be reviewed by up to three JSARP Editorial Board members. The criteria all relate to the student affairs and higher education field and include:

1. Exceptional, creative, and relevant application to the wide range of thinking, practices, and perspectives in student affairs and higher education;
2. Thorough and sound discussion of the practice, theory, issue, policy, and/or topic;
3. Inclusion of far reaching, relevant, and insightful implications and breakthroughs which go beyond the relevance of the institution(s) under study;
4. Regarding research manuscripts, 
   - accurate and appropriate description of the methodology,
   - method aligned with and suitable for the focus of the study,
   - findings clearly and skillfully communicated,
   - implications for practice and/or theory clearly communicated, and
   - quality measures obviously indicated and discussed;
5. Evidence of high quality, readable, and rigorous writing (e.g., coherent, cohesive, cogent);
6. Presence of practice implications in theoretical or research-based manuscripts and theoretical implications in practice-based manuscripts;
7. Rigorous treatment of the ways the theory, research, and/or practice under discussion can make a difference in the field;
8. Presence of a timely, significant, and appropriate topic;
9. Evidence of a profound and meaningful level of analysis (theoretical or practical) addressing the concerns, interests, and needs of student affairs educators;
10. Apparent contribution to current knowledge, literature, scholarship, theory, and practice; and
11. Research, theory, or practice findings connected to larger areas of concern (e.g., policy, decision making, leadership, student development).

Technical Requirements

- Manuscripts must be submitted in .doc or .docx format.
- Length: 7,000 words maximum (inclusive of references, cover page, tables, appendices, and all materials). The length of manuscripts is limited to 7,000 words because the editors are committed to increasing the accessibility of the journal to a wide range of authors. The number of words and pages the Journal can publish are limited by a number of factors related to cost and publication limits. Longer articles decrease the accessibility of the journal to as wide a range of authors as possible.
- Spacing and Fonts: Double-spaced, including references, block quotes, tables, and figures, consistently applied throughout the manuscript. Standard 12 point font throughout.
- Abstract: 75 or fewer words.
- Figures: All figures must be submitted as a PDF document or EPS or uncompressed Tiff (600 dpi) file in black and white or grey tones.
Editorial Review Process

1. Upon receipt, the Editorial Assistant will briefly review the manuscript to ensure that it meets the above minimum requirements.
2. A unique number will be assigned to the manuscript to enable the blind review process. Editorial Board members are also assigned a number to assure the integrity of the blind review process.
3. Manuscript submission and revising, communication, and the review process are conducted online through the JSARP website. When the manuscript is received, an automatically generated acknowledgement email is sent to the first author. It is the first author's responsibility to forward these communications to other authors.
4. The manuscript is assigned for review based on areas of professional and research expertise. The first review is expected to be completed in four weeks but may take longer.
5. Editorial board members complete their reviews online. Upon completion, these reviews are available through the JSARP website for authors to access.
6. At the completion of the review, each reviewer makes one of the following recommendations: Not to Accept, Major Revisions Required, Accept Pending Minor Revisions, or Accept. The Executive Editor and/or appropriate Associate Editor examines the reviews and renders a final decision. The first author is sent an email outlining that decision with links to a decision letter from the Editors and instructions on how to access the reviews.

- **Not to Accept/Not Accepted After Initial Review:** The manuscript does not meet one or more of the criteria in regard to the scope and direction for publication in JSARP.
- **Major Revisions Required:** The manuscript has potential for publication but must be revised before publication can be considered. The author is to address the editorial comments and make appropriate changes within one month. Authors will submit a revised draft for a second round of editorial review. The second review is expected to be completed in 6 weeks but may take longer. The resubmission and second review does not guarantee acceptance. A third revision is often required.
- **Accept Pending Minor Revisions:** The manuscript is considered worthy of publication pending the successful completion of minor revisions. Authors are requested to make the revisions and return the revised manuscript within one month. The Editorial Assistant and Executive Editor review the
final manuscript submitted to ensure that the suggestions have been appropriately addressed.

- **Accept**: The manuscript is considered appropriate and timely for *JSARP*. An email is sent to the author confirming its acceptance.

7. After a revision from the author is accepted, the final manuscript is forwarded to a Copy Editor who edits the manuscript. The Copy Editor will contact the author, when necessary, about changes.

8. The Executive Editor works with the authors and publisher to compile the issue.

*JSARP* is available online four times each calendar year. Subscriptions are also available through the *JSARP* website.

Exceptions to any of the above instructions should be discussed with the Executive Editor prior to submission. Questions about the submission and review process can be directed to the Editorial Assistant.
APPENDIX B

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES – QUALITATIVE INQUIRY
Submission Guidelines – Qualitative Inquiry

The following journal submission guidelines, which guided the formatting of Chapter Five, were retrieved on November 3, 2019 from https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/qualitative-inquiry#submission-guidelines.

Description of Journal

Qualitative Inquiry provides an interdisciplinary forum for qualitative methodology and related issues in the human sciences. With Qualitative Inquiry you have access to lively dialogues, current research and the latest developments in qualitative methodology.

A Valuable Resource

Whether you're a scholar, an applied researcher or a student, Qualitative Inquiry brings you the cross-disciplinary scholarship you need on qualitative research methodology.

Comprehensive Coverage

The journal publishes open-peer reviewed research articles that experiment with manuscript form and content and focus on methodological issues raised by qualitative research rather than the content or results of the research. Open to think-pieces and review essays, QI also addresses:

- Advances in specific methodological strategies or techniques
- Key issues in qualitative research
- Postmodern, post-structural and/or critical treatments of qualitative or interpretive work
- Practical applications of qualitative research
- Theoretical discussions on the philosophical bases of qualitative traditions

An Interdisciplinary Perspective

The papers published in Qualitative Inquiry transcend disciplinary, racial, ethnic, gender, national and paradigmatic boundaries, presenting research from such varied fields as:

- Anthropology
- Communication
- Cultural Studies
- Education
- Evaluation
- Family Studies
- Gerontology
- Health
- History
Current Scholarship

*Qualitative Inquiry* covers diverse topics spanning many fields and disciplines. Recent articles have examined:

- Body narratives
- Data as drama
- Debates between objectivists and social constructionists
- Ethical proposals for the Internet
- Fieldwork dilemmas
- The politics of identity
- Researching lives of women with HIV/AIDS
- Revising family stories
- Social construction of validity
- Strategies for analyzing medical interviews
- Qualitative models

**Submission Guidelines**

MANUSCRIPTS should be prepared in accordance with the 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Double-space all manuscripts, including references, notes, abstracts, quotations, and tables on 8 ½ x 11 paper. The title page should include all authors' names, affiliations, and highest professional degrees; the corresponding author's address and telephone number; and a brief biographical statement. The title page should be followed by an abstract of 100 to 150 words. Tables and references should follow APA style and be double-spaced throughout. Ordinarily, manuscripts will not exceed 30 pages (double-spaced), including tables, figures, and references. Authors of accepted manuscripts will be asked to supply camera-ready figures.

To submit the manuscript please access our online submission system at [http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/qi](http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/qi). If you have difficulties, please contact us at denzijnournals@gmail.com. There are no submission fees for this journal.

Special Issue Proposal and Submission Guidelines:
When submitting a Special Issue proposal to *Qualitative Inquiry*, you must provide in writing:

- a provisional title and abstract of 300-500 words on what the Special Issue intends to cover;
• a rationale as to why this Special Issue is needed, what contribution it aims to make, if there have been any other special issues (or edited books) on this topic, etc.;
• evidence of your qualifications to edit this Special Issue; and
• a proposed timeline to publication starting with the Call for Papers.

When submitting the completed collection of manuscripts to serve as the Special Issue, you should keep in mind the following:

• All manuscripts should have already been peer-reviewed and revised prior to submission; and
• The Special Issue guest editor/s must submit his/her/their editorial introduction at this time, which shows how each article manuscript connects to the mandate of the journal, connects the special issue to the relevant literature in the field, and so forth.

Once we have received the completed Special Issue package of manuscripts, our office will conduct an internal review of each manuscript for content and clarity. Note the following:

• Reviews of Special Issues will not begin until all of the manuscripts for the special issue, including the Introduction, have been received. For this reason, please do not submit the special issue in pieces; rather, submit them all at once; and
• We reserve the right to reject special issues and/or individual articles at any point in the review process. For this reason, guest editors should not communicate that submissions have been accepted at any point. Final Acceptance of a manuscript/special issue can only be granted by the Editor of the journal.

IF YOU ARE SENDING A PROPOSAL FOR A FULL ISSUE: Please email it first to denzinjournals@gmail.com

Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in the journal. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal, nor should manuscripts have been published elsewhere in substantially similar form or with substantially similar content. Authors in doubt about what constitutes prior publication should consult the editor. Qualitative Inquiry is an open-peer review journal.
SAGE Choice and Open Access

If you or your funder wish your article to be freely available online to nonsubscribers immediately upon publication (gold open access), you can opt for it to be included in SAGE Choice, subject to payment of a publication fee. The manuscript submission and peer review procedure is unchanged. On acceptance of your article, you will be asked to let SAGE know directly if you are choosing SAGE Choice. To check journal eligibility and the publication fee, please visit SAGE Choice. For more information on open access options and compliance at SAGE, including self-author archiving deposits (green open access) visit SAGE Publishing Policies on our Journal Author Gateway.

At SAGE, we are committed to facilitating openness, transparency and reproducibility of research. Where relevant, The Journal encourages authors to share their research data in a suitable public repository subject to ethical considerations and where data is included, to add a data accessibility statement in their manuscript file. Authors should also follow data citation principles. For more information please visit the SAGE Author Gateway, which includes information about SAGE’s partnership with the data repository Figshare.
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT – EMAIL/LETTER
Participant Recruitment Script – Email/Letter

Dear (participant name),

My name is Matt Ricke, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado studying Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership. [If applicable: I received your name from (name of reference).] I am contacting you today to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study about personal meaning-making and organizational change in higher education crisis management. The goal of this study is to better understand how higher education leaders who manage crisis make meaning of the experience and apply the meaning they make to organizational change efforts at their institutions.

To be eligible for this study, participants should:

• Have a willingness to share their crisis story
• Have a willingness to draw
• Hold a position at the director level or higher in their college or university
• Be a member of the campus’s crisis management team at the time of the crisis event
• Be able to reflect upon changes implemented by the college or university after the crisis event

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews (lasting 1 to 1.5 hours each) as well as a reflective drawing exercise. Interviews can take place in person or via Google Hangouts and will be recorded and transcribed.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate or have questions regarding the study, please contact me at pete8502@bears.unco.edu or 507.469.1269.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Matt Ricke, M.S.
APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT – TELEPHONE
Hello, my name is Matt Ricke, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado studying Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership. [If applicable: I received your name from (name of reference).] Do you have a few minutes to speak with me about an opportunity to participate in a research study?

I am contacting you today to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study about personal meaning-making and organizational change in higher education crisis management. The goal of this study is to better understand how higher education leaders who manage crisis make meaning of the experience and apply the meaning they make to organizational change efforts at their institutions.

To be eligible for this study, participants should:
- Have a willingness to share their crisis story
- Have a willingness to draw
- Hold a position at the director level or higher in their college or university
- Be a member of the campus’s crisis management team at the time of the crisis event
- Be able to reflect upon changes implemented by the college or university after the crisis event

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews (lasting 1 to 1.5 hours each) as well as a reflective drawing exercise. Interviews can take place in person or via Google Hangouts and will be recorded and transcribed.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Do you have any questions for me at this time? [answer questions]

If you would like to participate need to contact me regarding the study, you can email me at pete8502@bears.unco.edu or call me at 507.469.1269.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
Consent Form for Human Participants in Research
University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: Narratives of Organizational Crisis Management in Higher Education: Exploring Leaders’ Meaning-Making through Story and Drawing

Researcher: Matthew L. P. Ricke, Doctoral Student
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership
pete8502@bears.unco.edu

Advisor: Maria K. E. Lahman, Ph.D.
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Maria.Lahman@unco.edu

Purpose and Description

The purpose of this study is to better understand the role of personal meaning-making and organizational change in higher education crisis management.

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be expected to participate in two (2) semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes each. The interviews may take place in person or on Google Hangouts. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. You will also be asked to participate in a reflective drawing exercise (this exercise does not require any particular artistic ability). If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to share your experience of a campus crisis and how you made meaning of the crisis, as well as the role of the meaning you made in organizational change efforts at your institution. You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of your interviews.

Confidentiality and Data Use

Digital audio recordings of the interviews will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive using pseudonymous file names. Hard copies of any material, including consent forms, hard copies of notes, and any additional materials supplied by the participants, also will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher’s office. Data will be maintained for a minimum of three (3) years, after which identifiable data will be destroyed. All personally identifiable information you contribute to this research will be kept confidential. With the exception of the researcher and research advisor, no one will be allowed to see your personally identifiable information. Your responses from the individual interviews and drawings will be anonymized prior to any publication or presentation. You will identify or be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity. Data collected in this study will be used in the researcher’s doctoral dissertation, scholarly and/or trade publications, and public presentations.
Release for Artwork and Use of Images

By signing this document, you affirm that no other individual or parties hold copyright interest in the drawings provided as part of this study and that you hold all rights to these drawings. Furthermore, you grant the researcher non-exclusive rights to reproduce these drawings in the researcher’s doctoral dissertation, scholarly and/or publications, and public presentations.

Risks and Benefits

Your participation in this study may benefit you by providing the opportunity to process your experience managing a campus crisis and your professional experience in higher education. Your contributions to the study may inform other higher education leaders as they manage crises. There is no risk to you outside of natural discomfort that may occur when sharing your experiences of campus crisis. Should you experience any psychological discomfort during the research process, please be aware that the researcher can make recommendations for resources you can access.

Consent

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, Office of Research, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

___________________________________  ___________________________
Participant’s Signature    Date

___________________________________  ___________________________
Researcher’s Signature    Date
APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVALS
Initial Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

DATE: October 3, 2018
TO: Matthew Ricke, M.S.
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB
PROJECT TITLE: [1327117-1] Crisis Management in Higher Education: Exploring Meaning Making and Organizational Change During and After Crisis
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: October 3, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE: October 2, 2022

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.
Amendment/Modification Approval Letter

DATE: October 31, 2018
TO: Matthew Ricke, M.S.
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification
ACTION: MODIFICATION APPROVED/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: October 31, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE: October 2, 2022

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this modification and verifies its continued status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Matthew -
Your revised materials are approved. Best wishes with your research and please don't hesitate to let me know if you need any further IRB-assistance beyond what your research advisor can provide.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.
APPENDIX G
FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE
First Interview Guide

As this study is emergent, the questions and content of the interview may change over time. The following is a list of possible interview questions that may facilitate participants’ sharing their stories.

1. What brought you to this field?
2. What keeps you in this field?
3. Tell me a story about a crisis you have managed during your time as a higher education leader.
4. How did managing the crisis challenge the way you see the world?
5. What new insights did you find as a result of your experience?
6. Tell me about the institution where the crisis occurred.
7. What was your role on campus when the crisis happened?
8. Where were you when you first found out about the crisis?
9. What do you remember most about the experience?
10. What was the most challenging part of managing this crisis?
11. Tell me about the resources – spiritual, psychological, personal – that you drew upon to help you better understand this crisis.
12. What else should I know but didn’t ask?
APPENDIX H

REFLECTIVE DRAWING EXERCISE PROMPTS
Reflective Drawing Exercise

Using two, 8.5 x 11” pieces of unlined white paper, and any drawing or collaging materials you wish to use (pens, pencils, crayons, paints, magazine clippings), I would like you to create one drawing or image responding to each the following two prompts:

On the first piece of paper:
  • How have you changed as a person because of your experience of the crisis?

On the second piece of paper:
  • What changed at your institution since the crisis? What role did you play in the change that happened?

In your drawings, consider using different colors, shapes, and images in your drawing. Allow the drawing to flow – it does not have to be “artistic” as it is uniquely yours. It can be as simple or elaborate as you choose. It need not make sense to anyone but you.
APPENDIX I

SECOND INTERVIEW GUIDE
Second Interview Guide

The second interview is based upon the content of the first interview, as well as the reflective drawing exercise. Possible questions for the second interview include:

1. What new insights or reflections emerged since our first interview?
2. Tell me about the process of creating your drawings.
3. Why did you choose the materials you did to create your drawings?
4. Tell me about the meaning of the images.
5. How do the images connect to the story you shared during our first interview?
APPENDIX J

INTERVIEW DEBRIEF SCRIPT
Interview Debrief Script

Thank you again for your participation in this study about crisis management, Meaning-making and organizational change in higher education. I sought to answer the following research question through this study: How do campus leaders at an institution of higher education (IHE) make meaning of a campus crisis event? Little research has been conducted at these intersections, and your participation will contribute to the scholarly literature and help inform the professional practice of crisis management in higher education.

As a reminder, all study data will be kept confidential. Any publications or presentations resulting from this research, including the dissertation manuscript, will be anonymized using your pseudonym of choice or one which I have assigned you. Efforts will be made to authentically represent the context in which your narratives take place while maintaining your anonymity.

- In order to authentically represent you during this study, what pronouns do you use? (if not previously disclosed)
- What pseudonym would you like used to represent you in the study?

I have a few follow-up questions that I would like to ask you about your participation in the study.

- Now that your participation has concluded, how was your experience as a participant?
- Did you have any questions or feedback about the research process?
- Do you have any feedback for me as a researcher?
- Do you know of anyone who may be eligible to participate in this study? (request referral information)
- Would you like to receive a copy of the final dissertation manuscript?

If you ever have questions or wish to discuss this study further, please feel free to contact me at any time.
APPENDIX K

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INTIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM) CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION
Verification of Completion

- **Stage 1:** [https://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kc98ca297-da27-47f5-b727-92e1f368c18f-14974508](https://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kc98ca297-da27-47f5-b727-92e1f368c18f-14974508)
- **Stage 2:** [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w971bb9ce-52a9-4641-ba0c-e76bf0b30565-29738253](www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w971bb9ce-52a9-4641-ba0c-e76bf0b30565-29738253)
APPENDIX L

RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPANTS
Participant Resource Guide

Critical Incident Stress Management

CISM International
https://www.criticalincidentstress.com/home

International Crisis Incident Stress Foundation
https://icisf.org/

Information Sheet on Managing Critical Incident Stress

Your Institution’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

[Contact Information for Participant’s Employee Assistance Program]

Resources for Further Exploration


