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Crisis management post Hurricane Katrina: a qualitative study of a higher education institution's administrators' response to crisis management

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT POST HURRICANE KATRINA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION’S ADMINISTRATORS’ RESPONSE TO CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agriculture and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

by
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B.B.A, The University of Memphis 1997
M.Ed, University of Arkansas 1999
May 2011
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends who have encouraged and supported me through a lifetime of education.

I dedicate this dissertation to Tammy Hedges, my friend and mentor, who first showed me student affairs could be a career and who has supported me throughout all of my professional endeavors.

I dedicate this dissertation to Tim Cochran, my much missed friend, who was the first person to tell me back when I was a junior in college that I would need to pursue a PhD.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSID- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
EOC- Emergency Operation Center
HRM- Human Resource Management
DSS- Department of Social Services
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
ICS- Incident Command Structure
IT- Information Technology
LSU – Louisiana State University
MOU- Memos of Understanding
NASA- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASPA - National Association for Student Personnel Administrators
NIMS- National Incident Management System
PAO- Public Affairs Officer
PIO- Public Information Officer
PMAC – Pete Maravich Assembly Center
ABSTRACT

From campus shootings to mass prolonged campus closures in the Gulf Coast due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the past decade has seen an increase in high profile crises at higher education institutions. Louisiana State University was one of the institutions impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. After the experience, university administrators created an Emergency Operation Center and a new plan for how to handle campus crises. In 2008, LSU administrators had an opportunity to test their full scale plan with the landfall of Hurricane Gustav.

In this study, university administrators from LSU were interviewed about their experiences with crisis management and the changes implemented since 2005. The participants discussed the creation of the Emergency Operation Center, leadership shown from the administration in the construction of the Emergency Operation Center, the difference in higher ranking administrators versus lower ranking administrators, and the opinion of if the campus is ready for future crises.

In this study the researcher found that the creation of an Emergency Operation Center was an important achievement for crisis management. Additionally, it was decided that perceptions between higher ranking administrators involved with the Emergency Operation Center and those administrators not involved was significant and that a discrepancy was occurring between those who are considered essential personnel and non-essential personnel.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For administrators at Louisiana State University (LSU), the week of August 22, the first week of the 2005 fall semester, had come to an end. The students had moved into the residence halls for the new school year, the Greeks had held their campus recruitment, freshmen convocation had occurred, the programming board had hosted entertainment events to welcome the students back, and the students had purchased their books and gone to the first week of classes. Administrators such as Robert (a pseudonym) had been planning all summer to prepare the university for the return of the students for the fall semester. Robert served as an Assistant Director in a division of Student Affairs and had trained students, planned events, and adapted to a new supervisor who had just begun that summer. This was Robert’s first job out of graduate school and he had been working at LSU for two years.

Although it appeared this semester would start like the countless others at LSU, a storm was forming in the Atlantic Ocean. As the week progressed, this newly formed hurricane named Katrina passed through Florida and moved into the Gulf of Mexico. Robert, having lived in the gulf coast region, had experienced previous hurricane warnings. Although warnings had come before, the hurricanes had usually moved east or west of the Southern Louisiana area, going into Alabama or Texas. Often, when hurricane warnings came, the result seemed to be a lot of excitement for nothing or at most a hard rain.

The weekend approached with the threat of Hurricane Katrina making landfall. With a long and stressful first week of school completed, Robert was ready to relax and “let loose” with his friends. Robert invited fellow colleagues over for what is known as a “Hurricane Party.” Robert and his friends enjoyed the evening as the hurricane stormed through Southern Louisiana.
In the early morning hours, the party came to an end as the power went out at his apartment near the college campus.

The following morning, after the heavy rains of the storm passed through, Robert and his friends decided to leave the apartment to see how the rest of the city was doing. Without power, cable, and cell phone capabilities, it was the best way for Robert to see the hurricanes impact on the city and the campus. Robert soon realized the devastation that had occurred in his community. Trees and power lines were down, streets were blocked, and areas were flooded. The only way he could communicate with people was through intermittent text messages.

Twelve hours earlier, Robert had been partying with his friends, and now his mood had turned into one of despair. Robert headed to the LSU campus, his home away from home, where other students and administrators began to gather. The campus basketball arena and indoor track facility had turned into a triage center as helicopters began to bring people in from New Orleans. Robert began to volunteer with the medical units working at the on campus arena, volunteering 24 hours straight at the facility, taking short naps on the floor when he could. There was little to no contact with his superiors outside of text messages to his boss who was cut off in a town 20 miles from Baton Rouge.

After volunteering at the emergency shelters for about a week, Robert returned to the office. His students slowly returned to the office, some having lost their homes, possessions, and family members. The university had no official role for him as an administrator with regards to the hurricane, and Robert was torn between his intrinsic need to volunteer at the emergency shelter and his superior’s instructions to prepare his students for future events that would occur on campus, even if entertainment activities were the last thing on people’s minds. Robert
realized that this was not something any of his training or education had prepared him to handle.

Was his experience different than others who had experienced a crisis at their institutions?

**Crises in Higher Education**

Higher education institutions have faced numerous crises during the past decade. Because the composition of a college or university can be very similar to that of a small city in structure and population, it is natural there will be some occurrences that fall outside of the more commonly recognized ideas of what collegiate education is as it pertains to the safety of the campus community. In past decades the higher education community has experienced a broadening range of crises such as natural disasters, school shootings, serial killers, mass murders, and suicides. For instance, school shootings, once a phenomenon of high schools, occurred in at least three higher education institutions since 2007 (Newman, Fox, Harding, Mehta, & Roth, 2004). And where natural disasters are concerned, coastal universities have learned to take on a greater role in their communities after the impacts of hurricanes such as Katrina, Rita, and Gustav (Bachar & Devin, 2005 and Foster & Lipka, 2007).

These increased incidents of very public crises on college campuses have drawn higher education institutions into the media spotlight. With this new focus on how higher education institutions are handling the crisis issues, the administrations of the institutions are challenged to find new and innovative ways to address these crises. In the past, processes may have included a flip chart or a notebook with phone numbers, but with the increased occurrences of crises, administrators are challenged to be better prepared to anticipate, react, and evaluate how the problems are handled.

With this new emphasis on crisis management, higher education institutions are reevaluating their plans and new research is being conducted on what colleges should do to
prepare themselves (Zdziarski, Dunkel, & Rollo, 2007). The increased spotlight and focus on how crisis management is handled at higher education institutions allows ample opportunities for meaningful research. Crisis management research can be hard for educational institutions because crises are infrequent events. In addition, many institutions that have faced a crisis do not like to discuss the experience because they do not want others to scrutinize how they handled the situation, especially the mistakes they may have made (Pearson & Clair, 1988). Even with the lack of research in higher education on the issue of crisis management, a few recent studies have been conducted to investigate this issue.

A Tale of Two Studies

In the past decade, two dissertations have been done about crisis management and higher education. In 2001, Eugene L. Zdziarski completed a dissertation and study entitled *Institutional Preparedness to Respond to Campus Crises as Perceived by Student Affairs Administrators in Selected NASPA Member Institutions*. A follow up dissertation to Zdziarski’s study was completed in 2008 by Linda A. Catullo entitled *Post-September 11, 2001, Through Pre-Virginia Tech Massacre, April 16, 2007: The Status of Crisis Management Preparedness as Perceived by University Student Affairs Administrators in Selected NASPA Member Institutions*. These two quantitative studies provide the foundation for this current study.

Zdziarski Study

Zdziarski’s (2001) study was conducted prior to the traumatic events of the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, DC on September 11, 2001, a time in which most literature regarding crisis management in student affairs was primarily anecdotal. This study was a benchmark study for higher education and student affairs with regards to crisis management. His study was undertaken in order to find out from a student affairs perspective the current state
of crisis management preparedness for higher education. Zdziarski examined institutional preparedness in relation to four critical factors: a) the types of crisis for which institutions prepare, b) the phases of crisis for which institutions prepared, c) the systems in place to respond to crisis, and d) the stakeholders involved and considered in crisis preparation.

At the time of Zdziarski’s (2001) study, there was no published empirical data about higher education and crisis management. Therefore, he compared the existing literature from other areas such as management, organizational behavior, and public relations to higher education in order to find out where higher education stood regarding preparedness.

A survey was created that would be sent out to four year colleges and universities who were institutional members of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) with enrollment of over 8,000 students (Zdziarski, 2001). For the survey, there were 218 institutions that met his criteria and 146 responded to the survey and 7 declined to participate in the research study for a 69.2% response rate. This included both initial responses and responses turned in after following up with institutions who did not reply to the initial response.

Zdziarski (2001) found higher education institutions’ crisis plans were more reactive than proactive. The plans for most institutions had been around for less than 10 years. Further, most of the institutions with written crisis management plans had a post crisis plan while only two thirds of those institutions had a pre-crisis plan. Campus administrators perceived they were the most prepared for fire, student death, sexual assault, suicide, and campus demonstrations or disturbances. In regards to the four categories (natural, facility, criminal, and human) of crisis he had determined from his review, 86.3% of higher education institutions had prepared for at least one scenario in each category.
Crisis management teams had been created at 85% of the higher education institutions that participated in the study (Zdziarski, 2001). Team members were placed on these teams by either their superiors or through aspects of their job descriptions. Team members were most often trained in general procedures, work with law enforcement, interaction with emergency personnel, and media relations. Internal stakeholders had greater involvement over external stakeholders. Student affairs personnel felt extremely confident in their preparedness for a crisis situation because they felt crisis situations, especially with students, fell under their domain and they had routinely dealt with minor crisis scenarios.

Catullo Study

Linda Catullo (2008) followed up Zdziarski’s 2001 study to understand how perceptions of chief student affairs administrators had changed with regards to crisis management in higher education. Since Zdziarski’s study, higher education along, with the United States, had faced many challenges which changed how institutions looked at crises. Within the time frame of the two studies, the nation was faced with the horrors of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 followed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita’s landfall and disruption and destruction in 2005 of the Gulf Coast Region of the United States. While she was completing the written portion of her study, the shooting massacre at Virginia Tech, which not only shocked college campuses by the nation, occurred. She had gathered her responses before the incident, so the results did not take into account any change in procedures or attitudes which could have occurred from this incident.

This study was significant because it allowed institutions to assess their readiness for a crisis and gave insight into how to improve their crisis plans for the future (Catullo, 2008). In order to determine how prepared an institution was for a crisis, the study challenged chief student
affairs administrators about their perceptions of what their crisis management plans are against the actual written crisis management plans.

A survey was administered to residential doctoral granting institutions with enrollments of over 5,000 students and voting members of NASPA (Catullo, 2008). For the analysis between this study and the Zdziarski study of 2001, Catullo chose to compare and consider only the institutions who responded to both surveys. Using a survey instrument based on Zdziarski’s survey, 154 institutions of the population of 351 took part in the survey with 4 institutions declining to participate. Of these institutions, Zdziarski found that private institutions tended to rate their preparedness for a crisis better than public institutions.

The administrators were asked to look at crises in the four categories of natural, facility, criminal and human (Catullo, 2008). In 2007, the areas that campuses had the most plans for were student death (90.3 %), fire (90.0%), infectious disease (87.0%), suicide (86.4%), and evacuation of buildings (86.4%). Of the 146 respondents that had partaken in both surveys, 145 of them had some type of written crisis plan, which was no change from the previous survey. Additionally, 130 (89%) of them had a post crisis plan while 116 (79%) of the respondents had a pre-crisis plan.

Catullo (2008) found there was a significant increase in institutions that conducted crisis audits and the pre-crisis phase was being addressed more significantly. Even after events such as the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, there was no significant change in natural disasters preparedness. With regards to hurricanes, the South East was the most prepared for a hurricane and the institutions that were most likely to experience a hurricane were the most prepared for a hurricane to happen. She also found an increase to the amount of training provided to the crisis management teams and 62% had regular training for their crisis management team members in
Institutions had also made their crisis management plans more accessible on the internet.

Generally, institutions felt slightly more prepared for a major crisis and had become more prepared for additional types of crises such as chemical leaks, corruption or loss of data, loss of utilities, terrorist threats, and infectious disease (Catullo, 2008). Since September 11, 2001 more universities had made preparations for terrorist threats. Internal stakeholders within the institutions remained important and external stakeholders such as the community were more involved with aspects of the crisis management plan.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and Higher Education

Institutions of higher education were shut down for the longest time in history after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast (Lipka, 2005). Academic operations were disrupted and students, faculty, and staff were displaced. Over 1,000 colleges and universities across the nation opened their doors to allow 18,000 students from New Orleans (Delgado, Dillard, Loyola, Southern University at New Orleans Tulane, University of New Orleans, and Xavier) to enroll at their institutions (Mangan, 2005b). Administrations from one university took up residency at other universities who offered them space to function while they determined the damage to their own institutions and planned for their future reopening (Fields, 2005). Louisiana State University athletic facilities became triage centers and helicopter landing pads; facilities and buildings once housing basketball teams during the recovery effort housed a temporary morgue (Bacher & Devlin, 2005).

Students, faculty, and administrators were faced with unprecedented decisions. Colleges and universities experienced over 1.4 billion dollars in physical damages plus millions more in loss of tuition after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (Mangan, 2005a). Students
were caught off guard in the storm because they had seen other storms in the past bypass New Orleans and many of the out of state students had nowhere to flee (Dyer, 2005). Realizing they may not be able to return to their university that semester and not wanting to fall behind academically, many students began contacting other universities to enroll (Chew, Holsendolph, Walker, & Yates, 2005). After the hurricanes, the Gulf Coast universities were immediately impacted with such dilemmas as cancelled or shortened fall semesters, flood damage, relocation, damaged and destroyed buildings, loss of power, destroyed books and records, and scattered faculty and students (“The Aftermath on 31 Campuses”, 2005). While some universities such as Southern University in New Orleans were devastated by the flood waters, the University of New Orleans suffered major looting, most done under criminal intent and not to gain resources for survival (Gravois, 2005).

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, those in higher education began to discuss and reevaluate their status with regards to crisis management. Since most institutions had never faced a major disaster, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita provided an opportunity for higher education to examine their own preparedness (Henderson, 2005). “With Hurricane Katrina as a live example of disaster response, officials at undamaged institutions have been watching closely - even as they offer various types of aid- to see how affected colleges’ plans are holding up and to identify areas where their own plans could be strengthened” (Lipka, 2005, p. A28). Fluker (2005) called for ethical leadership in the rebuilding of the institutions in the New Orleans area, looking for leaders to have integrity and empathy. Audrey Williams (2007) discussed how higher education had been slow to adopt strategies for crisis management. Hurricane Katrina taught colleges to plan for extended shutdowns and to look for assistance from others (Lipka, 2005).
Numerous researchers have made suggestions concerning what colleges should be doing in order to prepare for a crisis situation (Henderson, 2005; Lawson, 2005; Lipka, 2005; and Williams, 2007). Ensuring clear, factual, and timely communication was seen as an important component in the crisis management process (Lawson, 2005 and Lipka, 2005). Universities needed to have different plans for different scenarios and need to plan for continuity in their operation if a disaster were to occur (Henderson, 2005; Lawson, 2005; and Lipka, 2005). Communication and Information Technology (IT) centers need to be prepared, organized, and backed up in case of a disaster such as a hurricane (Kiernan, 2005). Higher education institutions need to have crisis management teams on campus who are trained to respond in a time of crisis (Lawson, 2005 and Williams, 2007).

**Hurricane Gustav and Higher Education**

In the three years since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Gulf Coast had the opportunity to re-evaluate their crisis management procedures. When Hurricane Gustav entered the Gulf Coast region, the first ever evacuation of the Louisiana coast occurred which included the mandate for the complete evacuation of the city of New Orleans (Johnson, 2008). Institutions in Baton Rouge, such as Louisiana State University, made adjustments to their academic and co-curricular schedules after Gustav (Mickles, 2008). Having previously experienced the influx of people from the New Orleans area during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, LSU’s campus began to prepare for a similar experience. Evacuees from New Orleans came into town and volunteers flooded into the city to prepare for another post-Katrina situation (Harper, Vetter, & Smith, 2008).

However, Hurricane Gustav became a completely different hurricane experience from that of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita when it made landfall on September 1, 2008. The city of
Baton Rouge took the brunt of the hurricane force with the eye of the hurricane moving through the city. The LSU campus that had prepared to host evacuees suffered upwards of 12 million dollars in damage (Blum, 2008). During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, athletic facilities housed evacuees from New Orleans, but during Hurricane Gustav they housed members of their own athletic organizations whose own homes had suffered damage (Rosetta, 2008). Classes were cancelled for a week. A year after the hurricane made landfall, LSU was still working on the recovery effort from the storm (Meaux, 2009).

The outcome of Hurricane Gustav showed institutions had prepared differently for a major crisis, especially those in the city of New Orleans (Mangan, 2008). Many of the problems and mistakes made before were handled by the time Gustav arrived. This time around, administrators were able to track their students and students were prepared with their own evacuation plans (Mangan, 2008). People still felt powerless during the hurricanes, but were better prepared. Institutions in Baton Rouge were hit harder than they expected and had to plan for a different outcome (Mangan, 2008).

**Rationale for Study**

These stories in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav provide evidence for the need of further research into crisis management and leadership in higher education. By looking at how a university handles a crisis situation, from the way they prepared for it to the implementation and post crisis evaluation, college and university leaders can assess their own plans and how they would handle a crisis situation. Looking at the changes made between when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita landed and three years later when Gustav arrived will give valuable insight into crisis management planning.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to take a look at how the administrators at Louisiana State University prepared for and handled a crisis situation after having gone through a similar crisis situation before. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, LSU had the unique opportunity to prepare for another hurricane of that nature, in essence a Hurricane Katrina II. In 2008, LSU and the Gulf Region once again felt the wrath of a hurricane with Hurricane Gustav. This unique situation provides an opportunity to follow up on the quantitative studies of Zdziarski (2001) and Catullo (2008) with a qualitative study to gather the rich stories of those involved with crisis management at LSU. This study will provide information and insight into the administrative process and the decisions leaders made between Hurricane Katrina and Gustav. These recommendations and insight will serve as an example for other higher education institutions on how to construct their crisis management plan along with showcasing a practical example of an institution that has experienced multiple similar crises.

Research Questions

The following four questions will guide this study:

1. How did crisis management change at the university after Hurricane Katrina and Rita and what role did leadership partake in this process?

2. What leadership characteristics are important during a crisis and what makes a good leader during a crisis?

3. How does crisis management impact the personnel of the university, both essential and non-essential personnel during a crisis situation?
4. After the changes to crisis management from the lessons of Hurricane Katrina and Rita and other prominent crises on college campuses, is the university community prepared for a crisis?
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As crises become more prevalent, colleges and university administrators have come to realize they are not immune to crises (Griffin, 2007 and Mitroff, 2001). A crisis can affect the university educational process and facilitation of administrative functions. Crises on a college campus can be viewed through many lenses such as counseling, sociology, higher education, business, psychology, and law. For this dissertation, I will be looking at campus crises through the scope of crisis management and leadership, specifically higher education administrative leadership.

In this literature review, I will look at characteristics and definitions of crises. Following there will be a brief discussion of natural disasters and higher education institutions’ roles in crises. Next, I will take a look at the literature on crisis management and crisis communication. I will then follow with leadership and crisis management teams. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical framework of leadership by Bolman and Deal (2003) that will guide the study.

Crisis

As Zdziarski (2001) and Catullo (2008) did previously, this literature review will begin with the characteristics and the definitions of crises found throughout the literature along with the guiding definition I will be using for this research. It is often hard to narrow down one specific view of what a crisis is or an exact definition of crisis, because many people view crises in different ways (Mitroff, 2001). A crisis is often relative to the point of view of the individual who is affected by the crisis (Baum, 1987 and Coombs, 2007). A crisis is not simply a black and white situation that everyone can agree on and there can be a wide range of possible crises triggered from many circumstances (Fink, 1986 and Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). In general, a
crisis causes disruption to normal routines and has the potential to cause physical, psychological, and economic harm throughout its duration (Mitroff, 2001 and Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007).

If those who consider themselves stakeholders in a situation feel there is a crisis, then often a crisis will exist (Cavanaugh, 2006 and Coombs, 2007).

**Characteristics of Crisis**

Crises are considered to be very sudden, severe, and associated with uncertainty (Ahmed, 2006; Coombs, 2007; Fink, 1986; Lerbinger, 1997; Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Crises can happen to anyone at anytime and do not differentiate between victims – both “good” and “bad” people are affected the same (Adubato, 2008 and Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). Often, there is a very short response time to address a crisis, since typically crises are unexpected (Klann, 2003; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Communication channels are often disrupted (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). The victims of a crisis often feel weak, helpless, and shocked as a result of many people operating under the assumption that “bad things can’t happen to me” (Pearson & Clair, 1988).

A crisis can be a threat to basic human needs and well being (Klann, 2003 and Mitroff, 2001). There is an element of risk with a crisis and a chance of injury, harm, death, or destruction of property (Lerbinger, 1997). Crises bring about the context of fear and disruption to everyday activities and normal positive managerial operations (Laufer, 2007). All crises deal with disruption of information, knowledge, and understanding, causing trouble for stakeholders (Gilpin & Murphey, 2008).

There is not an exact way to predict the type and timing of crisis a person or an organization may face, but there are scenarios that can be expected or planned for (Coombs, 2007; Lebow, 1987; and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Crises may take the form of natural disasters,
terrorism, workplace violence, disease outbreaks, unforeseeable technical problems, product failure, emergencies, malevolence, confrontations, mismanagement, organizational misdeeds, economic hardship, human accidents, rumors, and bad leadership (Coombs, 2007; Gilpin & Murphey, 2008; Klan, 2003; Kupperman, Wilcox, & Smith, 1975; Reason & Lutovsky, 2007; Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997; Smits & Ezzat, 2003; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Crises can range from local to an international scale (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). Thus, crises can be looked from a very broad perspective and can seem unmanageable due to the spectrum of possible occurrences.

In order to manage the concept of a crisis, researchers have wanted to emphasize the difference between the types of crises and have categorized them into three types: emergency, technical, and disaster (Gilpin & Murphey, 2008 and Jacques, Gatot, & Wallemacq, 2007). Emergency crises are often seen as small scale and localized while disasters are seen as large scale and all encompassing. Technical crises come from human design, error, and failure in technology. Additionally, crises have been separated into natural and human made (Gilpin & Murphey, 2008; Griffin, 2007; Kupperman et al., 1975; Lalonde, 2004; and Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1997). While natural crises often deal with nature and its impact on people and their surroundings, human made crises occur from human errors, loss of technological control, or are purposefully implemented by a person to get ahead or cause harm to others (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997).

Higher education administrators face many challenges when a crisis occurs on campus. They may face challenges both externally and internally within the university system (Zdziarski, Rollo, and Dunkel, 2007). If the area of responsibility or “turf” becomes an issue, challenges regarding who is responsible for specific areas within the college or university and the
relationship between the university and the surrounding community could take place. How the colleges and universities deal with those challenges can determine how successful they are in solving the crisis situation.

**Definition of Crisis**

As discussed above, crisis can come in many varieties and a standard definition may be hard to define (Jacques et al. 2007; Lalonde, 2004; Mitroff, 2001; and Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). Thiery Pauchant and Ian Mitroff feel some managers misuse the term of crisis, referring to troubleshooting or routine situations as a crisis. Carol Lalonde said the term crisis has simply taken on a meaning that describes something is not going toward the expected outcome. Ulmer et al. (2007) think that not all bad experiences should be considered a crisis and that a crisis is a unique moment in history for the organization. Steven Fink (1986) writes about how a crisis is a turning point that runs the risk of escalating in intensity, receiving media or governmental scrutiny, image damaging, disrupts business operations, and has a financial impact on the organization or person. While J. Michael Rollo and Eugene Zdziarski (2007) state there are no common widely accepted definitions for a crisis, there are characteristics in the definitions which should be examined.

Some authors define crisis in higher education as an all encompassing term that includes any disruption to people, organization, educational pursuits, or unforeseen damage (Reason & Lutovsky, 2007). Rollo and Zdziarski (2007) discuss how the definitions of crisis often have “…common characteristics: a negative event or outcome, the element of surprise, limited response time, disruption of operation, and a threat to safety and well-being of people” (p.24).

According to Webster’s Dictionary (2009), crisis comes from the Greek word *krisis* which means decision. They go on to define crisis as:
3a: an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially: one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome <a financial crisis> b: a situation that has reached a critical phase <the environmental crisis>

Fink (1986) defines crisis as:

A crisis is an unstable time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending—either one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or one with the distinct possibility of a highly desirable and extremely positive outcome. (p.15)

Richard Luecke (2004) defines a crisis as: “A crisis is a change—either sudden or evolving—that results in an urgent problem that may be addressed immediately” (p.xvi).

Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) devised the following definition of crisis given the broad use and application of the term: “…a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core” (p.12).

Mitroff (2001) modified his definition later to state: “…an event that affects or has the potential to affect the whole of an organization” (p.34).

Otto Lerbinger (1997) defines crisis as: “…an event that brings, or has the potential for bringing, an organization into disrepute and imperils its future profitability, growth, and, possibly its very survival” (p.4).

Gene Klann (2003) defines crisis as: “…key moment or critical period that brings both surprise and dramatic change” (p. 4).

W. Timothy Coombs (2007) defines crisis as: “A crisis is the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (p. 2-3).

While there are many different definitions of crisis available, for this study I will be using the definition created and used by Zdziarski (as cited in Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007) which is: “A crisis is an event, which is often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the
institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of personnel, property, financial resources, and/or reputation of the institution” (p.27-28).

**Impact of Crisis**

Crises were once thought to have an exact beginning and ending, but are now considered to be more fluid and long lasting events, possibly even circular in nature (Fink, 1986 and Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). Crises produce a disruption to the routine of a person or organization, create a sense of lack of control, and often bring the outside attention of the media (Ahmed, 2006). They bring a sense of urgency with the fear of them getting worse if action is not taken (Kupperman et al., 1975).

A breakdown of socially constructed and institutionalized relationships occurs with the onset of a crisis and members of these groups will need to realize the way they had been operating is either faulty or they will need to prepare a defense plan for the next crisis (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992 and Pearson & Clair, 1988). Values which once were held as important may not be as important in a time of crisis (Ulmer et al., 2007). Crises can disrupt people’s perceptions of themselves and their world and impact organizational structure, mission and values (Lerbinger, 1997; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007).

**Individuals and Crisis.** A crisis situation can have a long term impact on a person’s life, often becoming a memorable event that a person may feel emotionally attached to for months to years after it happens (Cavanaugh, 2006). If an individual feels he or she is in a crisis, then scale will have little effect on them (Coombs, 2007). John Cavanaugh discusses how often after a person has experienced a crisis, he or she feels the need to talk with others and share their experiences. Martin Smith, David Lees, and Kay Clymo (2003) discuss how even those who may not have been part of the crisis, but felt they should have been or survived the experience,
also may experience guilt and other strong emotions. While people are often greatly affected by crises, they serve the most important role when an organization has a crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1988).

Organizations and Crisis. Like individuals, organizations are susceptible to crises. Organizations are designed in many different forms and are comprised of various amounts of people, goals, systems, technology, and organizational plans (Smits & Ezzat, 2003). To an organization a crisis is unexpected, not routine, and has the ability to disrupt the continuity, operation, and goals of an organization (Gephart, 2007; Klann, 2003; Pearson & Clair, 1988; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Organizations are impacted through technical, economical, legal, and ethical dimensions; the stresses placed on the organization through the disruption, lack of communication, and information can be harmful to the wellness of the organization (Jacques et al., 2007; Klann, 2003 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

Positives of a Crisis

While crises are often only discussed in the negative aspects, there are positive outcomes which result as well (Fink, 1986; Lalonde, 2004; and Meyers & Holusha, 1986). Gerald Meyers and John Holusha discussed the positive outcomes and advantages of a crisis which include creation of heroes, opportunities for change (organization and people), facing latent problems, creation of new strategies, development of warning systems, and obtaining a competitive edge. A crisis situation can bring people together and foster new solidarity and cooperation within an institution (Lalonde, 2004). A crisis for one person or organization could turn out to be an opportunity for others (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997 and Ulmer et al., 2007). Ulmer et al. found organizations have many opportunities for learning from a crisis, such as the ability to learn from other failures, adjust outdated practices, and create new practices.
Natural Disasters

One major variety of crises institutions of higher education may face is a natural disaster. Early research on natural disasters and crisis management was considered uneven and lacking focus due to the wide variety and classification of natural disasters, but discussion of natural disaster management has increased especially in the wake of the recent hurricanes in the Gulf Coast (Baum, 1987 and Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). For many years, natural disasters were the dominant model for crisis management definitions (Laufer, 2007; Lerbinge, 1997, Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Natural disasters consist of earthquakes, fires, tornados, hurricanes, ice storms, blizzards, droughts, landslides, and floods and are often considered to be an “Act of God” for the inability to control their effects (Baum, 1987; Cavanaugh, 2006; Champagne, 2007; Laufer, 2007; Lerbinge, 1986; Lerbinge, 1997, Nudell & Antokol, 1988; Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997; Schuh & Laanan, 2006; Ulmer et al., 2007).

Natural disasters cause major destruction to life and property (Baum; Lerbinge, 1986; Lerbinge, 1997; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Often, natural disasters are seen as unpredictable and sudden events which do not discriminate against their victims (Baum, 1987; Kupperman et al., 1975; Lerbinge, 1997; Mitroff, 2001; Nudell & Antokol, 1988; Schuh & Laanan, 2006; and Ulmer et al., 2007).

Natural disasters disrupt organizations, communities, and people’s lives (Baum, 1987 and Smith et al., 2003). The victims of natural disasters often suffer from psychological effects and withdrawal due to the overwhelming nature of the experience (Baumand, Pearson & Clair, 1988). Smith et al. discuss the different types of victims from a disaster experience:

Primary victims are those in the front line who have experienced maximum exposure to the catastrophe while secondary victims are the relatives and friends of the primary victims. Third-level victims include rescue and recovery personnel and fourth-level victims come from the community involved in the disaster. Fifth-level victims are those...
whose mental state is such that their emotional equilibrium may be upset by a disaster even though they have not been directly involved with it. Sixth-level victims are those who would have been primary victims themselves but for chance, or who indirectly caused others to be primary victims such as those who may have swapped shifts. (p.521)

In the Southeast Region of the United States, hurricanes are a prevalent form of natural disaster and have continuously devastated the region causing long term damage (Baum, 1987; Coombs, 2007; Lerbinger, 1997; Nudell & Antokol, 1988; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). A hurricane brings with it high winds, flooding, and tornados. Emergency warning systems are established to warn people of the approach of possible environmental disasters (Lindell & Perry, 1992). Hurricanes take unpredictable paths as they enter the region; therefore, even the warning of a hurricane in a particular region can trigger a crisis situation (Kupperman et al., 1975 and Nudell & Antokol, 1988).

In 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita battered the Gulf Coast region of the United States. With the devastation caused by the two hurricanes, failures in the emergency management and crisis management systems were exposed and have brought new attention to how crises of this nature are handled (Coombs, 2007; Dolan, 2006; Schuh & Laanan, 2006; Stein et al., 2007; and Waugh & Streib, 2006). Additionally, even though many natural disasters need outside assistance, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have shown that local organizations and communities need to prepare for the crisis and governmental organizations, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), may not be equipped to handle (Coombs, 2007; Lerbinger, 1997 and Nudell & Antokol, 1988). William Waugh and Gregory Streib state, “The response to natural disasters is, in large measure, an ad hoc affair involving organized nongovernmental actors, and emergent groups that often become well organized and long lived” (p.138).

While natural disasters were once seen completely as “Acts of God” with little human blame, recent events such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have shown there is a human element
of responsibility to natural disasters (Lerbinger, 1997; Mitroff, 2001; and Nudell & Antokol, 1988). People are responsible for planning for natural disasters such as hurricanes, building adequate structures in vulnerable regions, and the recovery aspects of a crisis (Baum, 1987 and Mitroff, 2001).

Events such as hurricanes allow time for preparation, since people and organizations will have a few days to respond once the severe weather is identified (Baum, 1987; Cavanaugh, 2006; Laufer, 2007; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). While people will know a hurricane is approaching, that does not make it any less a crisis, but does allow them time to prepare (Laufer, 2007 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). When it comes to behavior during a time of crisis, people tend to respond in a positive and pro-social manner (such as rescue attempts and volunteering) by helping out their fellow human beings versus turning to chaos (Baum and Goltz, 1985).

Higher education institutions need to be prepared for the unfortunate onslaught of natural disasters and other crises by protecting their constituents and infrastructure (Cavanaugh, 2006; Champagne, 2007; Epstein, 2004; and Schuh & Laanan, 2006). As Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated, a natural disaster can cause havoc to a college institution, create disruption, and force them to change the way they operate or even cause them to shut down (Dolan, 2006 and Schuh & Laanan, 2006). Higher education administrators need to be prepared and in the mindset not if a crisis will happen, but when will it happen to them (Cavanaugh, 2006 and Ulmer et al., 2007).

**Higher Education Institutions and Crisis**

While in the past, higher education may have not focused on crisis management, recent events such as the hurricanes in the Gulf Region and the school shootings in Virginia and Illinois
show that universities need to be prepared for crises and disasters before they occur (Stein et al., 2007). In recent years, college campuses have been exposed to the possibilities of murders, natural disasters, urban unrest, demonstrations, serial killers, and riots (Griffin, 2007; Jackson, Terrell, & Heard, 2007 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). While the 1960s had two memorable shootings (the sniper at the University of Texas and the National Guard firing on students at Kent State), the past ten years have seen shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois, the collapse of the bonfire at Texas A&M, and the disruption and destruction of campuses on the Gulf Coast by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to name a few (O’Hara, 2006, Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007, and Zdziarski, Dunkel et al., 2007). Stein et al. (2007) in their survey found 9 of the 12 academic or organizational units on the campus they researched dealt with some type of disaster during the year. Rollo and Zdziarski state, “History has shown that campus crises have had a significant impact on higher education - our students, their families, and society as a whole” (p.22).

Zdziarski, Rollo, et al (2007) define a campus emergency as “…an event that disrupts the orderly operations of the institutions or its educational mission” (p.38). A crisis can threaten the continuity and legitimacy of the organization (Klann, 2003; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Campus officials need to take a look at their campus crisis plans and re-evaluate their processes and procedures, because campus safety is an important responsibility of the administration (Carman, 2003; Jackson et al., 2007 and Stein et al., 2007).

With the recent events of the hurricanes and the shootings, administrators have realized some events may have been beyond the scale of their crisis management plans or were inadequately prepared for and have since looked to re-evaluate their plans (Gardner et al., 2007 and Adubato, 2008). Many universities are not prepared to handle a major crisis and higher education institutions cannot ignore the possibility that harm may come to the people on their
campus (Dolan, 2006 and Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007). The recent events provide actual case scenarios for other institutions of higher education to learn from in case they face a similar type of emergency (Adubato, 2008 and Dolan, 2006).

In the past, some authors have felt higher education institutions were unmanageable and resistant to change which would make it harder for them to adapt to new crisis management strategies (Bothwell, 1986 and Parker, 1986). Mitroff (2001) felt many institutions are not prepared to anticipate or meet a crisis if one were to occur. Others feel though, that organizations such as higher education institutions have the ability to adapt in a time of crisis, giving insight to their true value system. (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007 and Silva & McGann, 1995).

With the onslaught of crises colleges and universities have seen over the past decade, higher education institutions are making plans to deal with the challenges crises bring to their institutions while creating the opportunity to enrich their programs and provide new opportunities for teaching and learning (Coleman, 1986, Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007, and Zdziarski et al., 2007). Providing a quick response to crises when they occur and being able to communicate with the constituents of the university has become a very important part of the function of higher education institutions and can determine if institutions provided an acceptable response to the situation (Carman, 2003; Epstein, 2004; Lawson, 2007; and Ping, 1986).

It has become the role of higher education institutions to provide some form of protections for their students and many administrators feel it is their duty to provide this form of care (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). According to Wayne Griffin (2007), the goal of the colleges and universities during a crisis situation should be to restore the physical and emotional security quickly, help their constituents psychologically handle the experience, and show the larger community they have properly handled the situation. When institutions take this role, it has been
seen as a positive action by those within the organization and their community and shows care for the people (Dunkel, Griffin, & Probert, 1996). Often, universities have used student affairs divisions to focus on helping those who have needs in a crisis (Gardner et al., 2007 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). It is important for the higher education institution to show a commitment to safety and security of its community (Perrotti, 2007).

Higher education institutions are themselves considered organizations. Organizations are imperfect institutions and sometimes produce dysfunction and can be a victim of the people within themselves (Hearit, 2006 and Roux-Dufort, 2007). Understanding how complex organization works from the inside is important in understanding the factors that influence the decision making during a time of crisis (Laufer, 2007; Mitroff, 2001; Pearson & Clair, 1988; and Tierny, 1988). Organizational crises can have a high impact on the organization and their reputation can be influenced by the actions they take (Lerbinger, 1997; Pearson & Clair, 1988; and Ulmer et al., 2007). It is hard to conceal a major disaster or breakdown of an organization, but if an organization has a clear understanding of its mission and values keeping its stakeholder in mind, it should be able to efficiently deal with an issue it faces (Hoverland, McInturff, & Rohm, 1986 and Mitroff, 2001).

**Stakeholders**

Crises are very public events which impact many different groups of people (Lerbinger, 1986). Stakeholders are those people who have a vested interest in the organization and are affected by the decisions the administration and organization make (Coombs, 2007; Curtin, Hayman, & Husein, 2005; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Stakeholders range from those who are dependent on the organizations such as employees to those who are impacted by actions of the organization such as consumers and the community (Curtain et al., 2005). In higher education,
stakeholders often include students, staff, faculty, legislators, donors, community members, relatives of people who are victims, media, the general public, and corporate partners (Lawson, 2007). As stated previously, if the stakeholders consider a situation a crisis, then it should be treated as one (Cavanaugh, 2006 and Coombs, 2007).

The organization has a responsibility to protect their stakeholders and keep the stakeholders informed of what is happening during the crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1988). In order to be successful with crisis management, the organization needs to treat their stakeholders with compassion, concern, and sensitivity (Lalonde, 2004 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). The stakeholders can become disenfranchised if they do not feel they are being kept informed or their needs are not being met (Lawson, 2007). People respond emotionally to crisis situations, and they will often not care about the statistical information being given but will be looking for human responses (Curtin et al., 2005).

The stakeholders should be part of the process from the beginning and not an afterthought (Lerbinger, 1997). Different sets of stakeholders can be used to gain feedback on the crisis management plan (Lindell & Perry, 1992). By being involved in the process, the stakeholders will know what to expect, understand the decision triggers when they are made, and know how to respond (Cavanaugh, 2006). If the stakeholders trust the organization, then they will believe and trust in them to handle the crisis (Gilpin & Murphey, 2008).

Students During Times of Crisis

One of the major stakeholders college and university administrators are responsible for are students. How an institution handles the situation with students can greatly influence their reputation to the students and other stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). The recent incidents with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the shooting at Virginia Tech provided an opportunity to see
both the good and the bad ways a university may handle a situation. In Gardner et al. (2007) interviews with student affairs administrators after Hurricane Katrina, found all of the student affairs administrators they interviewed put finding and communicating with students as their top priority, using a wide variety of communication tools from the internet to texting. On the other hand, the Virginia Tech administration was criticized for their lack of communication with the students and for withholding information during the shooting (Adubato, 2008).

Higher education institutions routinely have systems set up to help students with traumatic events (Epstein, 2004). If a campus needs to be evacuated, administrators need to make every effort to ensure their students arrive safely at their destinations and that the families of the students are informed about what has occurred (Schuh & Laanan, 2006). Contact information for students and employees needs to be maintained and backed up at a secure location, possibly kept in a state in another part of the country (Cavanaugh, 2006). It is important for the college or university to get their programs, facilities, and services back to normal operations after a major crisis event (Schuh & Laanan, 2006).

Victims in a time of a crisis will begin to question themselves, their surroundings, and relationships (Pearson & Clair, 1988). Psychological First Aid will be applied to “…reduce initial distress caused by events and to foster short-and long-term adaptive functioning and coping” (Brymer et al, 2006). Psychological First Aid was designed to specifically help in times of natural disasters and terrorism. Campus counseling centers will often be responsible for helping students cope with their trauma (Epstein, 2004). Coping with the traumatic situation will often aid in the recovery of the students over time (Pearson & Clair, 1988 and Dunkel et al, 1996). A ceremony of remembrance is often helpful as a coping mechanism for the students who are greatly affected by a situation (Griffin, 2007 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Lisa
Kelsay (2007) suggested using prospective students’ perceptions on how the crisis was handled to gauge success or failure since they could be considered an outsider to the process as well as a stakeholder.

**Higher Education and Governmental Entities**

Emergency management has often been seen as an issue for the government, be it local, state, or federal (Lindell & Perry, 1992). The federal government has specifically established FEMA to coordinate activities in times of natural disasters (Lindell & Perry, 1992). Governmental agencies have been criticized for their actions during times of crisis, the unquestioned power given to them, the politics played, and the political events they become (Rosethal & Kouzmin, 1997 and Waugh & Streib, 2006).

However, it is important for higher education institutions to build positive relationships with governmental agencies before, so if a crisis occurs communication and operations will run smoother (Carrel, 2000; Cavanaugh, 2006; Curtin et al., 2005; Dunkel et al., 1996; Perrotti, 2007; Stein et al., 2007; and Zdziarski, Dunkel et al., 2007). Administrators need to be involved with the local governmental planning and training and need to invite the local government agencies into their specific crisis management training (Curtin et al., 2005; Lindell & Perry, 1992; and Wilson, 2007). Beth Hellwig-Olson, Merna Jacobsen, & Azfar Mian, (2007) suggests it may be beneficial to establish a university committee that specifically works with the community to increase communication and good will.

Waugh & Streib (2006) advise that institutions need to have a dynamic working relationship with many organizations, facilities, and governments while being less bureaucratic. Working together will allow for the different entities to know their specific role in a crisis situation and strengthens the communication between the groups (Cavanaugh, 2006; Dunkel &
An organization has a lot to gain or lose by the way it works with other groups and how it represents itself (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997).

**Differences in Higher Education Institutions**

Higher education institutions are diverse in their design, with the predominant classification of colleges and universities as four year public, four year private, and two year institutions (Number of U.S. Colleges and Universities and Degrees Awarded 2005, 2008). The resources each of these institutions has at their disposal make a difference on how they are able to create a team to deal with the crisis (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Some institutions rely on their local community for services and establish communication with them in order to successfully handle crisis situations.

Gardner et al. (2007) found that when they were researching institutions of higher education post Hurricane Katrina, there were differences in decision making structures in crisis situations. They found, “The smaller institutions in our study were private institutions with relatively flat organizational hierarchies, and the two public institutions were parts of larger state-governed systems that had elaborate hierarchies and power structures within each institution” (p. 219). Organizations with flat hierarchies allow more administrators to have direct access to the decision makers and have less people between them and the upper management to communicate with. While not all private institutions are small and not all public institutions are large, the difference in resources and administrative structure may have an impact on how they handle a crisis situation.

The ability of a college or university to survive a crisis will come from how well they are prepared to respond (Dunkel et al., 1996). Higher education institutions need to understand their
organizational culture and the dynamic make up of their organizational structure in order to properly begin preparing for crisis management (Gardner et al., 2007; Tierney, 1988; and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). Colleges and universities may need to adjust their organizational design to meet the needs of the university community during a crisis (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). It has become important for higher education institutions to properly handle crisis management.

Crisis Management

Crisis management has become more relevant to post-secondary institutions over the past decade as they have responded to incidents that have garnered national attention such as shootings, fires, and natural disasters (Associated Press, 2008; Coombs, 2007; Dupra, 2004; and Foster & Lipka, 2007). Mitroff (2001) stated about crisis management (CM) research, “One of the….findings of CM research is that there are a relatively small number of mechanisms that are extremely important in planning for and responding to major crises before, during, and after their occurrence” (p.39-40). While Lebow (1987) argued crisis management is not always possible, those at many higher education institutions feel there are ways to prepare for a crisis. In the end, crisis management is in place for public safety and health and then the preservation of property (Lindell & Perry, 1992). As universities begin to look over their current operations and learn from the actions and mistakes of other institutions, the topic of crisis management has become more prominent to higher education administrators.

There is a pressing need for organizations such as higher education institutions to become more aware of crisis management and to better prepare their crisis management plan (Coombs, 2007 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Crisis management can include managing hazards, disasters, economic issues, and disruptions to the system or organization (Kupperman et al., 1975 and Waugh & Streib, 2006). While ideally these plans will all be successful, they may also be
considered failures (Pearson & Clair, 1988). Failures in crisis management can be due to lack of 
information, bad communication, and mismanagement of personnel (Kupperman et al., 1975). 
Crises may be unique to a certain campus, and some events on campus seen as a crisis may be 
part of the daily routine of another institution (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). For example, unique 
crises for campuses on the West Coast are forest fires while those on the Gulf Coast are subject 
to hurricanes. On some college campuses a student death may be rare and considered a major 
crisis situation involving many people, while on another campus, student death could unluckily 
be a routine situation with established protocols for handling the situation bringing no attention 
to the death.

Higher education organizations will not be able to avoid the costly consequences of crisis 
situations, be it financial or psychological (Dunkel et al., 1996; Jacques et al., 2007; Klann, 
2003; Lerbinger, 1997 and Wilson, 2007). By planning ahead for a crisis, there is the 
opportunity to save lives and minimize negative outcomes (Hellwig-Olson et al., 2007, Nudell & 
Antokol, 1988; and Pearson & Clair, 1988). It is essential for organizations to have a crisis 
management plan, one which is updated and reviewed constantly (Wilson, 2007). Not every 
institution will have the same crisis management plan or organizational structure to deal with the 
crisis, but should have a structure to fit their needs (Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007). Many 
organizations have untested crisis management plans and are not as prepared as they should be 
for a crisis (Coombs, 2007 and Nudell & Antokol, 1988). It is hard to completely predict the 
type of crisis an institution may face or what situation they should prepare for, but organizations 
have the opportunity to prepare for different strategies in order to eliminate the uncertainty a 
crisis presents (Jacques et al., 2007 and Mitroff, 2001).
In preparing a crisis management plan, administrators in organizations will need to continually assess their strengths and weaknesses while also continuing to train, evaluate, develop, and practice for the different types of crises (Gephart, 2007; Klann, 2003; and Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007). It is important for administrators to prepare for a crisis before it happens, handle the crisis when it happens, and take care of the post crisis issues (Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Being prepared for a crisis is more than just handling the situation when it happens, but also preparing for possible crises (Mitroff, 2001 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). While an institution may not be prepared for every type of crisis, by preparing for different categories of crises, they will be better able to handle the situation.

Crisis management is becoming a regular component of the business organizational plan (Roux-Dufort, 2007). An organization prepared for a crisis has taken responsibility to plan for the eventual crisis to occur (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). Managing a crisis will often call for different, innovative, or nonconventional techniques and strategies in their crisis management plan (Lerbinger, 1986 and Ulmer et al., 2007).

**Components of Crisis Management**

An ideal crisis management program has crisis management as a top priority, a first-rate plan, monitoring system, communication systems, training, simulations, and is integrated with the business plan of the organization (Kupperman et al., 1975 and Mitroff, 2005). Institutions should organize a planning team, assess the scope of the problem, develop plans, test the plans, and continuously update the plan (Lueck, 2004). It is central in management to take action before it is too late (Kupperman et al., 1975). Crisis management looks at the possible risks and warning signs an organization may face and creates a plan on how to handle them (Coombs, 2007 and Lindell & Perry, 1992). One of the first steps of crisis management is to create a plan
of preventive measurements (Augustine, 2000; Coombs; Lindell & Perry, 1992; and Silva & McGann, 1995). Possible risks need to be identified, assessed, and reduced (Lindell & Perry, 1992). Not only should past crises the institution faced be evaluated, but the institution needs to anticipate additional types of crises that could strike the campus (Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007).

The next step is to recognize when a crisis is happening and to respond to the crisis when it happens (Augustine, 2000; Champagne, 2007; Coombs, 2007; Meyers & Holusha, 1986; and Silva & McGann, 1995). After the crisis is over, recovery efforts, evaluating the crisis response, and making changes to the crisis plan take precedence (Augustine, 2000; Coombs, 2007; Kupperman et al., 1974; Silva & McGann, 1995; and Ulmer et al., 2007).

It is important for crisis management not to be simply considered a standalone program that is unconnected to the other functions of the organization (Mitroff, 2001). Crisis management should be integrated into people’s job responsibilities and not just a part time aspect of their jobs (Coombs, 2007). Crisis management can help integrate different units of higher education organizations creating a more cohesive work environment between the units that have not always worked together (Mitroff, 2001 and Tierny, 1988). Plans need to be made in order to keep operations disruption to a minimum and to avert losses to the stakeholders (Pearson & Clair, 1988). By properly handling the crisis, the organization can prosper and grow, however a poor implementation of a crisis management plan can significantly damage the reputation and image of the organization (Curtain et al., 2005).

Creating a sound crisis management plan will allow people and organizations more control over what happens to them when a crisis occurs (Fink, 1986). By properly responding to the likelihood of a crisis happening to the organization, they can “establish a crisis response team, emergency preparedness, crisis management, policing measures, judicial measures, policy
development, procedural measures, and counseling and emotional support measures” (Champagne, 2007, p.267). Dealing with major risks entails handling and managing the probable and the improbable (Laufer, 2007). Although an institution may not be fully prepared for every type of crisis considering that crises are constantly evolving, they will have the key components in place to handle the situation (Mitroff, 2001).

It is important to realize a crisis is approaching, get the word out quickly, and then rapidly take the necessary steps and make the needed changes to help solve the issue (Silva & McGann, 1995). Higher education institutions need to have comprehensive plans for different crisis scenarios and ways to identify warning signs in order to prevent the crisis from happening (Wilson, 2007). An institution can make the mistake of having one plan that is supposed to cover every possible crisis which may leave many compromises when a crisis occurs because the specific scenario has not been covered or the wrong personnel has been called into action (Silva & McGann, 1995).

Zdziarski, Rollo et al. (2007) discuss the crisis management cycle for higher education. This cycle is composed of planning, prevention, response, recovery, and learning. Proper crisis management plans should deal with every aspect of the crisis management cycle if they want to be effective. Administrators in higher education institutions should not wait until a crisis happens to start thinking about what they should do and they should also try to learn from their experiences after crises occur (Meyers & Holusha, 1986 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Administrators need to plan for the prevention and pre-crisis phase - prevention and planning, the crisis phase, and post crisis phase (Coombs, 2007; Fink, 1986; Jacques et al., 2007; Meyers & Holusha, 1986 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007).
Pre-crisis Phase - Prevention and Planning Phase

Avoiding a crisis and preventing a crisis are some of the most important steps in crisis management (Champagne, 2007; Kupperman et al., 1975; and Lerbinger, 1986). Crisis management is more than reflexes and luck; well laid plans along with training is a major factor in successfully handling a situation (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). Recent best practices in crisis management have made prevention and planning one of the main focuses of crisis planning (Waugh & Streib, 2006). If done properly, there may be a chance to catch a crisis before it transpires (Fink, 1986).

The prevention and planning phase of crisis management affords the opportunity to create crisis management plans, emergency plans, assign personnel, educate employees and constituents, train team members, test communication systems, gather supplies, discover vulnerabilities and prepare for possible crisis scenarios (Coombs, 2007; Lerbinger, 1997; Lindell & Perry, 1992; and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). This phase, if done correctly, allows for those who are on the crisis management team to become more familiar with their resources, make the appropriate decisions, and may help in speeding up their response time (Fink, 1986; Lindell & Perry, 1992; Waugh & Steib, 2006; and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Preventive measures should be established that may be able to identify crises before they occur, therefore cutting back on the reactive aspect of crisis management (Saliou, 1994). Typically there is a limited amount of response time during a crisis which makes crisis management planning and prevention important (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007).

In this phase, crisis managers need to anticipate risks and plan how they will handle them (Fink, 1986; Laufer, 2007; Lerbinger, 1986; Lerbinger, 1997; Lindell & Perry, 1992; Meyers & Holusha, 1986; and Pearson & Clair, 1988). Often, this can begin by the crisis leadership
looking at past crises the institution or peer institutions have experienced (Laufer, 2007). By looking at how the colleges and universities handle smaller crises and events, crisis managers will have a better grasp of how to handle a large scale crisis (Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). A successful prevention and planning phase does not make a crisis any less a crisis but allows for the leadership to have more control over the situation (Lerbinger, 1997 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007).

It is important to make sure the proper resources are in place (Lindell & Perry, 1992). Crises scanning should be done in order to monitor different risks (Coombs, 2007). During this phase, the organization should actively look for weaknesses and threats to the system (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). The plan’s implementation will depend on and having the necessary people and components in place (Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

Before a crisis, there are often warning signs if the planning and prevention has been done appropriately such as storm warnings, perceptions of at risk situations (riots after a sporting event), and reported warning signs of disturbed students (Coombs, 2007). It is important to locate possible risks and crisis, pass the information to the crisis management team, and let the team analyze and make a decision about the information (Coombs, 2007). The optimal goal is to stop a crisis before it happens (Coombs, 2007 and Fink, 1986). The organizational environment needs to be monitored to determine how ready the institution is for the crisis (Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). A designated and separate crisis control should be set up to handle the crisis situation which will not be hampered by everyday activities (Meyers & Holusha, 1986). If the crisis cannot be prevented in the pre-crisis phase, the organization may still be better prepared for the crisis phase (Fink, 1986).
Crisis Phase

When the crisis occurs, the systems need to be in place to allow for the crisis management plan to automatically be activated and implemented (Cavanaugh, 2006; Coombs, 2007; Pearson & Clair, 1988; and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). During a time of crisis, critical decisions need quick responses which are often hard in bureaucratic structures such as higher education institutions. Therefore, a person or specific set of “triggers” should be established to quickly enact the plan (Fink, 1986; Lindell & Perry, 1992; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007; and Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). The crisis needs to be quickly identified, isolated, and managed (Fink, 2002). For most higher education institutions, a person such as the president or chancellor will have the responsibility of setting the plan in motion (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Information on the crisis needs to be identified, collected, and evaluated so the crisis can be isolated and successfully managed (Coombs, 2007 and Fink, 1986).

While experiencing the actual crisis may seem like it lasts a long time and is very intense, it is often actually the shortest phase of the crisis experience (Fink, 1986). During this period, damage containment becomes very important (Coombs, 2007 and Mitroff, 2001). Michael Lindell and Ronald Perry (1992) describe the steps for crisis containment if a natural disaster were to occur:

(1) detection and monitoring of an environmental threat; (2) the assessment of the likely severity, location, and timing of impact; (3) projection of the likely consequences for people and property in the community; (4) selection of one or more protective action recommendations; (5) choice of message content, mode of delivery, and timing of issuance; and (6) dissemination of the warning. (p. 104)

While this information is for a natural disaster such as a hurricane, it can also be applied to other crisis situations.
The goal of good crisis management is to help prevent damage to the organization and its constituents (Coombs, 2007). Time becomes a major factor in this stage, and a clear plan needs to be established, especially if the implementation of the plan changes traditional hierarchical or bureaucratic organizational structures (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). The crisis situation can bear down on the university administrators who deal with crises and possibly have long term effects on them even after the crisis is over. When Bert Epstein (2004) studied the long term and lasting effects of stress on higher education administrators and how it was influenced in a time of crisis, he found:

Campus officials will be called upon to deal with campus crises-an unfortunate aspect of campus life. A variety of pressures, such as administrator’s need for quick response, the counseling center staff’s need to demonstrate their capabilities, and a history of providing one-off debriefings all lead towards this traditional response, often modeled after the CISD [Critical Incident Stress Debriefing] approach. Research on this type of intervention yields unclear results, as pseudo-experimental studies sometimes show positive findings, while randomized controlled trials of somewhat similar approaches show not only a lack of positive effect but also a negative impact. (p.311)

There is no timeline of how long this critical phase can be, and if it is prolonged, the crisis can take a toll on those working and dealing with the crisis (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997).

Amidst the crisis situation, the actual crisis may be out of the control of the people who are handling or affected by it, but the crisis team can influence the final outcome of the experience (Fink, 1986). It is important for higher education institutions to respond appropriately and in a timely manner during the time of crisis even though individuals, the organization, and the community will be affected, because the lasting impact on the public perception of the institution can be greatly affected by how the event is handled (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Success could be determined by how the organization handles the situation and how it is portrayed publicly, the perception and inclusion of the stakeholders, and how information was distributed and honesty perceived during the crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1988).
Post Crisis Phase

Just as the pre-crisis and prevention phase is important, the post crisis phase is an essential aspect of crisis management. Coombs (2007) states about the post crisis process:

Post crisis actions help to (a) make the organization better prepared for the next crisis, (b) make sure stakeholders are left with a positive impression of the organization’s crisis management efforts, and (c) check to make sure that the crisis is truly over. (p. 19)

After the actual crisis has passed, planning may be needed to return to normal operations (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). The aftermath of a crisis can be very traumatic and stressful for those involved (Baum, 1987). According to Baum, “The extent of the horror or terror experienced appears to contribute to trauma, as do the suddenness, scope, and intensity of the event, the preparedness of the victims, the extent of warnings, and the familiarity of victims with the type of disaster event” (p. 17). If a natural disaster has caused extensive damage on campus, it may need to be treated as a crime scene to figure out what exactly has been damaged and what could have been done to prevent it in the future (Cavanaugh, 2006).

It should be the goal of the crisis task force to stabilize the community, assist with recovery, and repair the damage during this phase (Lerbinger, 1997 and Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). For an institution of higher education, students may have been evacuated to different parts of the country and systems need to be set in place to track them and plans need to be made to bring them back to campus (Cavanaugh, 2006). During this phase it is important to have clear communication, cooperation by those dealing with any investigations, and clear tracking of the crisis and cleanup (Coombs, 2007).

It is important to keep a record of the crisis experience, be it a journal of thoughts and actions, time log, or a collection of written statements from those who experienced the crisis (Fink, 1986; Luecke, 2004; and Nudell & Antokol, 1988). This record will become very
valuable when the crisis management team assesses the experience and will also be beneficial in creating more credibility when asked why and how a decision was made during the crisis (Fink, 1986). Dunkel (2007) states, “Learning from experiences is a learning approach that has been developed to advance educational processes in campus crisis management” (p.205).

Looking at the record of how the crisis was handled will be the first action in re-evaluating, changing, and adapting the new crisis management plan (Pearson & Clair, 1988). This assessment needs to look at both successes and failures in the crisis management plan along with the circumstances that created the crisis (Lawson, 2007 and Meyers & Holusha, 1986). The media, internet coverage and comments and feedbacks from stakeholders should be evaluated (Coombs, 2007). Not every decision will have been the correct decision and in hindsight some decisions will have had better options (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). Organizations often do not learn from failures because they simply do not pay close attention, acknowledge the issue, realize how the failure fits into the larger aspect of the organization, provide incentives to employees to report failures, and subsequently continually fail to learn from past experiences (Bazerman & Watkins, 2004). In the end, this should be a learning opportunity and not about placing blame (Coombs, 2007).

There are important lessons to be learned following a crisis (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Ulmer et al., 2007). The outcome of the crisis is often determined by what was done in the preventive and planning phase, so this becomes an opportunity to learn from what has happened and what changes need to be made for the future (Lebow, 1987 and Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). Administrators need to assess personal and organizational vulnerability, look for ways to reduce the vulnerability, create systems to monitor potential crises, increase communication with
stakeholders, and find ways to speed up and broaden the decision making processes (Lerbinger, 1997).

Assessment after the crisis will provide valuable insight on how to handle future crises. Thomas Dolan (2006) found after Hurricane Katrina, many schools needed to create better backup systems for their data and information systems and Cavanaugh (2006) found it would be best for institutions to store backup data at sites located at a distance from the universities in case monumental destruction occurred to the campus or campus data systems. After the shootings at Virginia Tech, Steve Adubato (2008) found that they needed a practical written crisis management plan, security and technology needed to be tested, spokespeople needed to be properly trained and designated, quicker communication, the worst need to be assumed and over responded to, and that safety should come first. Debriefing personnel immediately after the crisis will allow for the performance to be evaluated, staff can give their feedback on their performance and how management handled the situation from their perspective, and the administrators can make the necessary changes (Nudell & Antokol, 1988).

Organizations and how they operate will be effected by a crisis (Ulmer et al., 2007). They will be under much media scrutiny (Lerbinger, 1986). It may take time for the administrators and organizations to learn everything they need to know from the crisis (Schuh & Laanan, 2006). If administrators and organizations do not learn from the crisis, then they may be doomed to face the crisis again (Ulmer et al., 2007). It is important to take responsibility for the crisis, learn from the experience, and communicate to the stakeholders and community the changes that have been implemented in the future in case the crisis happens again; this builds confidence and increases reputation with the community (Silva & McGann, 1995; Schuh & Laanan, 2006; and Ulmer et al., 2007).
Universities have the opportunity to be creative in how they assess the crisis and have learning opportunities that can enhance safety features, create new standards in crisis management, and build better relationships with stakeholders (Schuh & Laanan, 2006; and Ulmer et al., 2007). As mentioned before, becoming more experienced with a crisis situation will help the institution solve similar problems, but will also make them more equipped to deal with other types of crises (Kupperman et al., 1975). At some point, the crisis needs to be officially declared over and the crisis mindset ended (Luecke, 2004).

The crisis management process is a continuous process which needs to be constantly monitored, evaluated, and updated (Cavanaugh, 2006). Organizations may need to reconfigure their operations on many levels in order to implement a proper crisis management system (Lalonde, 2004). When new processes have been established, it may prove beneficial to inform stakeholders of the changes and the process letting them know that crisis management is important to the organization (Coombs, 2007).

**Crisis Matrix**

For assessing the type of crisis, higher education institutions can use the crisis matrix conceptual model (Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). The model is designed to triangulate between level of crisis, type of crisis, and intentionality of crisis. Even if a campus has not had a major crisis, they can use the matrix as a foundation to determine the types of crises they may face and prepare in each sector of the matrix (Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Crisis may fall into multiple categories, and institutions need to have proper procedures to deal with each aspect of the matrix.

The levels of crisis will determine how the campus administrators need to respond to the crisis. Levels of crisis include critical incidents, campus emergency, and disaster (Zdziarski,
Critical incidents are usually dealing with one person or a small group of people such as suicides, accidents, and fires at a fraternity house; they are often very well centralized. A campus emergency impacts everyone on the campus, but is usually contained within the campus. These types of events can include riots at sports events, demonstrations, weather issues, and serial killers. Disaster is considered whole scale disruption and often impacts not only the campus but the local community. While a disaster is often defined by the damage that is caused, the impact is not only on the economic side but also on the personal side of the situation (Baum, 1987). Disasters have been on college campuses in the form of hurricanes, earthquakes, and large-scale fires.

The types of crises higher education institutions may face are environmental, facility, and human (Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). A crisis in a facility deals with a crisis which occurs in a building such as fires and power outages. Finally, Zdziarski, Rollo et al. state “A human crisis is any event or situation that originates with or is initiated by human beings, whether through human error or conscious act” (p. 41). These incidents can be anything from simple accidents to suicides and physical harm to others.

Intentionality of crisis is categorized as intentional and unintentional (Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Intentional events are events that are premeditated by an individual or a group of people in order to cause harm or disruption to the campus. Unintentional crises are caused either by accident or “Acts of God”. There is no premeditated cause as to why they happen.

Campuses can use the crisis matrix to determine the possible responses they may need to use during a crisis (Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). By using the matrix to form a cube which contains 18 different combinations, action plans can be designed to discuss a specific crisis, for example disaster-environmental-unintentional, in order to prepare for possible solutions for
handling that particular type of crisis. By planning for the types of crises that can happen in these categories, crisis management teams will be more prepared, even if that exact type of crisis does not happen (Mitroff, 2001 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007).

**Crisis Management Handbooks**

Having a written crisis management plan in a handbook is the starting point of crisis management preparedness (Fink, 1986; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Handbooks do not prevent crises nor can they have a scenario for every type of crisis, but they help with restoring the chaotic situation back to normal (Luecke, 2004 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Lindell and Perry (1992) describe what common crisis management handbooks include:

> The plan should describe the technical and organizational mechanisms by which the community emergency response organization will protect its own members and the public. Specific tasks include protective action decision making, warning the affected population, protective action implementation, hazard exposure control, impact zone access control and security, reception and care of victims, search and rescue, and emergency medical services. (p.64)

Higher education plans, if comprehensive, should also include a scenario for handling crises that deal with the three aspects of the crisis matrix which are environmental, facility, and human crises (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). They should include different alternative solutions to issues and solutions to the perceived possible crises that may be faced (Choo, 2008; Gilpin & Murphey, 2008; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Comprehensive crisis management handbooks are designed in collaboration with many departments, personnel from different levels of the hierarchy, and stakeholders (Champagne, 2007).

One of the complaints against crisis management handbooks is that they are large three ring notebooks that are seldom updated, complex, and sit on a bookshelf or in a drawer, possibly even hard to find in a time of crisis (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Curtain et al. (2005) discuss how the better crisis management handbooks are short and to the
point explaining what needs to be done and what each of the crisis team members need to do. The plans in the handbook need to be specific to the higher education institutions they represent (Champagne, 2007). The information needs to be clear and concise so that in a time of crisis there will not be any confusion of what should be happening and what needs to be done (Curtain et al., 2005). The plan needs to allow for certain situations to have preconditioned responses which will allow for other decisions to be made without being hampered by performing what should be standard actions (Fink, 1986). It may be beneficial to utilize the crisis matrix model to develop scenarios for the handbook (Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007).

Crisis management plans need to be considered dynamic and living documents reviewed regularly with the room for flexibility (Cavanaugh, 2006). The crisis management plans in the handbook should include the size and scope of the plan, the organizational structure and responsibilities for the team members, how the plan will be implemented, action steps, communication methods, the possible threats, the roles of campus security, evacuation contingencies, training procedures, and how procedures will be reviewed (Cavanaugh, 2006; Champagne, 2007; Coombs, 2007; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). The plans should remove as much guess work as possible and should have as many of the mundane and routine decisions decided (Fink, 1986). It should look toward the possible future crises and not just focus on the past crisis (Lerbinger, 1997).

Crisis Simulations

Many experts feel while crisis planning is very important, it is not useful if there has not been a test of the plan; simulations should be held to test crisis plans and team members (Kiernan, 2005; Wilson, 2007; and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). Crisis simulations can be designed to focus on general practices or focus on a particular type of crisis and should be
realistic as possible in order to give actual experience to the participants (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). It is important for the simulations to test the crisis management team and provide practical training for them (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Curtain et al., 2005).

Crisis simulations provide the opportunity to develop leaders within the organization who will address the crises (Lueck, 2004; Nudell & Antokol, 1988; and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). Through the simulations participants gain an understanding of the critical tasks and needs and will be better prepared to identify strengths and weaknesses of team members (Luecke, 2004 and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). The simulations bring the team members and leaders together, allowing for opportunities to learn from each other, share ideas, and prepare new strategies (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). It is best for the crisis team members to be assessed on their simulation experience finding what deficits they may have rather than learning from the experience during the actual crisis (Yusko & Goldstein, 1997).

**Crisis Management Team**

The personnel who handle a crisis when it occurs are very important. They are responsible for handling services, supplies, and resources making sure they are available when needed (Cavanaugh, 2006). Within higher education institutions’ structures, departments often get locked into compartmental thinking, worrying only about their department and protective of information and resources given to others (Carrel, 2000 and Stein et al., 2007). Some college and universities may think collaboration is not in their best interest. This lack of collaboration can make crisis management difficult in the university setting (Stein et al., 2007). Crisis management is a shared responsibility throughout the organization and everyone needs to be prepared for it to be successful (Laufer, 2007 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Gardner et al (2007)
found private institutions benefitted from the collaborative decisions administrators made working together during Katrina. Employees felt informed, they were part of the process, and their opinions mattered to those in charge.

Higher education institutions can look at existing system structures to find where collaboration and partnerships have already been established (Stein et al., 2007). Looking at these established structures can be a foundation for the crisis management team success (Mitroff, 2005). While different departments and divisions within the university may have different plans in case of a crisis, it is important for them to all be seen as supplemental and supportive of the institutional plan (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Different institutions will have different needs and will not have the same organizational structure and plan, but in the end, the individuals who deal with the crisis and the resources they provide are very important (Pearson & Clair, 1988; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007; and Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007).

A crisis requires individuals who can be onsite and handle a situation quickly when it occurs (Pearson & Clair, 1988 and Vogelaar, 2007). It is hard for those who may live hours away or are constantly traveling to handle campus emergencies. Hierarchical lines may need to be crossed and individuals need to be identified who have the resources and expertise to handle a situation (Laufer, 2007 and Lawson, 2007). How well an organization is able to prepare for a crisis will be guided by the size and structure of the personnel in the organization (Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Since the events of September 11, 2001, it has become clear to many organizations a team of trained individuals needs to be able to specifically respond and lead in a time of crisis (Curtain et al., 2005; Luecke, 2004; and Smith et al., 2003).

“The crisis management team is the group charged with planning, refining, managing, and evaluating the prevention and intervention actions taken by the organization to protect and
preserve itself” (Smits & Ezzat, 2003, p. 16). It is important to have a crisis management team in place before the actual crisis occurs, therefore they can respond in a timely and prepared manner (Fink, 1986; Lerbinger, 1997; Luecke, 2004; and Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). The crisis management team is responsible for organizing the institution’s crisis management plan and making the critical decisions; their effectiveness can determine the success during a time of crisis (Coombs, 2007; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

However, simply having a crisis management team does not mean that they will be a good team, and often organizations have a team in name only to show stakeholders they have one (Curtin et al., 2005 and Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). The crisis management team needs to be given the power to handle the crisis situation and given the skills, training and responsibility necessary to accomplish this task (Coombs, 2007 and Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). Crisis team members will be responsible for such issues as public safety, facility, communication, risk management, personnel management, legal, and financial matters (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). It is important for administrators to put strategic thought into choosing the leadership, membership, training, and operations of the crisis management team (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

**Crisis Team Leadership**

With the amount of emphasis on crisis management today, it is important for an institution to establish a senior executive who is the chief crisis management officer (Mitroff, 2005 and Reason & Lutovsky, 2007). Crises often do not give administrators time to quickly respond, therefore a designated person needs to be appointed to facilitate the crisis plan (Coombs, 2007 and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Stanley Smits and Niveen Ezzat (2003) describe the role of the crisis team leader:
The leader is responsible for keeping these designated crisis management personnel informed about changes in the strategic plan, and internal and external environments that might affect the effectiveness of the plan. In the event of a crisis, the leader must be visible, in control, and overseeing all aspects of the execution of the plan. Once the crisis is resolved, the leader is responsible for initiating the evaluation process and supporting the designated crisis management personnel as they redraft the plan incorporating what has been learned from the experience of the recent crisis. (p.7)

The person selected needs to make this their priority over other job duties in a crisis.

When a crisis occurs, the leader of the crisis management team will become the focal point for the stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). While it may be good to have the president or chancellor of the institution serve an important role, the person responsible for the team needs to be very familiar and understand all aspects of the plan and be the person who is responsible for training and preparing the team members (Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). The team leader needs to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the team (Coombs, 2007). The key players in a crisis include the chief executive officers, crisis team leaders, and the crisis team members.

**Chief Executive Officers – Chancellors and Presidents.** When a crisis occurs, the senior leadership will play an important role in the crisis management, even if not always an active one (Curtin et al., 2005; Fink, 1986; and Klann, 2003). The senior leadership will set the tone and example for all of the employees of the organization and is often a visible person in the organizational structure (Klann, 2003). The chief executive officer (CEO) has three possible options during a crisis- 1) lead from the front, 2) let the crisis management team do their job and 3) a combination of both (Curtin et al., 2005).

If the CEO takes an active role as leader of the crisis management team and leads from the front, they need to make handling the crisis their full responsibility and other tasks should be delegated (Curtin et al., 2005 and Fink, 1986). Problems arise with the leaders leading from the
front because the organization becomes exposed, other duties of the organization will not be fulfilled, and CEOs often do not have the time to fully train with the team on a regular basis (Curtin et al., 2005). A person who leads from the front will often abandon their normal responsibilities and move into a position where they handle and lead all aspects of the crisis.

Leaving the crisis to the crisis management team will allow for the crisis management team to do the job they were trained to do and the CEO will not be directly involved with the actions (Curtin et al., 2005). If the CEOs need to make a public appearance or statement, then they will be thoroughly briefed and prepared ahead of time (Curtin et al., 2005). If an organization uses a combination approach, it is often seen as a “poolside” or “lifeguard” approach, since the CEO will be around giving directions and orders but may more likely be seen more than heard (Curtin et al., 2005). Often in this role, the CEO plays the part of symbolic leader (Hellwig-Olson et al., 2007).

**Crisis Management Leader.** While some feel that adding a leader over the crisis management team who is not the CEO adds to the bureaucracy of an organization, in reality it is enabling personnel within the structure and delegating responsibility to those who may be more suited to handle the crisis (Mitroff, 2005). Leadership of the crisis management team needs to be vested in one person in order for the operation to run efficiently (Curtin et al., 2005; Nudell & Antokol, 1988; and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). One visible leader in charge of the crisis eliminates the questions of who is responsible when a crisis occurs. Constituents will know specifically who will be communicating with them. This person does need to be respected in the campus community both in persona and organizational hierarchy due to the number of people who will report to them during the crisis and be well versed in the organizational culture and
systems (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Tierney, 1988). The leader needs to be authoritative, decisive, an excellent communicator, and diplomatic (Curtin et al., 2005).

The crisis management team leader will be responsible for providing the foundation for the crisis management team, establishing the risks they may face, maintaining the teams information flow, implementing decisions, and creating policies (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). A responsible leader will count on their team to assist them during the crisis and help make decision they may not be equipped with the proper knowledge to handle. Crisis management is best done when the leader delegates to their team along with engaging them in the process while also voiding unnecessary debates during the actual time of a crisis (Curtin et al., 2005; Kupperman et al., 1975; Nudell & Antokol, 1988; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

Crisis Team Members. Unlike military institutions whose primary business and structure is set towards crisis management, higher education institutions often are structured in departmental silos which can cause a problem in a crisis due to a lack of communication and authority across the organizational structure (Lawson, 2007 and Vogelaar, 2007). Dealing with a crisis at an institution of higher education takes more than one person to facilitate. A team of individuals needs to be selected based on their skills, responsibilities, and leadership (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007 and Stein et al., 2007). It becomes important then for higher education institutions to specifically choose the personnel who will be responsible for coordinating the crisis management plan, and choosing this team may be key to the success and operation of the plan (Coombs, 2007 and Curtin et al., 2005). This is a team that can be called together by a CEO or the designated crisis team leader to handle a crisis (Fink, 1986).

Often individuals are designated to the team based on the responsibilities associated with their regular positions (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Additionally,
people are chosen because they can be counted on, are familiar with the organization structures, know how to get in touch with key people and resources, and are decision makers with the authority to make the necessary decisions (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). While the people on the crisis management team may be the heads of their divisions or other high ranking administrative positions, they do not have to be; it is more important to have people who are valuable to the process (Curtin et al., 2005 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

It is indispensable to assemble the best team of individuals to deal with the crisis who can work with each other and communicate effectively (Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007; Stein et al., 2007; Waugh & Streib, 2006; and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). In order to protect themselves from personality clashes during the crisis, team members need to learn to work together in the planning phases (Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; and Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). Stein et al. (2007) specifically state, “Significant barriers to collaboration that generally exist within university settings can make university disaster preparedness difficult” (p. 332). Having the right people on the crisis management team will be beneficial when a situation arises.

Crisis management team members need to represent different areas of the university such as senior leadership, public affairs and university relations, legal affairs, human resources, community affairs, government relations, security, risk management, information technology, operations management, finance and business relations, and student affairs (Coombs, 2007 and Fernandez & Merzer, 2003). Including front line support staff and technical specialists who may bring additional insight is important (Smits & Ezzat, 2003 and Stein et al., 2007). A secretary needs to be established to record the proceedings and chronicle the events as they unfold (Curtin et al., 2005). It may be beneficial to bring onto the team members of areas not generally
associated with crises such as admissions staff due to their contact with stakeholders outside of the university (Kelsay, 2007). Some members of the team may be on the team for specific types of crises such as a natural disaster, psychological issues, or a disease outbreak (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

Teams need to be made up of individuals who are good at getting the job done, flexible enough to handle a variety of situations under high stress levels, willing to share their thoughts and ideas, and comfortable working in the ambiguity that a crisis presents (Coombs, 2007; Meyers & Holusha, 1986; and Wilson, 2007). They should be able to leave their normal routine to handle the crisis when it arrives (Meyers & Holusha, 1986). The institution needs to support the members of the team and allow them work within the crisis management organizational structure, respecting what they bring to the table (Kelsay, 2007).

It is important for the crisis management team to have certain beneficial skills including: communication, discipline, listening, judgment, knowledge, responsive, big picture oriented, calming, organizational and management, supervisory, conflict management, creativity, power, perspective, levelheaded, quick-thinking, assertive, persistence, delegation, and integrity (Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; Meyers & Housha, 1986; Mitroff, 2005; Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007; Smits & Ezzat, 2003; and Wilson, 2007). Additionally, after the crisis phase assessment skills that were needed during the actual crisis to analyze the situation but also in evaluating how the crisis situation was handled as a mean to determine how things can be improved for the future (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

Team members should be committed to the cause. They should be critical thinkers who are not afraid to ask questions, be sociable, organized, and hardworking (Mitroff, 2005; Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007; Smits & Ezzat, 2003; and Wilson, 2007). Grant Sherwood and
David McKelfresh state, “Individual egos should take a backseat to creative intervention” (p. 59). It is essential the people on the team have the political savvy to negotiate the university community (Mitroff, 2005). The crisis team will have to have the persuasive skills to convince others a crisis is occurring (Coombs, 2007).

It is important for the crisis team members to realize their strengths and weaknesses along with the strengths and weaknesses of the team (Coombs, 2007). Team members should assess their skills to determine what competencies they bring to the overall group (Wilson, 2007). Depending on the type of crisis and the skill set, members will take on different roles during different types of crises (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). Coombs stated, “The selection and training of crisis team members must seek to maximize the knowledge, skills, and traits that facilitate group performance” (p. 167).

The crisis management team will need clear job descriptions that should be outlined in the crisis management plan handbook (Curtin et al., 2005 and Wilson, 2007). Members need to have diverse communication skills because it is important not only to talk with all of the constituencies but to be familiar with organizational politics and culture (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). An administrator who has knowledge of resources and campus policies will know within the university and community of who to talk to and where to locate specific items or services if needed (Meyers, 1986). It may also be wise to chose alternate members to assume the roles of the primary members in case they are not able to respond (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

Training

It is imperative the crisis management team receives continuous training (Carrel, 2000; Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; Griffith & Weathers, 2007; Lindell & Perry, 1992; Pearson &
Clair, 1988; Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007; Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007; Smits & Ezzat, 2003; Ulmer et al., 2007; Wilson, 2007; Yusko & Goldstein, 1997; and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). The training needs to include all members of the crisis management team and should utilize the crisis management plan as the foundation for training (Coombs, 2007; Lindell & Perry, 1992; and Wilson, 2007). The team members need to be trainable and willing to learn specific skills, knowing effective management comes from being prepared (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). While some people may find it is hard and futile to train for all of the different scenarios, other administrators felt it is better to be prepared for a crisis which may never come (Carrel, 2000 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007).

The training process allows for the crisis management team to learn from mistakes, build relationships, and make changes in the plan as needed (Lindell & Perry, 1992 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Training will help strengthen the team’s cohesion and the practice and training will make the performances quicker and improve stress management (Carrel, 2000; Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). Training should include drills, exercises, public relations and media relations training, and should be repetitive in order to increase efficiency and organizational memory (Lindell & Perry, 1992; Ulmer et al., 2007; and Wilson, 2007). Through the training process, team members may learn how to prevent a crisis from happening or correct mistakes from a previous crisis (Carrel, 2000). Members will learn to deal with uncertainty, threats, and communication issues (Ulmer et al., 2007). The training process will allow procedures to be tested, recognize personnel who may need to be added, test organizational relationships, gain coordination, and build credibility with stakeholders (Lindell & Perry, 1992).
Training options for the crisis management team includes orientations, seminars, drills, tabletop exercises, simulations, paper-and-pencil exercises, and full scale exercises (Coombs, 2007; Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007; and Ulmer et al., 2007). The training should emphasize preparation and also focus on vulnerabilities within the team, institution, and the different links within the institution (Pearson & Clair, 1988 and Wilson, 2007). Through this training, team members should gain a better understanding of their goals and their team members’ values and knowledge (Curtin et al., 2005). The training process will provided needed feedback and coaching to the crisis team members (Wilson, 2007 and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). Through this training, members will become more familiar with the crisis management plan and will be more ready to handle a situation (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

**Operations**

The crisis management team needs to meet regularly. By meeting regularly, the crisis management team has the opportunity to create and/or review the crisis management plan, develop training materials, develop relationships, review communication systems, analyze crisis information, assess the organization, select and train team members, share knowledge, and discuss potential crises (Coombs, 2007; Fink, 1986; Gilpin & Murphey, 2008; Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007; Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). The team needs to set in motion plans that can identify the seriousness of the threats and crisis along with steps on how to avoid the crises all together (Augustine, 2000 and Coombs, 2007). The team can prepare and develop response teams for when a crisis occurs (Lindell & Perry, 1992).

Each person on the team should be assigned a role (Curtin et al., 2005 and Lindell & Perry, 1992). It should be clear what their role is and team members need to learn the boundaries of that role while colleges and universities need to give the team authority to fulfill those roles.
It may be important for some roles to be duplicated due to their importance of having a person fulfill the role in the event of a crisis, and at least one person must always be accessible to handle the role at all times (Curtin et al., 2005).

The crisis management team is responsible for making all the major strategic decisions, maintaining communication, keeping the president or chancellor updated, maintaining normal operation, and providing risk assessment (Curtin et al., 2005; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; and Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). The team should use the opportunity to build relationships with those in the university and stakeholders in the community (Reason & Lutovsky, 2007). Sherwood and McKelfresh (2007) found one of the reasons crisis management teams failed was because roles were not defined or coordinated and lacked clearly defined communication lines.

The crisis will take its toll on the crisis management team. The actual crisis may cause team members to perform tasks they were not prepared for and people may be responsible for jobs for which they are not familiar (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). They may feel ineffective or meaningless and suffer from disrespect due to their dual roles as a staff member and a member of the crisis team (Lalonde, 2004 and Nudell & Antokol, 1988). When a crisis occurs, the people on the crisis management teams will also be victims and they will be under constant pressure from their family and coworkers, and may have suffered damage to their own property (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). At the same time, Smits and Ezzat (2003) found the press was often impressed by how staff members often showed up for work to help others even though they have suffered loss and damage themselves.

After a crisis has passed, the team members should be confidentially debriefed on their experience (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). The crisis management team will need to evaluate the
overall experience, being honest as it relates to how the situation was handled (Smits & Ezzat, 2003). By learning from the experience, the crisis management team will be able to use past crises to create patterns of understanding to scan for better ways to respond to potential future crises (Mitroff, 2005). The process will follow a continuous loop as people leave the team and new members are selected; the crisis management team leaders will have to be vigilant in getting the new people trained and inserted into the crisis management team (Rollo, Zdziarski et al., 2007).

During the crisis, the team needs to have a designated spokesperson and clear authority needs to have been established (Fink, 1986 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Communication is one of the most important tools of the crisis management team (Luecke, 2004). The following section will deal with crisis communication.

**Crisis Communication**

One of the essential and often most difficult processes of crisis management is communication (Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; Gephart, 2007; and Klann, 2003). It has become important for organizations to create communication strategies specifically for crisis situations which cover the pre-crisis, crisis, and post crisis phases (Coombs, 2007; Kelsay, 2007; and Klann, 2003). Communication becomes essential and unavoidable when reaching out to the stakeholders of the organization (Fernandez & Merzer, 2003 and Gephart, 2007).

Recent events such as Hurricane Katrina and the shootings at Virginia Tech showed the need for timely and accurate communication, and both tragedies were criticized for how communication was handled, be it the breakdown in communication or the all together lack of communication (Adubato, 2008 and Champagne, 2007). During the crisis, it is important to communicate the message and also important how the message is communicated (Fink, 1986 and
Curtin et al., 2005). Fink (1986) commented, “…in crisis communication, what you say and how you say it are essential tools to effective overall crisis management” (p. 116).

The actions leaders take through crisis communication will determine how stakeholders view the situation (Klann, 2003 and Laufer, 2007). Organizations will often use communication to come off in a positive manner with stakeholders during a crisis (Klann, 2003 and Hearit, 2006). Routine statements are more closely scrutinized for hidden meanings or propaganda to make the organization look better during a crisis (Nudell & Antokol, 1988). Organizations that have not communicated properly with their stakeholders often lose their stakeholders confidence and support (Adubato, 2008 and Ulmer et al., 2007). As the opportunities for the media to cover a campus crisis at a national level, organizations can use the media to communicate and influence the public perception of the event (Adubato, 2008).

Higher education administrators and crisis team members need to become familiar with, study, and understand crisis communication and the impact it has during a crisis on the organization and the stakeholders (Lawson, 2007 and Ulmer et al., 2007). The proper plan will have the correct people working together with them receiving the proper training and development (Lindell & Perry, 1992 and Zdziarski, Rollo et al., 2007). They need to learn the importance of quick, concise, informative, and factual communication (Lawson, 2007 and Lerbinger, 1997). Higher education institutions need to develop a high level, well planned, quick, systematic, efficient, and effective communication plan and system before the crisis even approaches (Fink, 1986; Lawson, 2007; and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

During a crisis, stakeholders will need to know who and where to look to for information. (Cavanaugh, 2006). Employees will need to know ahead of time if they are essential personnel and are supposed to show up to work, especially if there is risk in coming into work. Employees
need a resource to contact to find out necessary information during a time of crisis, and backup systems need to be available for the communication systems if the primary system is not functional (Cavanaugh, 2006 and Klann, 2003).

The crisis communication plan should provide a framework for communication during a time of crisis (Rennie, 2007). The communication plan will provide vital information to stakeholders, exhibit the higher education institution’s authority in the situation, establish the resources available, and assist with the continuing operations of the organization (Fernandez & Meyer, 2003). Effective communication plans will contain information regarding how to prepare, understanding risk communication, assist with crises when they happen, provide directions (to faculty, staff, students), develop media relations, how to issue warnings, reduce rumors, clarify uncertainties, help with recovery, develop trust, and provide learning opportunities for the future (Lawson, 2007; Lerbinge, 1997; Lindell & Perry, 1992; and Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007). When communication tools are not utilized or used properly as seen during the shootings at Virginia Tech when students were not notified immediately people had been killed on campus, the administration will receive criticism as they did (Fain, 2008).

**During a Crisis**

If the crisis management team has trained and practiced their crisis communication plan, they will be more prepared when the crisis occurs (Lawson, 2007). The crisis team needs to be able to activate the communication plan quickly when a crisis occurs just as the media will be covering the crisis as soon as it happens (Fernandez & Merzer, 2003 and Fink, 1986). When the actual crisis arrives, a strain will be put on the communication system and it will be important to quickly analyze and communicate a timely and consistent message (Cavanaugh, 2006; Coombs,
Delays in communication could become very harmful and stakeholders may see it as being dishonest with them (McGuire, 2007). When the crisis arrives people will be stressed, there will be chaos and confusion, rumors will be spread, and there will be many external variables influencing the situation so it will be important for the communicators to be simple, unambiguous, to the point, and reliable (Ahmed, 2006; Cavanaugh, 2006; Coombs, 2007; Fernandez & Merzer, 2003; and Klann, 2003). There will be uncertainty in the communication by both the spokespeople and the audience (Ulmer et al., 2007). Keeping the stakeholders informed and communicating with the workforce will ease the tension the situation creates (Klann, 2003).

The crisis management team needs to work together to create the message that will be continuously given and updated throughout the crisis (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992 and Ulmer et al., 2007). According to Klann (2003):

What the organization’s leadership initially communicates to the organization’s internal and external stakeholders should include (and generally be limited to) the known details of the situation, what went wrong and why, what is being done to deal with the immediate situation, and the actions that are and will be taken to ensure the situation does not happen again. (p.45)

The messages given out may need to be two fold, one towards those assisting in operations and members of the organization and another to the stakeholders who are not immediately impacted by the crisis (Lindell & Perry, 1992). The message given to the organization needs to be accessible by all members and not just the higher echelons (Klann, 2003). No matter what, when the crisis begins, the organization needs to give some sort of statement to reassure the stakeholders and to reduce uncertainty (Ulmer et al., 2007).
**Internal Communication**

Special communication may be needed when discussing the crises with employees and other internal stakeholders. Internal communication is communication the organization may not want external groups to hear such as payroll information, work schedules, or secure information (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). It is important not to leave out those within the organization when communicating during a time of crisis and it may be necessary to give them additional information they may need (Hellwig-Olson et al, 2007; Kelsay, 2007; and Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). This information may include issues such as leave policies, who are essential personnel, rumor control, preparatory information, and internal phone numbers to get information (Fernandez & Merzer, 2003). Fernandez and Merzer recommend these possible ways to get the information to employees in order to make sure everyone gets the message: meetings, e-mail, bulletin boards, intranet, teleconferences, letters and memos, and toll free phone lines. This was seen recently at LSU when broadcast e-mails and text messages were sent to students and staff to keep internal stakeholders updated of the circumstances regarding Hurricane Gustav.

**External Communication**

It has become very important for the institution to build a good relationship with the outside media since they are often the public’s way of gathering information (Adubato, 2008; Best Practices For Crisis Media, 2004; Coombs, 2007; Fernandez & Merzer, 2003; Fink, 1986; and Lerbinger, 1997). The media is considered to be society’s watchdog and keeps the public informed (Lerbinger, 1997). Higher education institutions need to be available to the media, honest with them, and willing to disclose information about the crisis even if they do not discuss every detail (Coombs, 2007 and Hearit, 2006). Crisis management works best when restraint, prudence, and open communication with the media are used (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997). It is
good to build a relationship with journalists before the crisis happens and if possible utilize the journalists in training (Curtin et al., 2005). The media should not be seen as an enemy to the organization; they have a goal which is to sell their story and not necessarily to make the organization look bad (Nudell & Antokol, 1988).

It is good practice to have one person designated as the spokesperson for the institution and to make sure when more than one person communicates with the media it is done with one voice (Adubato, 2008; Best Practices for Crisis Media, 2004; Coombs, 2007; Fink, 1986; Lawson, 2007; Lerbinger, 2007; Luecke, 2004; Nudell & Antokol, 1988; and Saliou, 1994). The people who speak publicly need to be trained and prepared in speaking with the media and employees should be instructed to refer the media to the proper spokespersons for the institution if they are approached (Coombs, 2007; Kelsay, 2007; Lerbinger, 1997; and Nudell & Antokol, 1988).

Press kits should be made available to the media and all written documents should have been approved before being sent out by, at least, the administrative leadership, public relations, and a subject expert. Some cases may even need the direct oversight of the legal department (Lawson, 2007 and Lerbinger, 1986). Public communication channels need to be maintained and information should be distributed to the public on what to do when a crisis occurs (Lerbinger, 1986). Institutions need to use external communication to distribute vital information, rumor control, promote understanding, serve as a warning system, define responsibilities to external stakeholders, give evacuation information, and provide educational resources (Hellwig-Olson et al., 2007 and Klann, 2003). It is important to be honest when giving out the information and to be proactive in the distribution of information, utilizing the media and external stakeholders for good (Fink, 1986).
Post Crisis Communication

After the crisis is over, it is important for the communication process to continue (Coombs, 2007 and Klann, 2003). Communication protocols should be designed to be implemented in case a crisis occurs and for the aftermath of the crisis (Lerbinger, 1986). Often, after the crisis is over, organizations forget they need to continue to keep stakeholders abreast of the situation (Coombs, 2007). By continuing the communication process with stakeholders, it will build trust for the next crisis and will help in gaining valuable feedback for assessment to decide if changes need to be made in the future on how to handle the crisis (Lerbinger, 1997 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

Internet and E-mail

Modern technology has brought new ways to communicate with people. The internet, through web pages, blogs, e-mail, tweets, text messages, and social networking has become the first place people look for information when an event is unfolding and can be a very important tool in disseminating information (Carman, 2003; Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; Fernandez & Merzer, 2003; Kennedy, 1999; and Mitroff, 2001). The information given out through electronic media needs to be clear and concise, focusing on the essential information (Carman, 2003; Curtin et al., 2005; and Joly, 2008). Higher education institutions need to take advantage of the technology and resources to help communicate with their constituents (Best Practices for Crisis Media, 2004).

Before a crisis even occurs, an organization can prepare their crisis website with information and have it sit in the dark (offline or have the link disabled) and then when a crisis occurs, have the pertinent information quickly updated and activated online (Coombs, 2007; Curtin et al., 2005; and Joly, 2008). Having this website prepared in advance can save a great
amount of time when trying to get the response out (Coombs, 2007). Protocols need to be established to implement the crisis website, especially if it takes over the main site (Joly, 2008). It may be practical to have a back up location to host the website in case a crisis such as a natural disaster disables the primary server (Joly, 2008).

**Leaders During Crisis**

A crucial aspect of crisis management is to have the proper leadership in place to handle the crisis when it arrives (Smits & Ezzat, 2003 and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). With all of the different aspects that make up crisis management, the outcomes and decisions will fall upon the leadership and how they handle it (Lerbinger, 1986). A crisis will test a leader and bring out the strengths and weaknesses of the individual (Cavanaugh, 2006 and Klann, 2003). During a crisis it is important for the community and the stakeholders to know the leadership is engaged with the issue (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

All organizations and leaders will face a crisis at some point, and many leaders feel how they deal with the crisis will be the benchmark for the rest of their careers (Klan, 2003 and Silva & McGann, 1995). If a crisis is not handled well by leadership, then stakeholders will see deficiencies in their leaders (Lerbinger, 1986 and Ulmer et al., 2007). During a crisis, leaders will often take on a more important and critical role – they are more visible, remain calm in the face of strong emotions, reduce turmoil, and are forced to make sense out of ambiguous circumstances (Adubato, 2008; Smits & Ezzat, 2003; and Ulmer et al., 2007). Leaders in a crisis should be visible, create goodwill, be open and honest, work well with stakeholders, and flexible with adjusting their leadership style to the crisis at hand (Ulmer et al., 2007). The crisis leader will properly prepare their organization for addressing the crises they may face and make sure the resources and tools needed for a crisis are available (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007 and
Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). There are different leaders for all types of situations and not every leader may be the right one for a crisis (Ulmer et al., 2007).

**Leadership Competencies**

Successful crisis management leaders often come from organizations that have clear vision and values (Klann, 2003 and Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). The strong organization will establish the possibilities and structures for leaders to gain knowledge, strategies, skills, and abilities to handle the crisis situations (Mitroff, 2001; Smits & Ezzat, 2003; and Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). When leaders learn new strategies and gain additional knowledge about crisis management, they become better able to make decisions and work under extreme pressure (Lerbinger, 1986).

It is important for crisis leaders to have many different competencies to handle crises (Yusko & Goldstein, 1997). Leaders need to be able to rely on their experiences and intuition, and need to be able to make impromptu decisions (Kupperman, 1975). Researchers list the competencies leaders will need to lead during a crisis as: being able to react under pressure, comprehensive planners, decisive, willing to make hard decisions, knowledgeable, personable, versatile, communicator, negotiator, delegator, empowered, self-actualized, tough, compassionate, fully engaged, understands culture, flexible, involves stakeholders, technically capable for their position, motivational, judicious, credible, clear vision and value system (Adubato, 2008; Cavanaugh, 2006; Fernandez & Merzer, 2003; Klann, 2003; Kupperman et al., 1975; Lalonde, 2004; Lerbinger, 1986; Tierney, 1988; and Vogelaar, 2007). All of these skills, traits, and competencies are tools to help during a crisis and many of these can be learned through training, problem solving, and conflict resolution (Klann, 2003).
Crisis management leaders will constantly assess situations to predict possible crises, create opportunities to lessen the possibility of a crisis, plan for the future, and make crisis management an integral part of their responsibilities (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992 and Smits & Ezzat, 2003). The crisis leaders will be responsible for arranging meetings, briefing senior management, training, keeping staff informed, monitoring stakeholders, fostering relationships, and evaluating the program (Fernandez & Merzer, 2003). Crisis leaders will know how to look at the positives and negatives of a crisis, assessing ways to make the best situation out of the experience (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). Those who deal with a crisis will have to be able to adapt quickly to the changes a crisis situation brings (Carrel, 2000).

Leadership Styles

Leaders in higher education may need to adjust their style in times of crisis (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). Three leadership styles often seen in crises are authoritarian, democratic, and laissez fair (Ulmer et al., 2007). Authoritarian leaders make most of the decisions themselves with little input from followers. This leader will often give orders to the team members and expect them to complete them. Democratic leaders are less directive and seldom make decisions without input from their followers. These leaders will bring the team into a committee meeting, letting them be part of the decision process, and often going with group consensus. Those leaders who are laissez fair may be a leader in name only and followers do what they need without the direct supervision. These leaders may allow the committee to make a decision and support their decision with very little input from themselves.

During a crisis situation, leaders need to be flexible with their leadership style. Often it may be more beneficial for the leaders of the crisis management team to be more authoritarian in approach but other times the democratic process may be necessary (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007 and
Ulmer et al, 2007). Leaders need to utilize the style that will allow them to have the best options to choose from when making decisions (Coombs, 2007). Crisis management leaders will have the ability to be both proactive and reactive in the decision making (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). While following the crisis management plan is important, leaders who are working with crisis management will know when to be flexible and not fixed to procedures (Nudell & Antokol, 1988 and Fink, 2002). The leaders will also realize they may make a good decision but it may not be a successful decision (Lebow, 1987).

**Leaders and Followers**

The line of authority is important for people to follow and respect in order for crisis management to work efficiently (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). It is important for the leaders and their followers to have a relationship built on a strong level of trust (Vogelaar, 2007). The senior leadership needs to be visible during a time of crisis and demonstrate good leadership decisions for the employees to see (Cavanaugh, 2006). The followers and team members need to feel as if they are part of the process or they may not feel ownership in the time of crises, thus not putting their best effort into assisting with the situation (Fink, 1986 and Klann, 2003). Leaders do not need to take for granted their followers, should be mindful of what they say, and realize how their actions will impact the perceptions of the followers (Klann, 2003 and Vogelaar, 2007).

Different people involved with the crisis will have different expertise and experiences (Lalonde, 2004). Employees need to be given the power to utilize their skills, and can often be stifled by their supervisors and less likely take initiative during a time of crisis because they are used to being held back by unnecessary bureaucracy (Vogelaar, 2007). It will be important for the crisis leaders and team members to decide what role subordinates play and how integral they will become in the decision making process (Lalonde, 2004 and Vogelaar, 2007). Many find that
a realm of collaboration adds to the organization success allowing the followers to have a stake in the process (Cavanaugh, 2006 and Lalonde, 2004). During Hurricane Katrina and Rita, Gardner et al. (2007) found that employees did the best they could and made the decisions they felt they had to make, right or wrong, in order to move forward. Leaders need to reward their followers for the actions and achievements (Klann, 2003).

It is important during a crisis that all personnel accepts their role in the crisis management plan (Smits & Ezzat, 2003). Employees at all levels should not be taken for granted during a crisis, and good leaders will have looked at the skill set of their employees in the pre-crisis and prevention phases (Mitroff, 2005; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; and Tierney, 1988). The leaders need to have created an atmosphere in which the followers have embraced the plan (Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

**Decisions in Crisis**

Leaders will have to make many difficult decisions during a crisis and will have to accept responsibility for the actions (Fink, 1986 and Klann, 2003). There will be time pressure, risks, and an ever changing situation with a crisis and seldom will a leader be able to control the timetable of the event (Coombs, 2007; Klann, 2003; and Kupperman et al., 1975). A crisis can disrupt a person’s perceptions of what should be done and cause self-doubt and stress in a leader (Fink, 1986 and Klann, 2003). It is important for a leader to make actions and decisions, even if the decision is wrong, because that will be better than not doing anything at all (Silva & McGann, 1995 and Klann, 2003). If wrong decisions are made, then leaders should be honest, apologize, and explain their decision making process (Hearit, 2006).

A good crisis management plan will allow for some decisions to be made in advance, because during a crisis it will not be the best time to think and second guess decisions (Curtin et
al., 2005). When decisions are made, they need to be quick and decisive, people need to be put first, the leader needs to be on the scene, and communication needs to be constant (Luecke, 2004). The leader will need to prioritize decisions on what needs to be done with the limited resources available (Kupperman et al., 1975). The decisions will not be easy, as there will be conflicting information (Kupperman et al., 1975).

**Leadership after the Crisis**

After the crisis is over, it is important for the leaders to reflect on the experience and look at how it changed the organization, the culture, and how it impacted people (Klann, 2003 and Tierney, 1988). Leaders need to be honest in assessing mistakes even if there is often a fear it may cost them their position (Carrel, 2000). Employees need to be congratulated for their work and stakeholders thanked for their support (Fink, 1986). After the crisis, relationships should be strengthened (Klann, 2003 and Fink, 1986). The information gathered and evaluated needs to be shared to those responsible for crisis management so that everyone can learn from the past (Smits & Ezzat, 2003).

**Summary**

Through this literature review I have discussed many important aspects of crisis management. To begin with, a general discussion of crisis is conducted. Specifically, the characteristics of crises are discussed followed by a sample of definitions of a crisis and the guiding definition of crisis for this study as it relates to higher education. Next the impact of a crisis is examined looking at the impact on individuals and organizations. While the negatives of a crisis are often discussed, a brief look at the positives a crisis occurs as well.

The next section deals with natural disasters and their relationship with crisis management. This section is followed by a section on higher education institutions and their
involvement with crisis management. I examine the relationship the institutions have with their different stakeholders, students, and governmental agencies. Finally, a look at how the difference in size, classification, and resources of an institution is discussed.

The following section discusses crisis management. The different components of crisis management are discussed. Next the three phases of a crisis (pre-crisis, crisis, and post crisis) are examined in detail. From there, the crisis matrix, crisis handbooks, and crisis simulations are explored. The next section is a review of the crisis management team, looking at leaders and members. Training and operations are explored.

The fifth section looks at crisis communication and its importance to the crisis management process. The procedures for internal communication and external communication are explored. A discussion of the ever increasing use of the internet and e-mail concludes this section.

The final section discusses leaders during a crisis. I look at leadership competencies and styles. Leaders’ relationships with their followers are discussed. The impact of leaders decisions and leading after a crisis closes out this section.

**Theoretical Frame Work**

For this dissertation, I will use the Four Frames or “multiframe” theoretical framework on leadership devised by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (2003). In *Reframing Organizations*, they discuss organization reframing which is a process of looking at an issue or a problem in multiple ways. Administrators make many decisions in the crisis management process for many different reasons. This framework will allow an opportunity to examine the decisions these administrators make. Scott (1999), in his use of the four frame model in examining athletic administrators and their decision making process, chose it because of the relevance to those in administration, the
differences between management and leadership, and how the different dimensions can be seen in the organizations operations.

Brian Fidler, (1997) in referencing Bolman and Deal’s leadership framework, discusses the choices a leader has when making a decision, especially in situations similar to a crisis.

Fidler states:

They recognise [sic] that appropriate leadership needs to be situational, but they also recognise [sic] that individual leaders will have a preferred, if not dominant, style which reflects their own personality. Each style has advantages and disadvantages. They identify successful combinations where a particular style of a chief executive is complemented by a different style from another senior manager in the organisation [sic]. The result of analyzing the leader's style and comparing this with the needs of the organisation [sic] at that particular time may throw up additional leadership requirements for the organisation [sic] to be successful. (p.29)

Bolman and Deal (2003) allows for an observation of leadership from different levels realizing the decisions being made can be decided for different reasons and the power to make decisions comes from different places, not always the top and not always from the people who are expected to be make the decisions. A crisis situation could allow for a person who should not be making a decision to make a detrimental decision because they do not know the proper procedure. An example of this could be a person deciding to lock the doors to their building when they hear there is a shooter on campus, even though that may not be the proper procedure.

They use a model of four frames, which are structural, human resource, political, and symbolic to give an overall impression of an issue or a problem (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Bolman and Deal discuss the use of the four frames:

You may be drawn to one or two frames and repelled by others. Some frames may seem clear and straightforward, while others seem puzzling. But learning to apply all four deepens your appreciation and understanding of organizations. Galileo discovered this when he devised the first telescope. Each lens he added contributed to a more accurate image of the heavens. Successful managers take advantage of the same truth. They reframe until they understand the situation at hand. They do this by using more than one
This four frame network allows for the leadership process to travel through the decision making process, allowing for the leaders to make the right decisions.

**Structural Frame**

The structural frame of an organization is both the traditional organizational chart and the “…versatile and powerful ways to understand social architecture and its consequences” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.41). The structural frame is the basis for the internal organization and their interactions and dealings with their outside stakeholders. The structural frame deals with coordinating work with the roles and responsibilities of the team members. They define these terms as “differentiation” and “integration.”

The structural frame represents how the organization and the hierarchies within it are constructed (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The design of organizational groups and teams along with how they are implemented and the power given are represented in this frame. This frame can be used to give insight on how the crisis management team is formed and the impact of policies, procedures, and bureaucracy on the decision making process.

**Human Resource Frame**

The human resource frame deals with the personnel in the organization and how their interactions and decisions impact each other (Bolman and Deal, 2003). People play an important role within the organization, and organizations exist to serve the needs of the people. If the people do not fit with the organization, then a problem is often created, while a good fit will usually bring benefits to the organization. Bolman and Deal apply Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of need (physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualizations) to what
people want to gain out of the experience with the organization. Using the human resource frame, administrators within the organization will determine their investments in the people.

The organization needs to invest in hiring, training, maintaining, protecting, and rewarding of the employees (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The human resource frame will be used by administrators to determine how much they invest and empower the employees. It could also be used to determine what members of the organization are chosen to be on the crisis management team.

**Political Frame**

The political frame is “…the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 181). This frame deals with the use of power, conflicts between people, and the coalitions that are built within the organization. Organizations, such as those found in higher education, are made up of many different people with many different ideas, values, and beliefs and the members will bring this into the operations.

Politics play a large part in the decisions which are made by administrators in an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The power given to individuals and the power an organization has with the stakeholders can be a major influence in a time of crisis. Administrators may use the political frame to determine how people will interact and respond to the crisis. The decisions made can be heavily influenced by the political frame.

**Symbolic Frame**

The symbolic frame looks at meaning and faith and how leaders “…make sense of the messy, ambiguous world in which they live” (p.240). Organizations and leaders within have the ability to be very symbolic to their stakeholders. The symbolic myths, values, missions, and
visions of an organization can guide the decisions the employees make. Organizations are judged by their appearance and their actions, especially during a time of crisis. The symbolic nature of an organization can hold the stakeholders together.

The symbolic frame represents the principles, rituals, and ceremonies of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Higher education institutions often are influenced by the symbolic frames and the decisions are impacted by this. The symbolic frame can be a guiding force in how higher education administrators make decisions in a time of crisis.

**Summary of Four Frames**

It is important for leaders to balance the four frames and utilize them together in their decision making process (Bolman & Deal, 2003). All four frames can be used to interpret the decisions that are made by those in an organization. Depending on the situation, one frame may be more important to the decision process than another frame. Bolman and Deal state, “Each of the frames highlights significant possibilities for leadership, but each is incomplete in capturing a holistic picture” (p. 365). It is important for higher education administrators to utilize these frames in their decision making process.

Through this model, I am hoping to gain insight into how leaders in higher education perceive, structure, prepare, and respond to crisis management. Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four frame model allows for the issues to be looked at from many different ways. Depending on the perspective of the administrators giving the data, different aspects of leadership may have more importance than others. It will be insightful to find which of the frames or combination of the frames the administrators use to guide their decisions. By using the four frame approach, the data will be able to be classified under either one of the four different perspectives in the model or a combination of the frames.
Conclusion

Through this literature review, I have conducted a discussion of the relevant literature written on crisis management for higher education. While much has been written on the practices of higher education, not much research has been done on the implementation of these theories and ideas. Using Bolman and Deal’s (2003) Four Frames model as a foundation for the theoretical framework, I will now be able to gain insight into how higher education administrators perceive and handle crises.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

For this study, I will be conducting qualitative research. The qualitative research process allows the researcher to explore multileveled questions and allows the questions to be modified as the data is collected from different individuals (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 and Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Mitchell (2008) discusses how qualitative research allows for a “deep exploration and explanation of phenomenon” (p. 1). The qualitative research process will be best suited for this study because of the flexibility in questioning and the opportunities for the participants to discuss detailed experiences.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) discuss how the analytical process “should be relaxed, flexible, and driven by insight gained through interaction with data rather than being overly structured and based only on procedures” (p.12). This method should work well with interviewing higher education administrators on a subject that by its very nature is not a normal structured problem. Corbin and Strauss also state, “Qualitative research begins with a broad question and often no preidentified concepts” (p.21). Again, this subject matter, due to its broad nature and what each individual defines as a crisis situation is better suited to a qualitative study.

The subject matter at hand may allow for supplementary information to be gathered because of additional questions that may become relevant through the interview process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As the major crises which are occurring on college campuses seem to be a relatively new or reintroduced phenomena, this data could become very valuable to the research process.

Mitchell (2008) stated, “At the heart of qualitative approaches to research are specific conceptions of data interpretation and analysis that entail the codification of transcripts, protocols, recordings, photographs and numerous other data-rich artifacts” (p.1). With crisis
management on college campuses, there are numerous artifacts to evaluate such as printed 
policies and procedures and media accounts of prior crisis that have occurred on a campus. 

Finally, the nature of the qualitative research process is ideal for this type of study. Crisis 
situations bring with them many emotions, feelings, and opinions. The interview process will 
allow those who are being interviewed to truly explain their story along with showcasing the 
complex emotion of the events (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). While a portion of the information that 
may be given in the interview process may be factual and technical, there will also be many 
abstract concepts that could emerge in the data. Those who have firsthand experience with crisis 
situations will be able to offer more insight into the data then a survey could generate. 
Analyzing the data and looking for the intrinsic meaning will be important in the data collection 
process. 

For this qualitative research study, I will be specifically using the case study design. 
Johnson and Christensen (2008) define a case study as “Research that provides a detailed 
account and analysis of one or more cases” (p.406). Yin (1994) states, “…you would use the 
case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover the contextual conditions - 
believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (p. 13). Yin explains 
that case studies are “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, 
when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary 
phenomenon within some real-life context” (p.1). More specifically for this study, I will be 
looking at administrative leadership in higher education with regards to crisis management and 
how administrators perceive their roles during this time of increased occurrences of major 
campus crisis.
The case study approach I will be using will be the intrinsic case study. I will be specifically looking at how university administrators view crisis management and handle crisis situations. The intrinsic case study looks at a specific topic a researcher would like to understand more thoroughly (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Johnson and Christensen discuss how this is a good research method to explore and gain understanding in a phenomenon but does have a weakness in it is hard to generalize the findings from the study.

**Biases**

I have examined the possible biases that may influence my research during this study. During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I was on staff during the crises and became involved from both a university and volunteer aspect. Additionally, throughout my career, I have worked at multiple institutions and have been involved in some aspects of crisis response from a department perspective to campus wide management. Some of the individuals who I interviewed were people I knew and had a previous working relationship. Every effort was made to disassociate my personal experience with them and the events from the interviews.

**Sampling**

Institutions of higher education come in many different forms – two year, four year, public, private, varied sizes, missions, and specialties. All institutions of higher education are susceptible to a major crisis. Crises are not unique to any particular institution, for example, in the past two years, there has been a school shooting in both large state institutions and at a community college.

For this study, I will be focusing in on one university that has had a unique opportunity to experience similar major crises over a short time frame. Louisiana State University in Southern Louisiana was directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina and Rita in 2005, both from the aspect of
a natural disaster hitting the area and by becoming a major evacuation point for the city of New Orleans. Three years later in 2008, the city of Baton Rouge and the Louisiana State University campus were directly hit and suffered damage from Hurricane Gustav.

I interviewed administrators who were involved with the university during Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav. Specifically, I interviewed administrators who were involved with the crisis management team, handling the crisis, or affected by the crisis. Initially, a purposeful sample was used in order to choose the best people to interview who have the richest stories to tell of the experience. Through the use of selecting the initial participants through a purposeful sample, the participants recommended additional people to interview creating a snowball or chain sample selection process for additional participants. The interviews were conducted in person, since many of the administrators are still on campus.

I discussed with the crisis management team leader at Louisiana State University how to figure out the best participants to interview. Additionally, I utilized the institution’s organizational structure, website, and university resources to identify others who would be interviewed. The people interviewed were classified as senior level management or mid-management/new professionals. Senior level management will be classified by director title or equivalent and above and likewise mid-management/new professionals will be classified by titles below director. Each title will be evaluated to make sure the administrators are classified in their proper categories. By interviewing administrators from different areas of the institution, I was able to gather data from different conditions thus showing how the data may vary under different conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Interviewing these administrators helped create the necessary “story” of the experience and universities can use it as a model to follow if they choose to do so (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
I interviewed nine individuals in the data collection process. Each person interviewed was given a pseudonym and their job title was generalized as much as possible in order to ensure anonymity. The following table describes the participants:

Table 1: Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym/Name</th>
<th>Level of Management</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Position Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>Head EOC</td>
<td>Leads the EOC team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>EOC and Student Affairs</td>
<td>Serves in leading role in student affairs and also as a member of the EOC team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>EOC and Faculty</td>
<td>Leading role in the faculty and a member through that role of the EOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Mid-Management / New Professional</td>
<td>Development and Student Affairs</td>
<td>Worked in student affairs and was involved with division during crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>Mid-Management / New Professional</td>
<td>EOC and Public Safety</td>
<td>Police representative to EOC and deals with training of EOC members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>Mid-Management / New Professional</td>
<td>EOC and Media Relations</td>
<td>Media relations representative to the EOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Mid-Management / New Professional</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Student affairs member who was involved with all three hurricanes from a staff member perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>Mid-Management / New Professional</td>
<td>Residential Life and Student Affairs</td>
<td>Residential life staff member who was involved with all three hurricanes from a staff member perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Mid-Management / New Professional</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Student affairs member who was involved with all two hurricanes from a staff member perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Methods

The data collection process is a very important aspect of the qualitative research process. Administrators at the institution were interviewed to gain their personal insight into the crisis management process and about the necessary leadership traits and experiences to handle situations of large scale magnitude. These interviews were conducted individually over a period of two months.

I contacted the administrators who participated in the research study to schedule dates and times for interviews. Each person interviewed was briefed before hand on the purpose and scope of the interview. In advance, they were given a copy of the informed consent form to look over in case they had additional questions. Each interview took place in the participant’s office to allow them to be comfortable in their own setting along with allowing them access to any resource materials they would possibly need. Once we were in the interview, each participant was given a copy of the informed consent form, it was explained to them, the process for the interview was explained along with the process for after the interview, and they were informed they would have the opportunity to leave the study at any time.

Each interview was digitally recorded with the participant’s knowledge and consent. The questions were broad and open ended, in order to gather as much information as possible without guiding the interviewee in any particular direction. A guide sheet of questions was created before hand and modified throughout the data gathering process. The shortest interview lasted approximately 50 minutes while the longest interview lasted an hour and a half. Each participant was told that their names would be confidential, that they would get a chance to review and add additional information to the interview, and that at any point they could elect not to be a participant in the study.
Additional information was observed in order to triangulate the information given by the interviewees. Triangulation allows for the researcher to check the integrity of the data using multiple data sources or methods (Schwandt, 2001). “Triangulation is both possible and necessary because research is a process of discovery in which the genuine meaning residing within an action or event can be best uncovered by viewing it from different vantage points” (p. 257). Triangulation occurred by comparing the different statements by the participants with each other and by also looking at local media to collaborate stories of the timelines and stories told by the participants.

Data Analysis

Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommend the data be analyzed as soon as possible after the interview in order to develop the research questions and elaborate on ideas with future interviewees as the process moves forward. This type of qualitative study lends itself to theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is a data collection method devised from the concepts collected from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In essence, the analysis of the data may actually produce additional questions to explore to gain more knowledge. As Corbin and Strauss state, this may not be the favorite method for a dissertation committee, but may produce better data collection for the research study.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim shortly after the interviews were completed. Therefore, during the interview process data analysis was being conducted. After the completion of the interview, the participant was sent a transcript of the interview for their personal review. They were given the option to make corrections, check for accuracy, or clarify any information. Any changes were sent back for their additional approval.
The transcribed interviews were entered into the Atlas TI program to assist with the coding process. The data was open coded looking for key reoccurring concepts and themes. Using the data, leadership practices were examined and presented. A story behind the creation of the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) was established. Ideally, other institutions of higher education will be able to look at the research and compare and contrast their crisis management plan, looking at what went well and what did not, adapting practices to their institution. The data collected from the interviews will also be compared to the available literature on the subject. Additionally, the data collected from the literature can also be compared with the institutions own written policies and procedures to determine if the data collected from the interviews is similar to the actual practical application of the principles.

Intercoder reliability was important to strengthen the study. Two people were used to code each interview and the codes were reviewed by a third party for additional accuracy. Following open coding, the data was broken down into hierarchical categories in order to determine the important themes from the interviews. Once the major themes were determined, minor themes were formed within each major theme.

In the end, after all of the interviews had been analyzed and the data divided into the hierarchal categories, the research report will be used. Direct quotes were used from the participants when possible to highlight the importance and similarities in the findings of the data. Comparisons will be shown between what the interviewees stated and what the literature on crisis management stated with Bolman and Deal’s Four Frames as the theoretical framework to guide the process.
Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation will be comprised of five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to crisis management, a discussion of previous studies, a look at Hurricane Katrina’s impact on higher education, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Chapter 2 contains the literature review and the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 contains the methodology. Chapter 4 presents the results. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a summary, recommendations, and direction for future research.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Creation of Emergency Operation Center

The landfall of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita along the Gulf Coast changed how many in higher education viewed natural disasters and how they should operate in a crisis situation. The impact of the hurricanes has caused institutions such as Louisiana State University (LSU) to examine their policies and procedures regarding natural disasters and other possible crises. The administrative process and leadership in creating the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) came after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and was put into activation for Hurricane Gustav in 2008.

Before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Before Hurricane Katrina arrived, administrators understood they may experience hurricanes or other crises and had basic plans in place, but they did not realize they would ever face the type of situation caused by the 2005 hurricanes. Elizabeth expressed the feelings of many administrators before Katrina and Rita when she stated:

I think we were naïve. We had been through several hurricane situations before and I think our assumption was that having worked, for example, for the LSU Union previously, I knew that it was a Red Cross evacuation center. The field house was a Red Cross Recreation Center. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Administrators saw their experiences with natural disasters as serving as a facility for outside agencies. Their role was often making sure their area was taken care of and then they would have a few days off. LSU’s main responsibility during this time frame was primarily from a facility role for special needs patients for the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH). LSU services basically amounted to handing over the facilities to the outside agencies (Exp. Linda). Linda summed up LSU’s role as, “…welcome to LSU - here’s the facility - let us know if you need anything. We are hospital management and this is how it’s done.” Before Katrina, certain essential personnel would be called into work, often those responsible for a facility, but for the
most part, LSU administrators were hands off and simply returned to work after another near miss hurricane. Often, hurricane warning and university closures were similar to Kathryn’s experience with a hurricane from the previous year:

I don’t remember which one [hurricane] it was but it ended up hitting Panama City but we had gotten a day off work I think we pretty much knew it wasn’t going to hit Baton Rouge. It ended up being one of the prettiest days of the year so at that point I really didn’t know a lot about hurricanes. Just coming in and just being here felt kind of unnecessary at first…(Exp. Kathryn)

It seems as if it was a new experience for people to come to work during a hurricane and to sit around and sit it out. People were not used to being mobilized for action.

**After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita**

Following the experience with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the administrators of LSU realized they needed to transform their views of crisis management. In this time period between hurricanes of 2005 and Hurricane Gustav, other widely publicized crises occurred in different parts of the country. LSU took a look at how their crisis management operations were being conducted and realized it needed to be modified. The impact of Katrina and Rita on LSU was significant and it would take time to reorganize the operation and philosophy on how to handle a crisis. Linda stated:

I think had we had a disaster like Gustav the year after Katrina no way we would have been as prepared. We would have been better prepared but no way as much. Obviously we are talking a lot about hurricanes and that type of thing but within that hurricane vein there are other crises that take place. (Exp. Linda)

Elizabeth reflected:

What happened with Katrina changed our mindset exponentially because not only do we house all of these people in our centers, we housed them everywhere. That’s what happens when you are seen as the “go to” people. I think now my perception of crisis management is much better and that it’s more of a critical thing. (Exp. Elizabeth)
Administrators realized how crises were handled had drastically changed and they needed to adapt to these changes. LSU looked to ways to change their crisis management strategy. There were small items and tasks they realized they needed to have such as translators, more water, and clear memos of understanding with state agencies, but the major development needed for the future was the creation of the EOC (Exp. Linda). Creation of an EOC would be the foundation for change in how crisis management would be handled.

**Creation of the Emergency Operation Center**

When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita arrived in 2005, LSU did not have an Emergency Operation Center in operation (Exp. Amy, Elizabeth, Linda). Even with the chaos and destruction a crisis such as a hurricane can cause, this creation of an EOC was seen as an opportunity created from the experience. Tim remarked, “I don’t know of any opportunities per se, outside of the actual establishment of the EOC in that hierarchy or organization and representation…” Amber echoed Tim’s comment with, “The number one positive, if there’s a silver lining to come out of a tragedy like hurricane Katrina, was the LSU Emergency Operations Center.”

Through the crisis management operation in 2005 and then in the post crisis evaluation of the experience, the formation of the EOC was initiated. The actions taken during the 2005 hurricanes laid a foundation for how an operation center would work. Amber discussed the Chancellor’s call for an emergency center:

I think that will forever be [Chancellor during 2005] legacy. One of the most important things he did when he was the Chancellor was to set up, because we had to kind of put one together on the fly during Katrina, an EOC. … After the fact he said we needed to have this established. We don’t want to have to put together on the fly every time there is an emergency because you’re right in the thick of it and you don’t have time to figure things out. You want to have a set plan and so that’s how he came about creating the LSU EOC which has been amazing. (Exp. Amber)
The formation of the EOC was guided by the Chancellor [2005] after the experience from the hurricanes. The chancellor gave Linda the directive to bring together her team of university officials she thought would be necessary for the team (Exp. Linda). He issued them a permanent dedicated space, which at the time, may be one of the first in the country. The Chancellor [2005] gave them the directive to learn the necessary procedures regarding crisis management and the federal government and to create a budget for the operation.

In the early stages, they looked to other universities for examples on how to set up the operation:

We visited several places. Florida at the time had an excellent program. Their program is great today and is much better today based on information sharing but Florida had what we had before, an empty room that we used as a classroom inside a police building and I think that they even evolved further but at the time had a crisis arisen at Florida they had to take the computers out of the closet and the phones took about 2 hours to set up. We didn’t want that. We wanted something that we could go in at any moment. We knew that if you take a computer out of closet it has to update, it may have a virus, you have all these unknowns…(Exp. Linda)

The University of Florida had been an institution that had also faced numerous hurricanes and a serial killer in the past. At that time, while most likely having one of the more advanced EOCs for higher education institutions, it still did not have a permanently set up operations center. This is a good example of how much importance was being focused on crisis management at other institutions and higher education in general.

The administrators then went to the Chancellor and discussed what they would need for a fully functioning EOC for LSU:

We went to [Chancellor during 2005] and said, ‘We want to do it right.’ ‘No problem’ was his response, so that is sort of what happened and we started to fill out our teams which has changed and evolved over time with people coming and going. We started the gentleman who had worked with Homeland Security, made us familiar with NIMS [National Incident Management System] and ICS [Incident Command Structure] and told us about these basic online courses through FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] that we need to take. Administrators need to take these courses. We are still
revolving in that area but we learned that in order to get federal dollars for certain things, if even we didn’t have a majority of individuals on our teams who were certified in NIMS or ICS, no funding was coming, no reimbursements in a lot of instances. It has been a very fascinating process and is ongoing, of course, because you now there is change with each crisis. Crisis management is situational. (Exp. Linda)

Having a Chancellor who understood the importance and need for crisis management ensured the development of an active EOC. This EOC needs to be active and not just another line in an organizational chart, a website, or a manual to sit on a shelf.

While the Chancellor had divested money and resources into the creation of the EOC and the reimagining of crisis management for the institution, Ryan was concerned not enough resources had been fully dedicated to the creation. He felt with not creating a full time position to handle crisis management and manage the EOC, there was not sufficient attention being focused on this role. With the head of the EOC being an interim position and only partial responsibility of someone’s duties, the position would not be able to reach the full potential and crisis management would always be secondary in the university master plan.

Additionally, Ryan was concerned about the fiscal resources being invested in the technology to make the campus safer. Tim supported this when he discussed what he felt the campus needed in ways of technology:

We still rely on the 1960’s telephone, analog and digital telephone services, and cell phones to call the police and notify them of emergency. There are some technologies out there that provide for emergencies. Panic buttons on keyboards for example, every classroom on the university campus has a computer and it’s networked in to LSU. What a wonderful thing that it would be that every keyboard had a key combination that the instructor could press to alert the police of an emergency in his or her classroom. So that’s where I want to be. I want to be where not only can I notify you but you can notify me and for 35,000 people to be able to do that. It doesn’t take much but it’s a monetary issue. Obviously there are some infrastructure issues but there’s where I would like to be. Knowledge is power and by giving people that mechanism you have empowered every person on the campus to be able to notify you of a problem. (Exp. Tim)
Additional resources would assist the EOC and the campus community in their crisis response and communication. The only thing holding many of these new technologies from being implemented was the lack of fiscal resources to purchase and implement them. 

Even with some concern for the commitment to the EOC and crisis management operations, there was still a feeling that LSU had come a long way in a short amount of time regarding crisis management. Amber commented on the significance of LSU creating an EOC:

I think that has been one of the best things that I’ve seen LSU do since I’ve been here. It was so necessary and important and the more and more crises happen on campus and more and more the media want to know what to do to prevent that or stop that or what can they do to not let it happen again. As you get more and more those kinds of calls, it becomes more necessary for us to have a better plan and figure out how we are going to proactively try to prevent something from happening … I think that what you see was a hugely significant improvement for the university because it’s just such a critical thing. Now it’s all set up. (Exp. Amber)

Kathryn simply stated about the present state of having and EOC, “So yes, I think we are in a better place, we’re in a much better place.” The EOC has been seen as a positive major development for LSU, created from the natural disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Since the hurricanes of 2005, LSU has created an EOC, something they had functioned years without. The participants saw the importance of having an EOC and some thought additional resources should be invested in the operation. The addition of the EOC was seen overall as a position addition to the university structure.

EOC Structure

One of the important aspects of having an EOC is having the right personnel in position for the job. The core committee at LSU has developed over time to include the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administrative Services, the Chief of Police, Information Technology (IT) representative from the police department, a police officer who specializes in crisis situations, the Executive Director of Risk Management, public affairs officers, and the Dean of Students
(Exp. Linda, Amber, Tim, and Amy). This organizational structure has gone through changes with additions and subtractions as needed for the situation.

A good example of how the core team members have gained membership throughout the creation process of the EOC comes from a story told by Kathryn. She explained:

Student Life did not have a representative in the EOC, even though we were there on the front line. I was actually there within minutes after the shooting before the primary people of the EOC knew what was going on. I was the one who contacted them to let them know what was going on. I felt that after the fact I was left out of a lot the conversations and I wasn’t given the information that I needed to provide to whoever it might be from my end so I kind of felt frustrated that we didn’t have that contact. I think that occurrence is really what triggered some discussion. [Judicial Affairs Director] started some discussion about emergency response about student life and he had invited me to the table there and I just kept saying over and over again that this exists on campus that we just need to have a seat at the table. I just kept saying it at every meeting, that what you are talking about doing already exists. It’s just that we don’t have a seat at the table and it was very frustrating for me that I didn’t feel like that message was getting across. I think they heard it but they didn’t feel like I had any control on it and finally when [Amy] heard me say it and she said that I was right. We didn’t need to create an emergency response team for student life; it already exists for the university. We just need to make sure we have representation on the university response … I think it helped us a lot for them to see the importance of us having a representative there. Then [Amy] joining that team really helped us out during Gustav. (Exp. Kathryn)

Tim saw his addition to the core team come with the approach of Hurricane Gustav.

I guess my expertise and my background generally professionally is in the emergency management realm. A state statute provided my capacity with the Louisiana State Police for those years. I acted as a incident commander, tactical commander in the field of fraud, chemical and explosive related emergencies in the state regardless of whether a fixed site or in transportation. So being here at LSU, I guess I attempted to inquire about that circle of emergency operations and emergency management. It wasn’t until Gustav was imminently approaching that I really got dragged in. My inception to the circle at LSU was physically through this door, ‘hey [Tim], meet us in the conference room.’ I walk in and the senior leadership of campus was scattered here at this very table, where I was introduced and I was basically told that we were going to activate the emergency plan for the campus, our memorandum of understanding with health and hospitals, to initiate our medical special needs shelter operation on campus. They said, ‘It’s your baby and good luck.’(Exp. Tim)
While both of these positions were not a component of the initial conception of the core team for the EOC, the team has been flexible to adjust the organization to fit the needs of the campus by adding qualified members and units which needed to be represented.

There was a general feeling many people on campus would be willing to help and serve on the core team if needed. There are also people not on the core team that could be an asset, but their service would be needed with their normal job duties. Linda discussed this circumstance:

I am certain that every employee on this campus would be willing to do that but because of their specific circumstances we, for example in the union, we wouldn’t want [Director of Union Operations] to be on the EOC team in the event of a crisis. The [Director of Union Operations] needs to be in that facility same as [Residence Life Director] in residential life. The [Residence Life Director] would be phenomenal on the EOC. He would be great, he knows how to do all these different things, he needs to be in the field, and people who are on the teams are expected to stay in the rooms and not leave the EOC the whole time. (Exp. Linda)

The role people in the EOC must serve would often take over their normal job duties and in some cases supersede other administrators in their role. Some people would better serve the university by fulfilling their normal job duties and would be more of an asset to the crisis team in that role.

Having multiple teams allows for the burden of the crisis not to be on any one particular unit. Amy discussed how this releases the burden that had often been placed upon the campus police department:

Primary decisions are all made through the EOC. You’re not stretching just your police department or anybody that is within risk management and the people that make up those different teams of the Emergency Operations Center. Again, they have significant training that they go through. Does that mean, again, that you’re ready and prepared for everything and anything? I think there are some great basics in there and good critical thinking that goes on and a gathering of solid heads, but that’s not the time you have to pull out the manual. (Exp. Amy)

Having fewer burdens on units such as the police department and risk management allows for them to concentrate on their regular operation, which will most likely be in full activation during a crisis situation.
Over time, the EOC structure grew. Linda discussed how they added additional teams to work with management of the EOC in order to have shifts so that personnel wouldn’t get overworked, burned out, and remain fresh. LSU created a two team structure based on the FEMA and ICS guidelines (Exp. Linda).

Amy remarked having these multiple teams allowed for the opportunity to operate 24/7 during a long term crisis. Having two active teams assists with spreading the workload around during a stressful time and allows those members to take care of personal matters that they may be facing. There has been discussion of a possible third team being added. Linda explained how during Gustav, they saw the need for a third team:

The two teams are set up where they will function if we are activated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and each team twelve hours. We are trying to build up our third team, because that was one of our lessons learned from Gustav that we needed additional grouping. The challenge comes that in EOC, there is no additional compensation, and it is other duties that are assigned. So it is hard to find individuals who can be away from their day job to come to the monthly trainings that we have for our teams and commit the amount of time and not receive any additional compensation. (Exp. Linda)

By adding a third team to the EOC, it would allow more individuals to be able to be in the decision making process.

With the two and possibly three team structure, more people are involved in the process and the team responsibility. Linda and Amy both felt having more people involved would increase emphasis on the team involvement and not put all the responsibility onto one person or allow one person’s ego to take over the situation. Amy stated, “Don’t set up systems that are dependent upon individuals because those individuals may or may not either (a) always be there or (b) be in the capacity to serve in the role you may need…”

Due to the concerns with the organizational structures, bureaucracies, and politics of a college campus, there may be people serving on the team who are positioned there due to title or
because of internal politics. They may not be the best people for the team. Tim briefly discussed the impact these people have on the team:

One, yes you are going to have that [people assigned to the team] and two, you shouldn’t. So to talk about the first part, you’re going to have it, that’s just the nature of the beast. You are going to have people that are in a position because of convenience more than qualification or ability and that’s something we have to work around. Can I sit here and say 100% that we do not have that issue? Like everybody else we have that issue. In an ideal world I could meet and for all intents and purposes test people’s ability to find the best and brightest to plug in one of these chairs in here. Unfortunately, we just don’t have that many people to choose from. When you really get down to availability, it’s not as easy as, ‘Hey, work at LSU? Yes, ok, poof you’re in here.’ (Exp. Tim)

It may not be ideal, but at a higher education institution, you will have people serving in the crisis management structure who may not be best suited for that particular role. It is up to the leaders of the team to make it work out for the best.

The EOC team has evolved since the initial conception. Members have been added and multiple teams have been established to allow for around the clock access. There are still members placed on the teams that may not be best suited for the team, but according to the participants they make the best of the situation.

Concerns

While many in the upper administration feel the EOC has been a great benefit to LSU, Ryan is still skeptical of the overall impact and felt it may have not been truly tested yet. He stated:

LSU is prepared procedurally, that is, the emergency operations center has a clear set of protocols. It has set up a sequence of actions to deal with such situations. I don’t know if it’s prepared economically, emotionally, or forensically. That is, of course, LSU doesn’t have any one from campus legal counsel, so it’s not quite ready to act immediately in that circumstance and one never knows what the full economical consequences of any such event might be. (Exp. Ryan)

Additionally, Tim was worried about tactical response and resources, “I think we could do a better job in the tactical portion. I think we are lacking in tactical response resources.” Part of
this trepidation may come from the fact the EOC had only been called into action two times since its inception. One of these times was the natural disaster which the campus is most prepared for, Hurricane Gustav, and once for a shooting of two international students in an off campus apartment. It is better news for the campus when an EOC does not have to be activated, yet no one will know for sure until any system has been tested from multiple fronts.

Tim, who has had experience working with crisis management from a police force perspective, discussed the positive organizational experience of the EOC:

It’s been great. I think, again, the university has done a great job. I’ve experienced different structures for Higher Ed now that I am kind of in the circle, explored some different options but I don’t think there’s a better option. I think the people that are brought in are decision makers. I think they are strong personalities and for good reason. They represent key departments that provide infrastructure to the university whether it’s campus life, information technology, or public safety. All of the major facets are represented. University Relations is on this core committee and that provides for the university to make quick, swift decisions with that one voice and direct and focus operations where they need be. If the EOC Core Committee members do not represent a specific facet then the liaison within that department or representative very quickly through their contacts acknowledges that on the campus side. I think they’ve done a really, really good job. (Exp. Tim)

Although it may not be the perfect combination of team members, overall, it seems those interviewed were satisfied with the EOC core team structure for crisis management.

**Function and Activation of the EOC**

In forming the EOC, the core team realized it is important to follow federal emergency management guidelines and regulations. This has been done in order to lessen the confusion that may be caused due to the unique and non-consistent titles colleges and universities give different positions.

The very basic is that any EOC in the country, whether it is a city, a state, parish, a county or whatever has to have the exact same titles. The incident command was created and NIMS was created so there wouldn’t be confusion in titles, because in universities sometimes you have an executive assistant to someone who is really the scheduler, but you have a special assistant who is the event coordinator. It’s not clear so that’s what this
does. We have these two teams that comprise an all hazard EOC which means that we would respond to a man made event, a national disaster, a no-notice event such was case when we had the tragedy in December of 2008 with the double homicide on campus. That is an example of a no-notice event. So we respond to just about anything. (Exp. Linda)

The Interim Director of LSU’s EOC has found the benefits of the national system and terminology and adapted it to work with the LSU structure:

…the beauty of it is at EOC, NIMS, and ICS: it is scalable so activation of any EOC. For us, everyone doesn’t do it this way, but we feel like it’s better to reactivate, to call them all in so the gold teams is on call, everybody comes in. Once we assess the situation and determine what is needed we can send home operations and liaison planning because really we only need there four people. (Exp. Linda)

With this flexibility, the EOC can utilize the human resources they may need for any given situation. With LSU being composed of many people, facilities, and operations the types of crises they face will vary and some personnel will be needed for some events while other crisis may only need the services of a few people.

Using the models suggested by FEMA and NIMS, the leaders at LSU have formed an EOC to handle large scale crises on the LSU campus. Linda explained the basic function the EOC serves at LSU as “EOC: it coordinates, it facilitates and it communicates.” By being the central authority on campus to handle a major crisis situation, it theoretically allows other units to concentrate on their specific responsibilities, assist communication, and streamlines decision making.

The activation of the EOC is an important step in the process. During Katrina, even without having an official EOC, the person who activated a call to action was the Chancellor. At that time, the leader in the Chancellor role for LSU had many years of experience with major national crisis events (Exp. Linda)

… we knew that Katrina was coming and we knew evacuation of New Orleans would be an issue, he immediately made the decision before we even knew that was happening that
LSU was going to be a dedicated space for the evacuation of medical operations. (Exp. Linda)

This activation of the EOC may come from either the Chancellor or the Director of the EOC (Exp. Linda). This leadership has been continued with designates who can activate the EOC.

Learning from a Chancellor who could recognize the possibility of a major crisis helped the members of the newly formed EOC to recognize the importance of identifying possible crises and proper activation when necessary. Amber discussed the importance of being proactive in a crisis situation:

So we want to be proactive and say, ‘Hey this is coming and we know you are going to be asking about it, so check here.’ We don’t want people to call us and ask what’s going on, we want to be able to get that information out first…(Exp. Amber)

There is a need to anticipate what the constituents and media may ask.

Before the EOC, the public safety office handled most aspects of a crisis situation, even if they may not have had the expertise in all the components of a crisis response such as communication and grief counseling. Linda showed how the EOC delegates the responsibility to other units in order for the public safety office to conduct their business as needed:

The EOC’s job is to help take off the backs of the police the non-police work and non-investigative non-lawful work. So years before, it would be if we had a perpetrator, the police were the ones having to call the media. The police were the ones having to deal with the victims’ families etc, etc. That is the EOC’s job so the police can concentrate on police business and that has proven to very beneficial. So that’s another thing that we learned. (Exp. Linda)

The new delegation of responsibility seems to be helpful from the point of view of the Interim Director of the EOC. This allows the public safety officials to concentrate on the police business. Other units on campus though may see this differently.

The EOC follows the NIMS and FEMA structure. This allows outside agencies to have easier communication with the university without confusion of titles. Activation of the EOC
comes from the Chancellor and Director. This allows them to determine who should be involved in a crisis situation.

Relationship between EOC Responsibilities and Administrative Duties

The EOC on the LSU campus serves as the main authority for the institution during a crisis situation. The decisions made and actions taken by the EOC supersede any other organization on campus and the hierarchy of the organizational chart. The role one holds on campus during normal university operation may not be the same position they hold during the crisis nor may the individual have the same authority they would normally possess. Linda discussed the reason behind this:

One of the things that you learn through NIMS and ICS is that what matters in a crisis is the position you hold at that time so all else is wiped away. You still need to be respectful and understand that those structures will exist afterwards but that what is best for the institution will come first. (Exp. Linda)

The EOC’s goal is to protect the campus and campus community to the best of their ability and during a crisis it needs to be clear who is in charge and responsible for making decisions.

Therefore, even the most senior leadership of the university may not be sitting in the crisis room of the EOC. Linda talked about how these senior leaders were not even allowed in the room, “… but here they report to the Chancellor to provide guidance and they are not on the EOC but they are not purposely supposed to come there unless they are invited.”

A crisis will often bring departments to the forefront that may not be normally so during regular operations. Elizabeth explained this scenario:

Even in my role, higher ranking position in a low ranking division, the people that become much more critical are not necessarily the people that are critical to running the institution. So your facilities service people become very critical, your food service people become very critical, your housing people become very critical, the people who do all of the admission stuff. The people in the hierarchy of higher education, those at the top go to the bottom and those at the bottom go to the top. And I think we really learned that. (Exp. Elizabeth)
According to Elizabeth and Linda, it became important for those who work with facilities and students who are living on campus to take a more active role with the university in order to protect, maintain, and repair the physical structure of the university to get it back into operation.

Tim, having worked with crisis management teams as a police officer, discussed his perception of how the university hierarchy functioned with the EOC chain of command during Gustav:

In my experience, it was very common to interact with just multi-levels of supervision and bureaucracy; however you want to describe it. That was not a shock. There are always politics in the game of management and that’s something you have to deal with. I did not experience any political red tape. I thought that the university has done a great job in establishing their chain of command and protocols … but I think the structure that the university has currently outlined and continues to use worked very, very well. I don’t think there could be a better system. (Exp. Tim)

Tim felt the creation of a university unit such as the EOC with the different units reporting to them during the time of crisis was beneficial. He saw what he considered a policy group of upper administrators in contact with the EOC along with groups such as residential life. Having this type of reporting structure and the EOC as a central hub for information and decision making made his job easier while working in the EOC.

Many of the positions in the EOC are connected with the employees’ regular responsibilities. Therefore some people are a natural fit without too much change in what they do in their normal university responsibility (Exp. Tim). Amy saw her addition to the core team of the EOC as a way to perform her normal job responsibilities more efficiently:

Some ways I have a pretty unique role because I am actually a member of the Emergency Operations Center Core Team … so as it relates to my core team responsibilities for the Emergency Operations Center there’s one piece that relates to my Dean of Students’ responsibilities as it relates to crisis management. The primary area that we tend to oversee is the volunteer management. If we happened to operate shelters, whether it’s in the PMAC or within the field house, I helped to oversee and supervise some of the volunteer management. Because so many of the people, the people that we do draw as
volunteers are our students but also serving in a troubleshooting role, whatever the Vice-Chancellor at the time needs. Overall looking out for the student function whether that’s bringing in residential life, thinking about Greek life, kind of an all purpose player looking out for our students. (Exp. Amy)

Being on the EOC may have dual benefits for employees who can utilize the EOC knowledge and experience with carrying out their normal job duties, but this is not always the case for all.

Not everyone may have the support of their supervisors or departments in their placement on the EOC. Additionally, the internal politics of the university may make it hard for someone to have a role with the EOC, especially if there is a chance their decisions as an EOC member could impact others’ perceptions of them in the future. Linda responded, “That is one of the reasons we had individuals be very hesitant about joining the EOC, for fear of not necessarily retaliation but uncomfortable working relationship upon return from the EOC back to the department.”

Linda went on to discuss that becoming a member of the EOC was not always a smooth process:

…during Katrina and during Gustav I have to say we may have had a few arguments back and forth with some of the upper administration vice-chancellors or executive directors about certain way to do things but in the end the right decision was made and I think that this is true for any university. (Exp. Linda)

High ranking administrators and faculty were not used to having people who would normally be ranked under them making the decisions and taking responsibility during the crisis.

Additionally, there were those not aware of the structure wishing to give their input. Linda explained this in a diplomatic way, “It adds clutter and it adds confusion and we had been trained to follow this command structure and at the university we have more than 5,000 very well intentioned faculty and staff who all want to help and that’s great.” These added voices and distractions can only add to the stress level that the members of the EOC had been experiencing.
Elizabeth reflected on her experience where she had to take a role of authority during a crisis with fellow administrators in the room that out ranked her position. Not all of the administrators ranked higher than her were happy with this role reversal. Linda had a disagreement with a department head that she would normally never have and the new Chancellor walked in on it during Gustav:

…about day two he walked into the EOC and heard me, we’ll say, sharing my thoughts about a particular department with the executive director of that department in a way that in a normal work day I would never share…(Exp. Linda)

Not everyone could understand during a crisis that decisions and protocol were under a different system. Tim became very important. Egos and titles had to be put aside and decisions needed to come from the EOC, the people entrusted with the decision making.

Amy discussed what she perceived to be the opinions of the administrators and faculty who felt their authority had been usurped:

I bet there were some people that were pretty pissed off (laugh) at decisions that would be made through the EOC but what they have to understand is the role and purpose. We are looking out for, or the interim director is looking out for, and more knowledgeable of what’s going on from the university wide perspective as compared to what’s going on the fifth floor of a building or what’s going on as it relates to vet school or another school or department… So people have to kind of check their titles at the door. If the Emergency Operations Center is running, if they are operationalized, they become that decision making point and that’s been deputized down basically from the Chancellor. So were there some people that probably didn’t like the answers they got? I bet there were, but I think it allows the university to deploy its resources in the best way as well as holding true to the promises that were made through the MOU’s [Memos of Understanding]. But yeah, I bet there were some people that didn’t like answers that they got (laugh). (Exp. Amy)

While knowing there was a very high possibility of upsetting their fellow administrators, the members of the EOC were most concerned with performing their duty to protect the campus and run the emergency operation they had in place.
It was not only the senior level administrators and faculty who felt as if the EOC was interfering with their job responsibilities and duties. Kathryn felt a frustration as a mid-manager because she felt she had to wait for the EOC to make decisions and take action on outside concerns. She was delayed waiting for the EOC to make a decision.

The EOC may be making the decisions for the campus during this time of crisis, but people will still respond to the systems and organization they know. If, for example, residence life is enforcing a decision the EOC has made, the people affected will most likely contact and be angry with the residence life staff and not the members of the EOC. Kathryn spoke of an experience on campus where this happened:

I think communication is the most important part of that. One thing I will say I’ve gotten frustrated with is just because I’m not at that higher level like in the EOC, but I do think there’s so much attention given to how we say something. I understand that’s important from a public relations standpoint, but it can be very frustrating at our level. For example, people wanted us to communicate to them after the shootings, what was going on, and we had messages that we would have to send for approval and then it could be 24-48 hours until we heard back. We were waiting for the turnaround to get the approval to send out the message, so the feeling then from our constituents, our customer or whoever it might be, would be that we weren’t responding. Whereas we were limited in how we could respond because we were told everything had to go through that funnel and that funnel was a very slow moving funnel. (Exp. Kathryn)

Her experience shows that it may not be a perfect system and communication flowing back and forth to the EOC may not be as efficient as it needs to be. While the EOC is running the operations, other units will be responsible for implementing those decisions and will most likely handle the consequences of those decisions.

In the end though, Linda felt people both in the EOC and outside of it were looking out for the well being of the university and the campus community. The damage caused in relationships could be repaired, especially with the right leadership. Linda explained:

… nobody wants to see the campus crumble so eventually they are going to get on board and if they don’t get on board during that time, then mend that fence afterwards and it’s a
hell of a lot easier when you have a chancellor who fully supports what you do in those situations (Exp. Linda)

Having an ethic of care would win out in the long term and if the individuals see that the people in the EOC were making decisions under the assumption of doing what was best for the campus community and not personal gain or to usurp someone’s authority, then things would work out and return to normal over time.

The crisis experience changed the organizational culture of the institution. People took on roles outside of their normal routines. Responsibility may shift in a crisis, and while it may be frustrating to some participants, they adapted to it.

Training

Each member of the EOC brings to the table their own unique skills and experiences when they become part of the team, even though the members may not all be at the same experience level when it comes to handling a crisis. Additionally, due to infrequency and the unexpected nature of a crisis, members of the team may become out of practice in handling these types of situations if they are not part of their routine work responsibility. In order for the EOC to remain current in their knowledge and practices along with keeping everyone on the same skill level, regular training is held for the EOC team.

Having members on the team who are not trained in the functions of the EOC could cause additional chaos during crisis situations. Discussing the team members and this possibility, Linda said, “…however, if they don’t understand the concept of what it is we are trying to do, to create order out of the chaos, they are going to add to the chaos, not to the work.” The experience gained through regular training enables the team to work more efficiently together. Elizabeth compared training for a crisis to preparing for other events in life:
A practice plan. You know it is like good manners, you know you are not going to have good manners unless you practice it every day and when under duress you have to be practiced. It is like practicing a speech; almost always something you don’t like to do. These are the worst of times so this is why they call them disasters. They are the worst of times, so if you have your plan in place and you work the plan, then your emotions, you can keep yourself in check. You can remind yourself, is this an emotional decision or is this a logical decision? (Exp. Elizabeth)

By constantly training for a crisis, the team members will be better prepared when a crisis occurs and be able to think more rationally during high stress situations because the scenario could be familiar to them.

With Tim joining the EOC, a member was added who had experience with managing emergencies and training individuals for crisis situations. In deciding the training each month, Linda worked with Tim, “So [Tim] helps to propose which trainings we will do each month and then I help to coordinate what needs to happen.”

When Tim joined the team, he brought in his experience of working with emergency management from the police force. One of the first things he did was assess the team, the operation and the resources (Exp. Tim). He saw the similarities in working with the EOC and his past experience. Holding a dialogue with the team members highlighted the need for more formal training and introducing new materials and concepts versus constant reviews of previous learned items. Tim explained this early assessment and training:

Well, with anything you start at the basics, start at the foundation. I found that people at various levels of training had received some formal training and some had received none but I think that you manage expectations and you start at the ground up. Regardless if I were to sit through an incident or a NIMS introduction class, I would be bored to death but I think those core foundations components are extremely important and so we revisited those. We looked at the haves and have nots. We looked at what was available. Obviously there are budget concerns, we don’t have a pot of gold that we can just dip in to send people all over the country for training…(Exp. Tim)

Having all of the team members on the same training program and at the same level prepares the team for the crises they could experience.
Training takes place once a month with the core team members and their alternates (Exp. Linda). This becomes a major commitment and responsibility to those who are involved with the EOC. Tim explained:

…it takes a commitment to attend a monthly training session. We try to keep it to a one or two hour deal most of the months, but last week it was a four hour course, last month it was a two day course, month before that two days. So we do ask for a little bit but you are looking at two day maximum per year. That’s not very much when you look at the big scheme of things but to that person’s supervisor it’s a lot, that two days is a lot. (Exp. Tim)

This type of commitment can become time consuming to some individuals or their supervisors as this is an added unpaid responsibility in addition to their normal work assignments.

It has been a time commitment for the EOC team members, but Amber felt the training has been important. She discussed how they worked through FEMA courses and other helpful exercises with special sessions for public affairs officers (PAO). The initial type of crisis that inspired the creation of the EOC was hurricanes, but the EOC prepares for all types of crises. Linda stated, “I think you have to prepare for every possible thing that you can imagine. Then, if it occurs you have to go with the flow and not stick to the manual because that’s not going to help you.” Ryan described the approach to the training he experienced, “…it’s been more on a case study basis as we had discussions about what to do about various sorts of calamity whether it’s an illness, epidemic or whether it’s a shooting.”

On a college campus, there are many different combinations of crises that could occur. The members of the EOC need to be prepared for them. In their training, the LSU EOC went through simulations that included bomb scares, fires in residence halls, alcohol death in Greek life, hazing, chemical hazards, and cut power line to name a few (Exp. Amber and Linda). In these scenarios, they discuss who is responsible for what actions, what office would contact family members and community, and who would be brought in to assist from the different
divisions of the university (Exp. Linda). Through the discussion of the scenarios, situations and solutions they never thought about before were discovered and the members began to build a relationship with their fellow team members, seeing how they would operate in these types of situations (Exp. Amber).

Training with scenario gives the EOC team members an idea of what types of crises they may face and how it should be handled. They will work through the scenarios and make decisions with the actual people they will be within a real crisis. They will see how the personalities work together, what are strengths and weakness in the group, and possibly have some readymade solutions to a type of crisis if it comes.

But even with all of the training, practicing for a scenario does not prepare one completely for everything that may occur during a crisis. Amber recollected her experience in the post crisis phase after Hurricane Gustav:

I think, then, after Gustav they did a very thorough job. They printed a whole log record and there were over 4,000 entries in that log and so we kind of went over it. What could we have done better? What have we learned? So we do a lot of lessons learned after each crisis too, which is very good because none of the training, as good as the training is, none of it is like the real thing, because in the real thing the pressure is really on because it is real and also you get scenarios that you never dreamed of when you were in training. It’s amazing how the real thing causes problems or issues that you didn’t even think about, so training is very beneficial. Very much. (Exp. Amber)

The training was important, but did not cover everything they would face in the actual crisis. They were able to take what they learned in the actual experience and apply it to future training.

The Impact of the EOC

LSU’s creation of an EOC has made them an innovator in higher education when it comes to crisis management. By creating a permanent service for the campus to deal not only with hurricanes but other emergencies that could occur on the campus, they have changed the ways many think about their regular jobs and the relations to crises. Tim noticed how his involvement
with the crisis management team has changed how he does his job. He explained how a situation such as a routine burglary and possible perpetrator on campus caused him to think about whom outside of the police force should be contacted and if there should be an emergency message sent out to the campus (Exp. Tim). This is different from how he used to operate where the police would handle it all internally. The more campus wide approach to the situation comes from the liability issues and the public perception and expectations for awareness and information.

Tim summarizes the main purpose of the EOC and the example they could be for other higher education institutions:

I think focusing on the students and their safety and how campuses engage the process of providing for their safety when they have been impacted. I think LSU should be a model, truly, for positive ways to deal with that. (Exp. Tim)

Crisis management on college campuses is important and universities need to take crisis management as a serious component of their university management. LSU’s recently formed EOC provides the first defense in LSU safety when a major crisis arrives.

**Leadership**

Leadership abilities of administrators and volunteers have the opportunity to be showcased during a crisis. The natural disasters of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav brought out the leadership at the university, not all of it from people with high ranking titles and leadership positions. Elizabeth discussed this from her experience during Katrina and Rita:

…leaders rise because of a lack of leadership and leaders rise because they have to. I think leaders came out of Katrina and Rita that due to position may be unexpected because of where they were housed and because of literally the people that they are, they became experts. (Exp. Elizabeth)

The crisis situation brings out extraordinary qualities in people that may not have had the opportunity to showcase them before.
There are many expectations for leaders on a college campus during a crisis. Being a leader during a crisis can be difficult with plenty of pressure. The data from the study suggest there are many perceptions of who a leader should be and what leadership traits they should have. Tim describes these expectations and how a leader should handle them:

It’s very difficult to manage and I think as an emergency responder, especially in the senior leadership position, 90% of your job is managing expectations and managing a perception. I think that’s one of the most overlooked training components and that goes back to the crisis leadership and decision making. If you manage perceptions and you manage expectations, not saying alter, but you manage the information so that the perception good or bad is received as the truth, then I think that you’ve done 90% of your job. I hate to say it like this, but I don’t think there is any better way to say it, but you can teach almost anyone if they have the right character to respond to an emergency and do a good job but you can’t teach, well you can, it’s very difficult to teach leadership skills where they focus on if someone can pull themselves out of the weeds and manage expectations and perceptions. I think that’s where your good leadership comes from. That’s one of the biggest obstacles on a university’s campus. (Exp. Tim)

These expectations are often hard for a leader to live up to. Followers often look to their leaders to possess certain qualities and expect their leaders to already have certain skills.

The leadership qualities and traits that a person brings to the leadership position during a crisis are very important. Many things that happen during a crisis are important, but how the leaders interact with people is often how the crisis is judged. Linda explained, “The bottom line is people in any situation, I don’t care what the crisis is, it is people and how you deal with people.” Those who were in the position to experience the natural disaster had the opportunity to evaluate the leadership traits of the individuals they want in charge.

**Leadership Traits**

Throughout the interviews, the discussants expressed their opinions about the skills and leadership traits they were looking for in leaders during a crisis. The interviewees often became very specific in what they were looking for in the leaders. In the variety of responses, the themes
that stood out included people who work well in a team situation, people with skills, and people who can handle pressure and tough situations.

Personnel whom can function well together as a team stand out as one of the traits people were looking for in their leaders. The amount of time the people spend together on the team, through various meetings and trainings, and during actual crises made their interactions with each other an important aspect of what they were looking for in the leaders on the team. Linda stated, “We look for people who we want to work with, who if I was in a foxhole and am going to have to be stuck in that foxhole for 21 days, who else would I want in there with me.” Heather followed with, “Well, I would definitely look for anyone having a reputation for being a good team player, who put themselves last in situations so it’s not about what they want but the greater needs, based on the situation.”

Familiarity with people and operations becomes important in building the proper team for the crisis unit. Linda wanted people on her team she could trust, who would be firm but fair, and people who would be supportive but not always agreeing with everything the leader said. Additionally, she wanted people who understand the different types of relationships at the university:

You also have to be able to have someone who understands the relationships, not just the relationships of facility services to residential life, that’s primary, but if you have a person who can understand personality relationships. Maybe not know all things, but know that this person handles things this way and this other person does it this way so maybe we ought to bring in this person to help us as well. (Exp. Linda)

Having familiarity with each other assists the team with the functions of the operation. Knowing the team members and the skills they have could make the decision process easier and the delegation of responsibility more concise. They are not looking for “Yes People” but for people
they are familiar and comfortable with, so they can handle working long periods of time, be it
hours or days together.

Additionally, the discussants looked for leaders who could handle pressure situations. A
危机 calls for people to take action and make decisions during a stressful time and those who
cannot handle the pressure may not be best for the leadership situations. Linda asked, “Are you a
panicker or are you a manager or are you a dictator or are you a delegator or are you a little bit of
all those things?” And Elizabeth stated:

People that won’t talk about doing something, people that will just do it. I want doers. The
people that really showed up and did their jobs exceptionally well and when they
couldn’t do their job anymore they volunteered to assist in other ways. I was a fund
raiser. My job was not to facilitate meetings or to unpack boxes and whatever. I am an
organizer. So put me where I was needed, ‘Here I am sir, put me to work!’ You need
somebody prepared to put these people to work because idle hands are a dangerous thing.
Maybe I became that person that said, ‚What’s next?’ I probably became facilitator of
people that didn’t have another place to be that didn’t need to be somewhere else…(Exp.
Elizabeth)

These basic qualities of leadership they discuss are important in deciding how a person will act
in a high pressure situation.

The leaders need to be familiar with how the campus works and not only their particular
area. Linda stated, “We look for people who can first know their area, but be flexible enough to
understand they can’t operate in that silo.” Administrators are looking for people with a plan,
vision, and an understanding of the campus. Ryan discussed, “I think somebody needs to go back
to the very first point, as I recall, they at least need to seem to have a plan, that is, you’ve got
someone who doesn’t flail from moment to moment, but is ready to announce even on the outset
that he knows he has a general direction for dealing of the crisis.” Linda contributed similarly:

…if your leader does not have the ability to envision the big picture and then look down
at the pieces and say, ‘In order to put this back together we have to start over here’ then
you are never going to get any order out of that chaos in the timeline that it is needs to be
done. So that’s the first thing you need - somebody who can understand the magnitude,
prioritize and recognize what’s best for the institution. Preserving human life comes in first, of course. You need someone who has the ability to communicate effectively and without being a dictator. (Exp. Linda)

The administrators are interested in someone who has a clear plan from the outset and who can communicate in a direct manner the plan of action to the team members.

Another skill that would be valuable to the leaders during the crisis would be the ability to adapt to the unique and unexpected situations a crisis would bring. Heather discussed the importance of being creative for these creative situations:

I think people who may be creative, who can kind of help with creative situations: people who have experience in crisis management, facility management, or food management. Just try to think of what are those things that need to be done and who can lead this effort for us as a whole and having those things tasked to those people who have experience in that area. (Exp. Heather)

With the essence of a crisis sometimes being the unpredictability of it, then a creative leader may be better at adapting to the unexpected.

The emotional maturity of the leaders was also listed as one of the key skills people were looking for in their leaders. Linda and Elizabeth look for strong emotional strength and people who will not bring drama to the situation or unnecessary attention to themselves. Amy gave an example of how emotions related to a crisis:

Sometimes people are not emotionally prepared for what they may be called to do, and you have to deal with some of that, too. An example being some of the people who were served within the PMAC or within field house were incredibly needy of everything you could do for them and that could be emptying a bed pan, it was helping in any way, shape, or form and there were definitely some staff, especially if they had experienced an adverse impact from Katrina themselves and then they got catapulted into, ‘Wow, I am in a different role for Gustav.’ I think there were situations that they realized that there were some, I guess, unsettled emotions that they probably weren’t even aware of that came back up again and that was just, I don’t know if you could anticipated it, but then ones that presented itself, how do you help that individual, not necessarily bring closure, but just wrestle with it. Okay, maybe they don’t need to be down in the PMAC right now, we could use them someplace else because we got different things that need to happen but they were not quite ready for that. That was kind of a unique rule but that was something we didn’t necessarily anticipate, but for the number of people that had been
here for both and with different stories and situations, I probably should have expected it more than I really did. (Exp. Amy)

Having control of one’s emotions will allow the leader to succeed in a hectic atmosphere. Many of the people they could deal with during a crisis may be suffering emotionally. If they have control of their own emotions, they will be able to empathize with them while also making the decisions, often hard, that can impact people.

Being calm during a crisis with a sense of urgency was also widely regarded as an important skill for the leaders to have (Exp. Amber, Heather, and Kathryn). Handling the pressure that comes with the unexpected occurrences of a crisis can make a difference in the success. Showing a sense of calm while understanding the urgency of the situation implies the leader is in control of the situation. Amber said:

I think somebody who can stay calm, somebody who has been trained and knows what to do. I think somebody who other people can put their faith in and I think you put your faith in somebody, because you know that they have the training and experience and that they know what they are going to do. So I guess a good leader is somebody who has it together…So that is kind of steadfast demeanor and somebody who I think can rally the troops but who also understands the significance of the event and the importance of what’s going on and they take it seriously, but they also can make that good decision and gather the information and listen to what their people have to say…(Exp. Amber)

Kathryn felt people who were calm in a crisis situation would be able clearly understand the situation and be able to know what to do and give people proper directions. Heather followed up with, “Someone who can remain calm but delegate and see big picture where the greatest needs are in the overall picture” and “…to be calm, to really try to be the peacekeeper because I think emotions are high from several different people…” (Exp. Heather).

Calmness is associated with having a clear and reasonable head during a situation of this nature (Exp. Amber and Kathryn). When a leader is calm, it may bring the anxiety levels of the followers down. Being calm during the crisis could increase the perception the event may be in
control. Kathryn suggests that a group being under more control, more reasonable and productive thoughts will go into the decision making process.

Finally, another common aspect the discussants mentioned was the importance of not letting the crisis become a panic situation. Linda said it in the most basic way, “…crisis cannot translate to panic” (Exp. Linda). Amy closed with:

Some people freak out, that’s not a helpful skill set. If you are going to be either pre-occupied or the sky is falling, or oh this is terrible, you may not need to be a part of this process right now and that’s okay, let’s get out of the way and that’s alright, we’ll deal with that later. But, I think as a skill set you just have to know what your limitations are, you have to do your homework, you have to ask questions and you have to be able to process information. (Exp. Amy)

No one wants their leaders to lose control under pressure. While there is an expectation that a person in a leadership will not lose control, there is the possibility it will happen. A crisis situation is not the time to lose control. With a combination of the many skills the discussants talked about, hopefully a leader will be able to handle the situation without losing control and panicking.

The participants had a variety of traits they were looking for the in their leaders. It was important for the leaders to be calm, knowledgeable, cool under pressure, and having control of their emotions. These traits seemed to make the participants feel more comfortable with their leaders in a tough situation.

**Decision Making**

Another important characteristic that appeared from those who were interviewed is the importance of decision making by the leaders. Making important decisions is seen as one of the roles of a leader. Heather mentioned this importance, “I think making decisions, but listening to all the information, but not taking too much time, as people are waiting, and it is a crisis so
making good decisions, staying calm and delegating.” There are many decisions that need to be made during a crisis as Linda explained:

If no decision was ever made then you may as well have no leader. Decisions go from how many ambulances are we going to need for this particular issue to are we sure we want to send out this particular broadcast e-mail. (Exp. Linda)

During a crisis, leaders must make many decisions, often in a short amount of time with limited resources and information.

Not everyone is willing to be placed into a situation where they have to be responsible for the major decisions during a crisis. Kathryn stated, “It’s not bad, I mean, it is in some ways, you don’t want to make those major decisions. You don’t want to be the person that’s responsible for making those major decisions.” A crisis is a situation where you have to have the people in place who are willing to make those decisions. Linda remarked, “So you definitely need somebody willing to make a decision.” Elizabeth also responded:

I don’t care what the decision is, right or wrong, make a decision. Go forward and take steps. A lack of direction is just chaos, you can’t have somebody wishy-washy and that’s why I have so much respect for [Chancellor during 2005]. He was willing to make hard decisions and they were hard decisions. You can say whatever you want about putting the campus on lockdown. Was it a decision? Absolutely. Was it his? Probably not, but did he make a decision? Yeah, right or wrong or indifferent and he was willing to say, ‘I am responsible,’ and every meeting I was in he said, ‘No matter what, I am responsible. I will take heat for it.’ You have got to respect that. (Exp. Elizabeth)

The leaders are going to be responsible for making the hard decisions whether they are right or wrong and their followers will be looking to them to make those decisions. According to the participants in the study the leaders need to hold themselves responsible for making those decisions.

The decisions the leaders will be forced to make during a crisis will not be easy ones. Heather discussed the nature of the decisions made during a crisis:
It is a crisis and whatever we decide is going to affect not just us but people who are going to be there. If they are good decisions they may get reported and if they are really bad decisions, then they are absolutely going to get reported. There’s going to be this huge debacle. (Exp. Heather)

With the decisions being so crucial during a crisis, wrong decisions will tend to stand out to those such as the constituents and the media.

If a wrong decision is made during a crisis, a leader needs to be able to be responsible for their decision or admit their mistake and make a correction. Linda explained, “…if it is the wrong decision the leader in that situation has to stand by that decision or has to say, ‘I made a mistake and we are going to shift now’…. ” Sometimes the leader will have to admit a decision they made at the time during a crisis may not be the best decision at a later time. Amy explained:

…you just can’t stick with a decision because that was the decision that was good at the time because it may not be the same best decision five minutes from now. You’ve got to go with that and I guess that’s a flexibility issue, as it relates to a skill set or trait. (Exp. Amy)

If a leader realizes a decision they made may no longer be the best one during the crisis, they must not worry about their ego or other’s perceptions, but do what is right for the betterment of the institution and the community. They can admit their mistake and make efforts to set things right.

The decisions the leader will be making are not easy decisions and not every decision will be liked by those involved or impacted. During Hurricane Katrina, a lot of hard decisions were made that not everyone agreed with at the time. Elizabeth described once such circumstance with the former Chancellor:

He was willing to make very difficult decisions. I did not agree with some of his decisions, for example, opening the campus back up after 2 weeks. But what he knew for sure is that we would have become a military base, and everybody that has looked at that after that realizes we would have become a National Guard military base if he did not open the campus when he did. Was it right? Probably in hindsight to reopen the campus,
yes business as usual. As an academic institution, he was staying critical to the core. I think he was willing to make the decision and suffer the consequences. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Many people were not pleased with going ahead and restarting the academic year so soon after Hurricane Katrina, but hard decisions like that were needed to be made by the leadership involved. Some decisions in hindsight prove to be good ones while others may prove to be the opposite.

Leaders are in the position to make hard decisions. They will not be easy and not always the right ones. In the end thing people are looking for them to make decision during a crisis.

**Decision Making for the Greater Good**

One of the most common themes discussed by the participants was the importance of making a decision that may have broken some policy or regulation, but had been made for the greater good or was the “right thing to do” in the situation. Public universities are subject to many policies and procedures, self designed or by outside agencies such as the state or federal government. Elizabeth discussed the breaking of the regulations:

I think for the large part people make the best decisions they knew how. We really have great people on this campus. I don’t think anybody got fired over it. You did the best that you could under the circumstances. I saw some gross blatant breaking of laws. Not laws that are going to throw anybody in jail, but are we going to use state resources to go buy 1000 sheets so that students have beds? Yes. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Linda described this bending of the regulations, “Again, we exercised a great deal of authority that we didn’t necessary have but we just assumed because we were ignorant.”

The governmental regulations often in place to prevent corruption are seen to Ryan as a hindrance to doing what is right for the people on the campus during a crisis situation:

Maybe the interaction point between that and state law, that is, some of the social welfare schemes I am proposing may run into difficulty with regard to state law. What that comes down to is kind of over regulation, in other words this is a state that is so worried, with good reason, about corruption and abuse that the laws are now preventing the doing of
perfectly normal appropriate humane activities, so some liberalization might be appropriate as well. (Exp. Ryan)

While many state regulations have been set to protect people and institutions from corruption, during a crisis, following those regulations may not be feasible or be for the welfare of the population.

In a time of crisis, many of the administrators felt it is more important to do what is right for people and come at the problem from an ethic of care. Amy described:

I think as an institution of higher education we should in some ways take advantage of lessons that have been learned from other places, but, we also need to operate from a position of care as compared to a position of how to avoid getting sued. Again, that’s my bias, but we’ve got to do the right thing for the right reasons as compared to, ‘Wow, if we do this we might be opening ourselves up from a liability perspective.’ So if there’s a concern, behavior, or something that needs to be addressed, I’d rather violate a FERPA arrangement than not do what needs to be done because I’m afraid we are going to get sued for something. (Exp. Amy)

And Elizabeth felt those who made tough decisions in a crisis should be spared from any administrative punishment:

Nobody is going to get into trouble over it; you know what I am saying? Under those circumstances I think people made the best decisions that they had, under those circumstances and I think all the way to the top they figured it out. I don’t think we ever want to be in that situation again. (Exp. Elizabeth)

In this crisis experience, decisions were made that the administrators were not prepared for and from the lessons learned from this experience they would not have to make those types of decisions again. Amber reiterated the same feelings with regards to doing the right thing during a crisis. “…my public relations philosophy is do the right thing because if you do the right thing, good press and good reactions are going to follow.” Making the decisions for the right reason over what may be policy and regulations seemed to be the most important thing to those who spoke about it.
Elizabeth recalled an example of how the student health center had to make the hard decision that, while not necessary legal, was the right thing to do in her opinion:

What is the altruistic thing to do? What is the right thing to do? I think the Student Health Center was watching how that happened with the PMAC and watching what happened with the field hospital. The Student Health Center gave everything in their facility away. They opened up their pharmacy and were handing out drugs. They had to. You don’t want your people that need psychotropic drugs and diabetes medicine to not have their medicine. Give them what they need in an emergency. Is it legal? No! Is it the right thing to do? Are we under extreme circumstances? Absolutely. Are we going to count the 250 thousand dollars worth of equipment that we just handed out? Do we really care what it cost for rubber gloves, when people are standing on your steps bleeding? No. I think people really make good hard decisions, and one of the other things I respect about [Chancellor during 2005] and about [Vice Chancellor during 2005] is that there are laws for good reasons, and sometimes you have to make decisions that aren’t necessarily legal to make. … That was not a popular thing. He got huge backlash from the administration all the way up to the Governor, but was it the right thing? Absolutely. Did they recover it? For the most part, yes. So he was the right leader at the right time and made some very difficult decisions. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Sometimes the right decisions from an ethic of care standpoint need to be made but it could be costly to those who made those decisions.

Hard decisions have to be made. While well intentioned, some decisions may break rules and regulations. If leaders come from an ethic of care looking at the protections of individuals and the greater good, the discussants do not feel one should be punished in a crisis situation.

Leadership Empowerment

An additional important action a leader can do during a crisis is empower their followers and staff to make the decisions, especially if the leader is not an expert in the area or is unavailable for crucial decisions. The discussants expressed the importance of being empowered to make a decision. Elizabeth stated, “I think a good leader surrounds himself with other good leaders and prepares them, makes them be prepared, has high expectations and empowers them also to make decisions…” Linda discussed how having the support of the [Chancellor during 2005] made it easier to make decisions, “I knew at that time I had the backing of [Chancellor
during 2005] as long as what I was doing was well intentioned and in the best interest of the institution. He was for whatever I did; I didn’t have to ask.” This support and empowerment helps all those involved in the crisis situation.

Being empowered and having the support of a leader who has empowered you was important to Elizabeth. She stated:

He empowers his people to make this decision and right or wrong he has got your back. He will tell you that we have moved off course, that we are going to go this direction now, but good, bad, or indifferent, you are empowered to control your universe. I don’t have to ask your permission. (Exp. Elizabeth).

This empowerment bestows confidence into the team members and allows them to also showcase and grow their leadership skills.

Amy gave an example of [Chancellor during 2008] actions during Hurricane Gustav and the empowerment he gave to his team:

It was not unusual for [Chancellor during 2008] to be down in the EOC at 2 o’clock in the morning or at 6 o’clock in the morning. What I appreciated about him was he had a line of communication back to the board of supervisors as well as with the other chancellors within the state, so he possessed information that was helpful to the EOC. He did not get in the way. He did not try to micro-manage. He allowed the authority in their responsibility that had been given to the staff within the EOC to stay there. He didn’t undermine anything. He was very, very, visible, very supportive, and I think he learned an awful lot about the institution in a very short period of time. He also learned an awful lot about the people that comprised the EOC in that concentrated period of time, too. So he never tried to trump, but on the Chancellor, I say this, he would take all the information and he really did. He seemed to really respect everybody that was at that table. (Exp. Amy)

This type of support from the senior leadership was respected by the members. They appreciated the support along with the ability to do the job they were empowered to do. Because of the empowerment, Linda felt her leadership ability gained from the crisis experience and the trust given toward her, “I do that every day but I also am willing to be the leader and to make the decisions and if someone else is not willing to do that, I can’t sit there and allow the situation to
escalate.” The experience of the crisis and the empowerment she received allowed her to become a more active leader.

**University Personnel**

The EOC plays a large role in the operation and management of the university during a crisis situation. The university, though, is a very large entity constructed of many people and departments. Many of them are used to working autonomously throughout the year with little interference from those outside of their departments. Linda pointed this out:

…one of the things that we are slowly learning on this campus is that for the past 50, 60, 150 years we’ve had individual departments who operate in silos in crisis mode and in other things and that’s just the nature of an institution this size. (Exp. Linda)

The silos and other lack of regular contact with the EOC create a different perspective of the crisis management experience for university personnel.

**General Faculty and Staff Training**

While those involved with the EOC team are working with crisis management on a regular basis, at least having monthly discussions, and training about crisis situations, other employees may not be getting the same experience and training. When asked about how often crisis management was talked about in staff meetings, Heather replied with, “Not very often. It’s business as usual unless something happens.” And she reiterated with, “Well, like I said, there wasn’t really a whole lot of direction given prior to the storm…” (Exp. Heather). This lack of direction, discussion, and training can be a hindrance to the development of the staff and their ability to handle a crisis situation.

While the EOC has made strides to change how crisis management is done and handled on the campus, they may not have communicated their plan to all of the employees. Ryan discussed the ambiguity of the situation, “I have a feeling that the procedures are much better
than they were, but again whether they’ve been carried out in real life, given the material
foundations that we have here at this university, it’s not a question” (Exp. Ryan). This lack of
knowledge about the details of the university’s crisis plan and the role they may or not play in it
is disturbing for some employees.

Some administrators feel there is a need to create opportunities to educate those
employees who are not on the EOC about what to do during a crisis and what role should they
partake in if a crisis were to occur. Amy discussed what should be done to educate employees
about crisis management:

I think you’ve got to do some ongoing professional development as it relates to warning
signs and indicators for that. I also think the institution has done a much better job of
telling faculty, student or staff members where to go when they need to know. We have
to educate them on: (a) what to look for (b) what are the resources and (c) how to make
an appropriate referral. We have to do that constantly every single semester. Our students
change, our faculty and staff change. Some of our resources need to change so it’s a
constant issue, but really helping people understand what your resources are, what you
can and cannot commit to. People also have to be very well educated on what the
parameters are which we are working within. You may not, you cannot, act as an agent
of the institution and make a promise to deliver something you are not allowed to do.
You have to have constant professionalism, you have to be really aware, we have to
continually provide that training, that education, and give people the background and help
them understand. If all else, ask the question, go to someone whether it’s going to your
supervisor, going to that person’s supervisor. Find it out, get it right and transfer the skill
to the situation you are going to see again in the future. (Exp. Amy)

A strong professional development plan would be good for the employees of the institution.
However, that is not what the staff and faculty receive.

There was a noticeable lack of crisis management training felt by employees who were
not involved in positions that directly involved crisis management as part of the regular duties.
Heather talked about what happened in her department during the three years between
Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and Hurricane Gustav, “There wasn’t really anything directive wise
between Katrina and Gustav in terms of training or planning.” Ryan felt a similar feeling about a
lack of training with Hurricane Gustav, “...as we were coming in to volunteer, we learned what the operation was, what we were supposed to do, but really no real training before that, more on the job training” (Exp. Ryan). This lack of training and feeling of preparedness at the mid-manager and entry level positions was noticeable.

Even when employees are given the opportunity to be part of the crisis process, they may not take advantage of it. Ryan explained the general opinion he felt from the faculty, “One has to recognize that many faculty will not take this opportunity, that is, they are too busy with other things or in kind of dreamland, but basically we don’t have any training at all.” There may be a general lack of interest from those faculty members who do not feel they are directly impacted by a crisis on a regular basis or believe that becoming active in the crisis management process will take away from their other responsibilities.

Some of the lack of interest may come from what the university does provide to the faculty and staff regarding crisis preparedness. The university sends out a folder or a “red sheet” to the employees of the university about what to do in a crisis situation. This is the general information the employees receive and may be the only outreach they receive regarding what to do in a crisis. Ryan discussed the inadequacies of this document:

There is a red sheet that gives emergency procedures but this is mixed with what might be called, if not political, at least psychological correctitude. In other words, the procedures for what to what with the shooting or hurricanes are mixed in with what to do with an alcoholic student. (Exp. Ryan)

By combining everything into a short document, a disservice has been done with the information, even if the university is making an effort to reach their employees. Unluckily, Ryan felt most of the faculty does not look at it, “Most faculty say, ‘I’m committed to all of these things but I’m just going to put this on the shelf.’ They don’t really read it.”
Some administrators discussed the training being sporadic dealing more with the manuals or binders and making sure they were up to date. Kathryn discussed her department’s discussion of crisis management:

We have an emergency manual that we send out every year for updates, for review and updates, and then that usually becomes the topic in at least one staff meeting for a year after we have done the updates and we reviewed. Part of our hurricane review is that whenever there is a hurricane announced, one of our first steps is to determine whether it’s predicated to come our direction or not. I think at about 148 hours out, we meet and go over the processes so the process is fresh in their minds. Then we have a couple of steps along the way, another around 72 hours out. Anytime they say there is a named hurricane we start meeting pretty regularly. (Exp. Kathryn)

Elizabeth explained her office procedures:

About once a year, we get stuff like this, and it brings up the discussion of the emergency contact folder. Did you get your text message and broadcast [email]? We make sure that we are part of campus but separate. We can’t make all our people be part of crisis management text messaging system because we are not technically LSU employees; we’ve asked everybody to do that for themselves. We expect them to take some responsibility to that end. I think people are identified if they are critical staff or not. There’s only probably about three or four in the building and we do it every time we go on vacation and for an extended period of time when we shut the building down, like Christmas. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Both Kathryn and Elizabeth had brief discussions in their respective departments about what to do during a crisis, but only had in-depth discussion when a hurricane was approaching. Regular discussions about crisis management are not being held nor are scenarios being used to train employees about the different conditions they could face in their jobs. Crisis preparedness seems to be based on one scenario happening, that being the disaster from a hurricane. Not enough seems to be getting done in the planning phase of crisis management.

**Essential Personnel**

One of the areas that developed in the discussion with the interviewees was the differences and confusion between essential personnel and non-essential personnel during a
crisis situation. When the institution experienced Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, there was a sense of confusion by some about who were considered to be essential. Amy described this situation:

The university has policies and procedures and they map out who were considered essential and non-essential, so some of the departments within our division [student life] such as residential life have very different roles, scopes, and missions and they are a part of it. Many of them were deputized as essential personnel, arguably, sometimes people within the union and sometimes people within the university operation. There were no essential personnel that were designated throughout the Dean of Students’ Office. However, with my experience from other institutions, I knew I needed to be here. So I got here and we just basically kicked in. Several of us came to Johnston Hall, which kind of served as our home base and our Vice-Chancellor at the time would attend daily or often three daily meetings with the Chancellor, all the Vice-Chancellors, and the police department. Then he would come back and share with us what the greatest needs were being discussed in that meeting and so we were trying to put into operation those things and make things happen. Some of those things involved helping the Student Government as it related to getting volunteers over at the PMAC and the field house. (Exp. Amy)

Due to the limited protocol for crisis management at the time of Hurricane Katrina and Rita, many of the administrators who should most likely have been considered as essential were not. They had to take action on their own. Luckily for the university and those who were brought to campus, they did.

If one was not considered essential personnel, one would often follow their own hurricane plan. Heather said, “…There really wasn’t plan for our staff to participate in any way so I basically stayed at my apartment and made sure nothing there was destroyed.” Without a plan and not being designated as essential personnel, there was no protocol for employees to come to the university to help out.

Kathryn worked in an office that is comprised of many people who were considered essential personnel, but also had people who showed up that were non-essential due to their circumstance. She explained her experience:

I think during Katrina, because it was so tragic and so devastating, you didn’t hear a lot of that. It was the week before Labor Day weekend, so even on Labor Day, which was the day they decided to open up Pleasant Hall, we were asked to come in when that was a
paid holiday in theory. We were actually in there working on that day and so you would hear little grumblings about little things like that, but for the most part people were in such a service mentality that even the people that weren’t really being asked to come in because they weren’t essential, you were seeing a lot of them coming in and volunteering. I’m sure some of that had to do with the fact that a lot of people didn’t have air conditioning in their homes and we had it here in the office, whatever the reason may be. (Exp. Kathryn)

During Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Kathryn saw a lot of people coming into the office to help. Because of the devastation, most people were not complaining about coming into work or volunteering, even if they had ulterior motives of conveniences they had lost.

Before Hurricane Katrina there was a more visible division between essential personnel and non-essential personnel. Those who were considered non-essential were not expected to be around and that was the system people were used to functioning in at the university. Amy, who had previous experience with hurricanes in the past at other institutions, discussed how non-essential members could have been a benefit to those designated as essential personnel:

I didn’t sense frustration between people that had been deputized as essential or non-essential because everybody was, again res life is an example, essential personnel. They were so focused on what they were doing. I think the role that other members of the division of student life could have played was to help relieve them or to just offer assistance but people didn’t even necessarily know to do that, or that it was an opportunity or expectation. We’re also organized very differently, so our communication levels as it related to different auxiliaries or an individual’s experience is going to be dependent upon whom they were being supervised by at the time and how the overall reporting line probably worked. (Exp. Amy)

Elizabeth talked about how without being told to be there, she assumed she should show up to work:

I reported directly to the Vice Chancellor of Student Life and Academic Services, but at that time I did not have any crisis management responsibility. I was considered his executive staff. We all assumed that we had responsibility under the circumstances but no one officially called me and said that I had to be here or I was on some kind of list and I had no responsibility as far as in the division or anything like that. At that time, no one actually reported to me. I was just the right hand of the Vice Chancellor. (Exp. Elizabeth)
Hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed that much thought had not been considered to a hurricane having a prolonged durational impact on the institution and the employees. Plans had not been made regarding the vast majority of the human resources.

As the unprecedented seriousness of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita became realized by the administrators who had come to work, both essential and non-essential personnel, their expectations began to grow for the other members to be at work. This expectation, especially if not communicated by their superior, was often seen in hindsight. Heather discussed her situation, “Back in 2005, I basically didn’t come to campus. I wasn’t given any direction to do so. I think later on there’s an expectation that we should have done something.” Employees felt judged by their actions or inactions during this crisis situation, but the judgment on them may not have been fair due to not having a clear protocol or expectations given by their supervisors to be on campus helping out.

There became this expectation that it was the right thing to do for an employee to come back to work, even if they were not designated as essential personnel. Amy remarked:

I don’t think people felt put out by not being designated as essential. It was more a matter of not letting a designation like that stop you from offering assistance if you are able to be there, but there was confusion. I’m sure there were people that just took the initiative, because we saw a need. (Exp. Amy)

And Elizabeth discussed the expectation to come into work if you could:

If you don’t have a role then there is an expectation of what we think you should do. As an administrator of this campus, I believe anybody that is, and this is my personal bias, that anybody that is not personally effected, if you work here you show up to work and you get assigned at the Central Volunteer Center. Doesn’t matter if you are unloading the dog food, or you are bandaging victims at the field house, you show up. It’s all hands on deck at that point to the ability that you can. You have small children at home, they’re not in school, you do what you can, and that’s fine. But I think you should have some kind of job if you are able to show up for work, even if you are not doing the ‘J’ ‘O’ ‘B’ you are assigned to, then you show up at the Central Volunteer System. (Exp. Elizabeth)
Amy and Elizabeth felt that if you were capable, there is an expectation and a responsibility for you to help out with the university during a crisis of this magnitude. This decision to arrive and assist could impact their future opinions of others who did not show up to work.

After their experience with Hurricanes in 2005, in order to make sure they were not judged by their actions, proactive employees consulted with their supervisors about their role and expectations. Elizabeth pointedly asked her supervisor if she was needed during a hurricane:

When Hurricane Gustav was coming I asked my boss if I was critical staff. That never occurred to me to ask before, except when I was at the union. I asked if I was critical staff, and they said no, so I packed my kids and I evacuated. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Having the clarification on whether she was essential and needed was a different experience for her than her experience through Katrina and Rita where she arrived on campus to help and did not leave for 38 days.

After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, discussions began to be held about who should also be considered essential personnel in time of a crisis. Discussions about certain individuals being added to the team were made, but maybe not put into policy as they need to be. Amy discussed this change:

It has changed. It was changed when [Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Life] was serving as the interim Vice-Chancellor for Student Life and he was able to indicate who within the division were considered essential. What I don’t know is if that has been promulgated in any other way or forms as it relates to a policy statement level or permanent memorandum level or just of an operation process within our division. I would say that that’s an area that needs to be strengthened within our division so that people have a better understanding of what those expectations are, because you’ve got staff turnover, you have changes in responsibilities. We need to take those things off the shelf and make sure we’re geared up and ready and that people have received, basically, ‘Here’s the heads up. Here’s what this institution’s expectations are for you.’(Exp. Amy)

In the five years since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, discussion has begun and some clarification has been made on who needs to serve during the hurricane, but clear protocols have not been
created and expectations set for all employees. Without this discussion, there is still a sense of confusion. Heather showed this in her answer to a question about essential personnel:

I think it could be much clearer and I’m not sure what the process is for being dubbed essential personnel, but I think that could be a lot clearer. I know we had this plan for what our response is going to be, but I don’t know that we are technically essential personnel other than we were supposed to coordinate volunteers. (Exp. Heather)

Having this continued ambiguity can cause future resentment between colleagues if some employees work or volunteer extended periods of time and others do not.

This ambiguity was seen in action after Hurricane Gustav with Residence Life. Kathryn discussed her experience:

...we probably do as the University has some policy in place to follow if classes go down for a week or two weeks or whatever. How long were we out for Gustav, almost two weeks? The university basically closed down, but you still have those offices that have to remain open and there needs to be a better policy about how you spread the word of who needs to be available. For us, we basically said, ‘Everybody needs to come, once it is safe for everybody go come back in, you need to come back, you need to be fully functioning as an office.’ There were offices on campus that just shut down and didn’t bother coming in. I think the university was probably too vague about when to come back. They basically came to the point, unless you absolutely can’t report, you need to report, but how are you defining can’t report? Some people were saying, ‘Well I still don’t have power, I can’t report.’ Well, I didn’t have power the whole time, but I was reporting. If there is a power line blocking my street and I can’t get out, then I might not be able to report… (Exp. Kathryn)

Kathryn’s experience showed how even by the time of Hurricane Gustav, there were still issues with essential personnel and non-essential personnel and the expectations of coming to work. Even the idea of taking care of one’s personal business first could be questioned.

Some of the units who had been more involved with crisis management and the utilization of essential personnel clarified and expanded their internal roles after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Amber said, “We have been essential personnel since prior to Katrina. Sometime back in the mid 90’s I think that we decided that this office is essential for personnel and so now more than ever everybody really understands what our role is.” Kathryn explained
how her department in Residential Life, which largely consists of people who are essential personnel, became more structured and functional in spreading the duties among personnel:

Yes, we have tiers. We have essential; we have an A Team and a B Team. After a certain period, like we stayed during the hurricane, and immediately after, Team One, the first team has to be here and then they need to be able to go home. The relief has to come in, so we have Tier Two, and that offers some relief. I don’t know though, I say if offers relief, but really the way the tiers work during a crisis, there’s no way to really change that out. I know even with the EOC they have two - a purple team and a gold team - and if you were really in the midst of a hurricane whoever happens to be there has to deal with it. You just can’t say, ‘Okay, times up, time to switch.’ (Exp. Kathryn)

They have created a clearer distinction of when people are needed to work, including almost the entire staff in the operation. It is not a perfect system, as it may not always be best to alternate teams in the heart of a crisis. More design may be needed in order to smooth the transition of the teams.

The participants felt there was a need to clarify who were officially essential and non-essential personnel. They felt expectations and policies needed to be discussed with non-essential personnel for circumstance such as long term closure for emergencies. They agreed clarification could make the situation better.

**Paid for Not Working**

During a crisis, such as a hurricane where the university may be shut down, employees are split into essential and non-essential personnel. Those who are essential will most likely have to report to the university to work during the crisis in some capacity, be it modified shift, regular shift, or extended shift. Additionally, personnel who are deemed non-essential may show up to work or assist others at the university. But many people who are not deemed essential personnel may never show up to the university during the closure, yet everyone will still get paid as if they were working (Office of the Chancellor, 2004).
This separation of essential and non-essential personnel was noticed by those who showed up to work during Hurricane Katrina and Rita. Elizabeth pointed out the fact that she took special notice of those who did not show up, “I do remember counterparts not showing up, it was noticeable and something I would not forget” and “I would have been a volunteer; I wouldn’t have had a week off. I would have volunteered where I could have volunteered because I am a member of this community.” Amy saw those who came to work during this time, especially those who were non-essential employees as stepping up while those who did not come to campus as adding to the frustration, “Some people rose to the occasion and helped and others did whatever they were doing. Was there sometimes frustration? Absolutely there was!” There seems to be a resentment shown from Elizabeth and Amy towards those who did not come into work during the period of the hurricanes.

Nothing like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had been seen on the campus like this before. While many people were brought into work, others spent their time volunteering at one of the many operations on campus. Again, this created some division amongst those who were assigned to work, those who came into work even though it was not required, those who were volunteering, and those who did not come in at all. Elizabeth explained how she perceived the situation:

There became a hierarchy during the hurricane and those who were doing it and those who weren’t and people were getting very frustrated. It’s like there were people who spent all of their time in the field hospitals volunteering and helping the patients and that sort of a thing. That was a noble and worthwhile cause, but they weren’t doing their jobs. Then there were those of us that were doing our jobs that weren’t volunteering in the field hospitals. Then all of us became competitive, it was like, ‘Well, you’re not over at the field hospital.’ ‘No, but I just loaded four tractor trailers full of dog food for the pets, I just organized three 18 wheelers full of supplies from North Carolina and I just washed literally 1000 bed sheets at the Recreation Center and bought 40 washers and dryers so that we can make this happen.’ It is like we are under that kind of duress; it’s frustrating to watch people that didn’t step up the way you stepped up. And then if you don’t have the capacity; I don’t have the capacity to go in a field hospital, I can’t do it, I tried, I
volunteered for one night and I said, ‘You know what, this is not my gift, my gift is
directing traffic. You know there are people that can do that, I am not one of them.’ So it
became very competitive almost and then you had people who did nothing that saw it as a
5 day vacation. It was totally unacceptable to me. It does not go in line with the
Commitment to the Community that we have. You sign that document and you say I am
going to honor it, act with integrity and I am going to treat my community. It was to me a
lack of personal character with people that either worked here for the same institution I
try to uphold or they go to school here. It is not a five day vacation. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Elizabeth had strong feelings about how people utilized their time during the hurricanes. She felt
there was a strong need to serve as a member of the community and help where it was needed. At
the same time, she felt those who chose to volunteer over returning to their more official job
responsibilities should not serve judgment against others for not working in the more
humanitarian efforts over the logistical operations. These strong feelings from those who worked
the duration of the tragic experience could easily carry with them for years after the hurricanes in
their normal work situations.

Kathryn noticed a change in people’s attitudes from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita when
people were willing to volunteer and help to the attitude she saw from employees during
Hurricane Gustav, especially from those who had to work:

I think there were more attitudes after Gustav because even though people have been
impacted it wasn’t the tragedy that Katrina was, and so we had so many days off. Many
people just didn’t come in because they didn’t have to and then there were some of us
that were expected to be here, and I think there was a much more negative feeling about
it. Essentially, your classified staff stayed home and your professional staff came in and
of course, as a professional staff member you don’t get any additional compensation for
that so there was that frustration. It kind of seems unfair that we’re not getting
compensated for that and these people are getting these long vacations, paid vacations, or
whatever. Yes, that was definitely there but I don’t remember a lot of that during
Katrina. (Exp. Kathryn)

Heather discussed how she felt an inequality in pay becomes a factor:

I’ve got to work all these days. I don’t get paid any extra. To the other end, I felt some
people who take it as an extra 10 day vacation, so there’s almost this guilt factor. I need
to be here volunteering or not volunteering. (Exp. Heather)
With Gustav, the attitude had changed. People had gone through the experience of Hurricane Katrina and Rita, and they were expecting everyone to step up as they had before. But this time around, people who had been deemed non-essential did not show up as they had before and the resentment of those who had to work during this time, especially if they had worked the previous hurricanes, began to grow. It seemed as if one set of employees were working overtime without pay while others gained a paid vacation.

The administrators were not sure what the best solution for this issue was. Heather discussed awkwardness of the situation:

In terms of guilt for getting paid versus not getting paid, I’m not sure what should happen in terms of that ... If you’re salaried, you should be here but how much time should you devote? That’s a question I can’t answer, but I think that it should be shared by all because it is a burden upon the university and that shouldn’t be one department bearing the brunt of that work. (Exp. Heather)

Amy discussed the conversations that were being had about this issue:

Some of those conversations are taking place within HRM [Human Resource Management]. There gets to be this conversation of, ‘Okay, so, I got paid during that time. I didn’t necessarily work during that time and then you’ve got some staff that were here basically 24/7 for 10 days. Should they be compensated or should they not be compensated?’ All of those pieces need to be ironed out as much as you can on the front end, because otherwise there can be some morale issues. There often can be some animosity issues and there also can be a tendency for some staffs to bond around the fact. The mindset is: we were all here, and we had this common experience and you’ll never understand that if you weren’t a part of it. It also can be: where the heck were you? There things from a policy prospective that the managers and the leaders in the areas should map out so it is real clear what the expectations are. There may be exceptions and compelling circumstances, but if we don’t have a template really worked out about what the role and purpose is and what our expectations are, you can’t actually blame somebody for not showing up. But as a university, I’ve not seen anything where we’ve communicated what the expectation is. (Exp. Amy)

This continued ambiguity in the issue continues to be a problem for the administrators and leaders of the university. Not having a clear plan or expectation for the employees can lead toward animosity and grudges that may last much longer that the crisis experience.
Working Beyond Your Limits

Many people who work in higher education are used to working long and unusual hours above what their job description may entail. Often, personnel in higher education are very willing to work beyond their limits and give their personal time to their job. A crisis situation, especially one such as a hurricane which may take many days or weeks, may prove to be taxing to individuals. A crisis situation may cause people to work beyond their limits and lose focus on their personal needs. Amy discussed this phenomenon:

People, especially in our profession, are very willing to give of our time, our energy, and our talents. I think one of the things that may often be harder for us to do is to know when you have to go take care of yourself. Maybe your own electricity was out at your house and you were taking care of family members and here you are at the university trying to help in that role but you still need to be able to take care of yourself and your family. Sometimes people might have given too many hours and they needed some time away but then they felt guilty about taking that time. (Exp. Amy)

Heather gave an example of this guilt:

We were volunteering that Saturday, getting everything set up for Gustav and then the hurricane came Monday morning and I was at home but I came back afterwards. I know I felt guilty for not being here to help out but there’s not a whole lot I can do as the storm is passing. (Exp. Heather)

During the hurricanes many staff members came to work, giving of themselves, working many hours without looking at their own personal needs. A sense of guilt developed among those if they wanted to take a break from their job responsibilities or volunteer efforts to consider handling their own needs and damages to personal property. It was hard to determine how to slot time between personal needs and university work needs.

The impact of the hurricanes in the community may cause the division from work and personal life to blur. In order to do their jobs and take care or protect their families, administrators often brought their families to work with them. The office also became a safe haven for personnel. Kathryn recollected how six or seven families were sleeping in their offices
with their children and they would start each morning turning their temporary homes back into offices. The blending of office responsibility and home life can add to the stress. By living in the same space they are working, the employees are missing the opportunity to escape from one situation or the other.

As people volunteered to help during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, administrators realized quickly that they could not ask volunteers to work in areas beyond their personal limits. Linda allowed volunteers to choose the types of jobs they would be doing. She saw from the beginning that not everyone was capable of handling every type of position. It was necessary to have people volunteer within their personal limits.

The crisis situation can be hard for those involved. The crisis can become both physically and emotionally draining for the administrators involved. A disaster of this nature brings out many aspects that one may never have assumed would be part of their job. Elizabeth discussed her experience:

It was so traumatic. It was a wonderful opportunity for me personally, but it was also personally traumatic because I knew these people and I cared about these people. Having to go into a residence hall and visit with these families; I’m not trained as a social worker. I think the term they used after Katrina was compassion fatigue. I could not hear another story. It was all so horrific, that you really do get compassion fatigue … It’s just numbing for years, truly numbing. You walk over a 4 year old on the way to your office sleeping on the street with a Mickey Mouse and you’re going to an office. How do you do that? You really are helpless, to know that I am looking out my back window and I see refrigeration trucks and I know it is a morgue. I don’t want to live that again. I don’t wish that on anybody. (Exp. Elizabeth)

Elizabeth experienced a situation she never expected when she became a higher education administrator. Many of the situations the employees faced were scenarios they never had imagined nor trained for causing them to work past their normal parameters. These scenarios went past the “other duties as assigned” on their job descriptions.
The time involved with handling a crisis of the magnitude of the hurricanes was emotionally draining on the staff. It was not something one could prepare for in their training. Both Elizabeth and Heather discussed that no matter how much you try to prepare there is no way to be prepared for the crisis when it actually happened, especially with the emotional drain which cannot be planned for. The emotional drain on those who are working and volunteering is tremendous. Elizabeth went on to discuss the effects of it years after:

Thirty-eight days staying physically on a campus after a disaster and the stress and the post traumatic stress; there is no way to talk to someone now who wasn’t in it without getting very defensive. I have had conversations with my colleagues across the country, they will make snide remarks about New Orleans or Katrina, or how these people should help themselves or however the case may be. There is no way that someone can understand it until they live it. I don’t want to put my children through that again. I mean they literally came and spent the night with me here [office]. (Exp. Elizabeth)

The administrators felt they could not prepare for the emotional experience. There was an unexpected toll of even waiting for the hurricane to occur that added to the actual response of it happening. The experience was nothing like anything they had seen or prepared for in their job.

In order not to become overburdened with the emotional and physical strain of a crisis situation, Amy discussed the importance of knowing one’s limitations as an administrator:

I think people being able to know what their limitations are, know what some of your boundaries are, be willing to ask for help, and be willing to say that they need to go leave for a couple of hours. Trying to model that as an institutional leader I think is also important. (Exp. Amy)

Leading by example becomes important. If followers see their leaders over extending themselves, they may feel the need to do it also, be it from fear of retribution to not wanting to let the superiors down.

Amy felt it was the responsibility of the supervisor to set up the parameters for working during extended crises in order to try to relieve some of the stress. Shifts may need to be created
and employees’ specialties need to be assessed. They need to know what the limitations of their subordinates are and what they can and cannot do. She stated:

You have to figure out some shifts. Who can handle what? How can we distribute this evenly? People need to know when they need to step away and be able to have a system in place so that someone else can come in and run it so that it is not dependent upon an individual to make something happen. One person does not need to possess so much knowledge that if they’re removed from the equation that the service can’t continue. I think those are some things that translate to our non-crisis management load to our regular work every single day. (Exp. Amy)

Dividing the responsibilities amongst the team and not having one person as the gatekeeper of all the information may help reduces the stress on the staff involved with the crisis. Having the responsibilities delegated will help with the staffs’ actions, and having multiple personnel knowledgeable of different roles on the crisis team will allow the burden to become less on one individual. Hopefully by working together and spreading the work load and responsibility, the administrators will work less above their limits and become more efficient in handling the crisis.

A crisis situation can cause administrators to work beyond their limits. The discussants talked about the emotional toll a crisis would have on them, a matter they felt no training could prepare them for. Amy recommended supervisors to become better aware of those situations and to delegate the responsibility amongst their staff.

Is Campus Prepared?

Institutions have been adapting and changing their crisis management plans over the past few years due to the increased activity in high profile campus crises. Institutions such as Louisiana State University have become proactive in creating an EOC, training new individuals to be involved and becoming more proactive in the execution of their crisis management plan. The nature of a crisis is that no one will know when it will occur. Ryan stated, “…simply that
crises happen, that is, the world is uncertain and one never knows what is going to happen next.” Institutions can set up plans and train individuals, but they are never truly completely prepared.

Before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita rolled through Southern Louisiana, institutions such as LSU had routinely prepared for hurricanes, often with them never impacting the institution. According to Ryan, people became complacent after many years of getting ready for a hurricane landfall and not having it happen:

I think this is also a cultural thing for LSU because for so many decades LSU has, in some sense, been a nice place in that people thought these kinds of things don’t happen here. This has produced a long term cultural aversion to taking those possibilities too seriously. (Exp. Ryan)

Preparing for a hurricane or other natural disaster and not having it happen may cause people to fall into a false sense of a security, therefore causing them to not be as prepared as they think they are for crisis.

At this time, administrators feel LSU is in a better place than it was a few years ago, but there is still not a complete consensus among them. Amy felt by having an EOC and the training, the university was prepared for the next crisis that approached. Heather had similar thoughts, “…in terms of hurricanes, I think we are a lot more prepared now than we were in 2005.” And Linda explained how it is important for the institution to continue to educate their employees about the crises they may face, “I think that being a member of an institution of higher education it is critically important to continue to educate your population about crisis management and what you do.”

While Amy and Linda are senior administrators at the institution, Heather and Kathryn are both classified as mid-managers and have a different perspective not being part of the EOC team. Kathryn stated, “I think we probably became experts for a hurricane, but I still have a
question about how well we would handle a campus shooting like what happened at Virginia Tech….” Heather said, “It depends on the crisis.” Heather followed with:

I think not knowing what is going on is bad. I know that we have an emergency operations office in the EOC and I am sure that they have put plans into place, but not being a part of that group or in any of those offices that have anything to do with kind of the larger response; I am not sure how ready we are for other things. I don’t remember seeing any kind of manuals going out that say what you should do in this case, so I really can’t say. I don’t think that we are all that prepared for anything. I think what we are most prepared for is a hurricane. (Exp. Heather)

Kathryn discussed how she felt the institution was not prepared for a shooting and it would be hard for the institution to recover if something besides a hurricane happened. With the modifications that have happened over the past few years to the emergency plan, both Heather and Kathryn perceived the institution to be ready for a hurricane but had gained no real sense of how well prepared the institution was for a different type of crisis. The institution may have gotten employees better prepared for a hurricane, the type of crisis they are most likely to face, but at the same time, have left many employees feeling vulnerable to other types of threats.

**Campus as a City**

An institution the size of Louisiana State University is a city unto itself. Being as large as it is, it has resources available to it that make it more prepared for a crisis. Amy, Linda, and Tim discussed the resources available to a campus such as LSU. The institution has their own IT, public affairs, agreements with state agencies, and food service. The institution played a major role for the region and served as the largest respondent to public health in history (Exp. Amy and Tim). Serving as a city unto itself provides many resources that may not be available to others and allows the institution to depend on itself for many of the items they may need during a large scale crisis.
One of the additional benefits of the college campus during a large scale crisis is the human capital. Tim discovered this coming to work for LSU and through his handling of Hurricane Gustav:

What surprised me dealing with the campus setting was the student volunteerism and how it played a critical role in our response and our support of not just the shelter on campus, but the campus in general. I think that management of volunteerism is a huge aspect of emergency response for campus. You have so many people very well intentioned, good students that want to help. If you don’t manage and focus that help, it could become a monster really fast. (Exp. Tim)

Linda talked about how a simple way the volunteers helped out during a crisis, one she would never have thought about beforehand or realized they would need:

That is the greatest value of being at a university where everybody speaks some language whether it is technical or Swahili. There is somebody here that can do that for you and knowing where to find these people is the magical part. (Exp. Linda)

The need for people who speak many languages was realized when the citizens of New Orleans were evacuated to the LSU campus during Hurricane Katrina. Having the volunteer base to help out during a large scale crisis is important. Even a small college campus can mobilize upwards of 2,500 people to help out if needed. The human resources available become one of the greatest benefits to a campus.

Tim summarized the importance of the campus being a city unto itself and the role it can play during a crisis:

I think they see that as a growing trend as people catch on for that theme that the university, most of them really, have a total infrastructure in place and are poised to help with whatever they can. I think especially when you look at these large universities and football programs you think of the enormous response that we have seven weekends a year on a campus. You have over 400 policemen working a football game with over 100 emergency medical service technicians for just a football game day event. Response is massive and the scale of public safety presence and the persons there providing for services, too and I think that’s something overlooked by a lot of communities. It’s not acknowledged. It’s a fun day at the university for football but you really dissect the dynamic of hosting a football game day on an extreme level such as LSU; I think it will really give you good insight in what they can provide in an emergency. (Exp. Tim)
A football game and all of the resources that go into keeping the institution secure while also allowing the community who participates in the festivities to have fun without knowing the interworking of the operation is a good example of how an institution must prepare mobilization for an emergency. Through the football experience, the university shows how it can coordinate many individuals involved from security to clean up. The institution has many resources available to it, and the key one during a large scale crisis is to realize how to properly utilize them.

Can the Campus Become too Relaxed?

One of the issues that has been discussed is if the campus can become too relaxed if a major crisis does not occur year after a year. The EOC at the institution constantly trains for emergencies and crises, but they do not happen on a regular basis. A location such as Southern Louisiana will spend many months watching for hurricanes during hurricane season, but may never see one even though they may be forecasted to have many. Amber explained this:

> It’s [hurricane] out there in the Gulf but it’s going to hit somewhere else and we have always had the whole ‘cry wolf experience’ with these hurricanes. It will turn at the last minute, it’s not going to hit us, and you know how that works. (Exp. Amber)

And even in the past when there was activity on campus because of a hurricane, the institutions response was very minimal. Elizabeth talked about a past situation:

> Because we have had previous hurricanes that we had evacuations for, for example, it was a year before or two years before, Rec Sports worked the whole time at the field house entertaining the kids and making sure people had housing and that sort of thing. I think we were naïve in the assumption that anything worse than that could happen. The very worst that would happen would we be open our facilities, and the facilities manager would handle that. (Exp. Elizabeth)
In the past, administrators did not think much would happen to the campus if a hurricane actually did make it through, because they had become so used to false warnings. A false sense of security had been created.

Hurricanes’ Katrina and Rita though changed how the institution would operate during a crisis. LSU has established a particular role they will play for the State of Louisiana during a crisis. Linda stated:

I don’t think we will ever become too relaxed. I think that part of that is because regardless of whether the hurricane hits, we are going to continue to maintain that medical mission. Since we have established that we know that someone is evacuating here regardless of where that hurricane is going to hit we have to ramp up and we have to get ready. I do think that we will have some people who do get too lax and attitudes start to change but that is the responsibility of the director to make sure that doesn’t happen and if she gets too lax then we need a new director. (Exp. Linda)

The institution now has to prepare to be a medical center and a location for evacuation any time a hurricane comes through. People prepare to have the institution’s operations disrupted for a long period of time.

By experiencing the recent hurricanes and creating the EOC from the ground floor, the institution has moved into the forefront of crisis management. Elizabeth discussed the current state of crisis management at the institution:

I think we are light years ahead of where we were. I also think we are a model for other people. I know that California and Florida have watched how we have handled this situation: good, bad, and indifferent. They are building their crisis management manuals off of what we have accomplished. We were unprepared, we did it the hard way, and we did it well and successfully even though we were completely unprepared. Subsequently, we have been ready even though we have not had the disaster we had with Katrina. I think we were more ready and I think other people are looking to that. (Exp. Elizabeth)

With other colleges and universities looking to LSU as a benchmark for crisis management, it shows from an organizational standpoint, the institution may be more prepared than others.
Having a great organizational system in place may not dictate that the institution is prepared for a crisis if one does not happen on a regular basis. As with any job, there could be a tendency where crisis management becomes a routine for those involved. Tim described this scenario:

I think you do find yourself in that rut, but I think that’s what separates the good from the great. It’s not getting in that rut and looking at the totality because regardless what you think there’s no such thing as the routine emergency or crisis. We try to teach police officers on the laymen’s side of the house on law enforcement, that there is no such thing as routine traffic stop because you never know what you are going to get. It may look the same and feel the same but I assure you there are some differences and when you don’t recognize those differences that’s when it’s going to bite you and that’s when people are going to get hurt. To be able to identify those things is what separates the good from the great. (Exp. Tim)

It is important for those who work with crises to keep prepared and not to let things get into a routine. That is why it is important for institutions to practice different scenarios and to keep up to date with current trends and threats in the field. It becomes easy to focus on what one may constantly face, but extra effort to prepare for the unusual and unexpected may be what the institutions need to also examine.

At the same time, not everyone feels confident that there is enough training and differentiation to keep all of those involved from becoming too lax to a crisis, even a natural disaster that they are used to facing. Elizabeth explained:

No No No! I feel that we will get naïve again. I feel we will have 5 hurricanes that missed us and we will be unprepared again. Somebody will say that it’s not important to have an Emergency Operation Center. I fear that the lack of a disaster will make us unprepared twenty years from now. When you start cutting funding, that’s not a place you need to cut, that is my fear. I don’t want to be lackadaisical again. It’s like terrorism; you always have to sleep with one eye open, you always have to be prepared. Does everybody hate a fire drill? Yeah. Are you glad you had one in a fire? Probably; nobody wants to think about that again. I think people who weren’t here during that time are going to be naïve. Twenty years from now when I’m an old woman I am going to be telling some nostalgic story and I am not going to forget what that was like to not go home for 38 days, to have to bathe in the union, go to Recreation Center to take shower and wash your clothes so that you could show up five hours late after sleeping on the
floor with the team work people. Really, I don’t want us to become naïve again. I don’t think you can ever be prepared enough because the disaster is a still is a disaster; the human emotion of it will destroy you. It’s like you can prepare for someone’s death, but aren’t prepared for when it happens. (Exp. Elizabeth)

And Kathryn stated, “I don’t think you can ever be too prepared but you definitely can become complacent.”

Amy argued:

Well, I don’t think that would really happen, because the stakes are too high. That is, the lack of any plan at all, the lack of any kind of procedures or structure, would expose the university to so much criticism and also so much litigation that I do not think that would be allowed to happen. What is happening is that to some extent, we are out of practice and people would be taken by alarm. (Exp. Amy)

There is an assumption that the more time between actual devastations, people will become more lax. As universities are often faced with budget cuts, it could become easy to cut money to a unit designed to prevent something that may never happen, combine it with another unit on campus, or split it up amongst many units on the campus again.

Part of making sure the activation of the EOC does not become too routine is to know when to properly use it and call it into action. Amber replied when asked if a crisis could ever become too routine:

I don’t, because if you see what goes into an EOC activation it’s no small thing. You have people who bring a bag with them because they don’t know how long they are going to be there. People who had to leave their families … we had people who had children and spouses that they didn’t see for a week. Their families rode out the hurricane at home without them because they were in the EOC. That’s never going to become standard or business as usual and that when you have to pack your bags and move into this facility. Yet, it’s very businesslike in there and everybody has their computers, the Chancellor is coming in, the LSU PD is there. It’s very serious; it’s intense and I can’t imagine it ever feeling like that was just par for the course. When that thing gets activated, it’s game on, and I don’t feel like it would become too relaxed or anything and that’s why I think it’s important that they don’t open or activate it for every little thing …I think to avoid … where it becomes just a random run of the mill, ‘oh yeah we activated the EOC again’ and I think when we do it, it’s for a real emergency and everybody knows the seriousness of it. (Exp. Amber)
The importance of using the EOC in the proper way adds to communicating to the constituents the seriousness of a crisis situation. Without over using the EOC, people may take the call to action and warnings from the EOC more seriously.

Amy still believed though, when it comes to natural disasters, people will always be somewhat prepared:

I think as long as you live you’ve got to know region of the country that you’re in. We don’t prepare much for snow storms, do we get some snow? Sure. Does it shut us down? No. But I think you can’t let your guard down. Now, it doesn’t mean that you walk around being paranoid all the time either but you have to stay on your A game. You have to be aware there are going to be people who have positions of responsibility who are going to make sure that you have a plan or who are going to make sure that you are aware and then when the time is right you kick in. You do what you need to do but that’s why those binders can’t sit on the shelf. That’s why those plans have to be dynamic and not be static because who is prepared for a student to drive their car onto the quad? What was the response? How is that handled? You can’t make that stuff up, so who was prepared for a faculty member to pull out a weapon and shoot three of her colleagues at a regular departmental meeting on a Friday afternoon? You know there are some basics that kick in. The scenario might change a little bit but there has to be some basics that are essential and that you don’t compromise on. I think that you just can’t allow people to let their guard down too much. We’ve got to keep it at the forefront. (Exp. Amy)

One of the key aspects of a crisis is that you don’t know when it is going to happen or the impact it will have on a campus. Administrators at institutions need to prepare for the crises they know will happen or could possibly happen to them. Crisis management needs to always be at the forefront of the institutions objectives.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I will begin with presenting a brief summary of the study, the proceedings, and the findings of the research study. I will follow with a conclusion and a discussion of the findings. The chapter will conclude with limitations of the study, implications for practice, and direction for future research.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct inquiry into how the administrators at Louisiana State University prepared for and handled a crisis situation after having gone through a similar crisis situation before. LSU experienced dual hurricanes in 2005 and had the opportunity to evaluate and implement a new crisis management plan before the next hurricane, which arrived in 2008. Through this study, the leadership decisions that were made to create a new emergency operation plan, the importance of crisis management to this particular campus, and the experiences and opinions of those who were involved with handling crises were examined.

Four research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How did crisis management change at the university after Hurricane Katrina and Rita and what role did leadership partake in this process?

2. What leadership characteristics are important during a crisis and what makes a good leader during a crisis?

3. How does crisis management impact the personnel of the university, both essential and non-essential personnel during a crisis situation?
4. After the changes to crisis management from the lessons of Hurricane Katrina and Rita and other prominent crises on college campuses, is the university community prepared for a crisis?

**Review of Procedures**

This study was conducted through qualitative research. In this study, it was important to gain insight into the reasons the participants made specific decision as well as thoughts and feelings that informed these decisions. Of particular importance for the study were the thoughts and feelings that occurred during the initial crisis or those that occurred when planning for future crises. The stories told by those who were selected give insight into how and why crisis management changed on the campus and the leadership behind the decisions that were made.

The sample group from this population was specifically targeted for this study, in order to get the needed information and pertinent stories. Participants were selected based on their experience with crisis management or their connection and role with the crises that occurred on this particular campus. In some cases, snowball sampling was used when participants were selected based on recommendation from people who were also interviewed. Interview question were designed from the review of relevant literature.

Participants were then interviewed one on one to gather the data for this study. After each interview, the interviews were transcribed, data was analyzed utilizing Bolman and Deal’s (2004) Four Frames model, and the data was coded. From there, the prevailing themes were reported on and discussed.

**Summary of Findings**

1. How did crisis management change at the university after Hurricane Katrina and Rita and what role did leadership partake in this process?
After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the university remodeled their crisis management plan. They created their first ever official Emergency Operation Center to prepare for not only future hurricanes, but additional crises that could occur via the crisis matrix (Zdziarski, Rollo, & Dunkel, 2007). University administrators were tasked with creating an EOC following the FEMA guidelines and permanent designated space and funds were given for the formation (Exp. Amy, Linda, and Tim). The leadership devised a plan of action and a training regimen for the members of the team (Exp. Amber, Amy, Linda, and Tim). Membership was adjusted to fit the needs as the leaders evaluated the operation (Exp. Amy, Linda, and Tim).

While it would have been easy for the administrators to look at the short term solutions to prepare simply for the next hurricane, they showed the leadership of thinking long term and looking at crises as a more comprehensive problem. Scenarios were devised to examine the possibilities of many different types of events such as school shootings, fires, and chemical spills (Exp. Elizabeth and Tim). The leadership shown by the university administrators in the creation of their program allowed LSU to create an EOC that other institutions are looking toward as an example of efficient operation.

2. What leadership characteristics are important during a crisis and what makes a good leader during a crisis?

The participants discussed many aspects of what they looked for in a leader during a crisis situation. They looked for leaders who can handle the pressure most crises involve and remain calm in those situations (Exp. Amber, Heather, and Kathryn). They looked for leaders who could work well with a team and who were familiar with operations (Exp. Heather). The leaders need to be aware of the campus culture and organization structure and resources (Exp.
Elizabeth and Linda). Having an understanding of the different relationships on campus could make a difference in a crisis (Exp. Linda). Leaders who could clearly communicate their ideas to the followers are also important.

Leaders are going to be responsible for making a lot of major decisions during the crisis. Leaders are going to have to make many hard decisions and not everyone will be happy with the outcomes. Linda stated, “If no decision was ever made then you may as well have no leader.” Some decisions made will be for the greater good, but may go against regulations or state laws (Exp. Amy, Elizabeth and Linda). People are looking for leaders to make the best decision for the greater good and to help the most people.

3. How does crisis management impact the personnel of the university, both essential and non-essential personnel during a crisis situation?

Crises affect individuals in different ways. Through their experiences with Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav, the administrators have determined their own opinions about responsibility to the campus and community during these trying times. While most crises will not have involved everyone on campus, a natural disaster such as a hurricane will most likely somehow impact everyone on the campus.

In a crisis such as a natural disaster, there is the likelihood that personnel will be divided into essential and non-essential personnel. Essential personnel will be required to come to work and continue with their duties while non-essential personnel will not have to come to the office, but will most likely get paid for the time off. There has been confusion about what role non-essential personnel should play. A participant said regarding the essential and non-essential personnel policy, “I think it could be much clearer…” (Exp. Heather). Prolonged events such as the hurricanes have brought some animosity towards those who do not come to work or
volunteer and help. Due to the influx of people and responsibilities the latest hurricanes brought to the campus, there is an expectation from individuals that non-essential personnel should volunteer and help the campus community if they are able. One participant said, “If you don’t have a role then there is an expectation of what you should do….anybody that is not personally affected, if you work here you show up to work…”(Exp. Elizabeth). The human resource office and the administration need to examine their policies regarding long term shutdowns for a crisis.

4. After the changes to crisis management from the lessons of Hurricane Katrina and Rita and other prominent crises on college campuses, is the university community prepared for a crisis?

Crisis management on the campus has changed since the arrival of Hurricane Katrina. A more active plan has been created and more people are involved with crisis management. Lessons have been learned from the past experiences and preparations have been made for the future. The institution created an EOC, which it did not have before, to be the leaders of crisis management during an incident.

Overall, most participants felt the institution was much better prepared than it had been in the past for a major crisis (Amber, Amy, Elizabeth, Kathryn, and Ryan). At the same time, some felt there was still improvement needed in regards to crises that were not a hurricane (Exp. Heather and Kathryn). Kathryn said regarding the possibility of a school shooting, “I don’t know that we would be ready for it…I think there would be a lot of devastation that followed afterwards.” Also, senior administrators or those who were more involved with the EOC team felt more prepared than those who were not on the team, often those considered new employees or mid-managers. Amy said regarding if the institution would ever become too relaxed, “I don’t think that would really happen, because the stakes are too high.” Unluckily, those involved with
the institution will only know if the campus is properly prepared for the next major crisis when
the next one occurs.

**Conclusions**

From this study, I developed the following conclusions from the research:

1. The creation of an Emergency Operation Center (EOC) after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
   improved the crisis management organization and response for the campus. There is still
   room for improvement in the operation.

2. It is important to streamline the campus operations with federal government training and
   organizational structure. The campus should utilize federal government terminology and
   position structures.

3. Those involved with crisis management through the Emergency Operation Center are
   more prepared and more comfortable with handling crises than those who are not on the
   team.

4. It is critically important to have the right personnel on the team. Campus positions and
   titles may not be as important as a person who understands how the campus operates and
   has knowledge and access to resources.

5. Universities need to have an independent Emergency Operation Center with authority
   from the chief executive officer (president or chancellor) to make decisions affecting the
   university.

6. Frequent and regular training is needed. Different scenarios should be examined, not only
   the crises the institution expects to face. Training and discussion of scenarios should be
   happening not only with the EOC but also within individual departments of the campus.
7. Leadership is important. Decisive, knowledgeable, calm and collected people work the best. Leaders who you would like to be around for long periods of time are ideal. Leaders need to know the campus resources, because a campus such as LSU is a city unto itself and has many hidden resources.

8. Dialogue needs to be held regarding individual staff members responsibility to the university community in times of crisis and natural disasters.

9. Clear guidelines and expectations need to be given to staff members about their responsibilities during a crisis, especially if they are considered to be non-essential personnel.

10. If clear expectations are not given, administrators cannot hold people responsible nor judge them in the future for not helping if there was no clear expectation to the employees about their role during the crisis.

Discussions

From my experience with this study, I realize that this is just the beginning of my research on crisis management. The research on crisis management in higher education has only now begun to be examined, let alone discussed. After submitting my research to both research and practitioner conferences this year, I received opposing responses back from each one. The research conferences feedback often included a comment regarding this study is for a practitioner conference and from the practitioner conferences, they felt the material needed to be presented at a research conference. Both groups gave feedback about how important this type of research is at the moment. The American Educational Research Association, one of the predominant organizations for educational research in both K-12 and Higher Education, has hundreds of sub-categories discussing the many diverse areas in education. When looking for a category to
submit to, I was shocked to realize they did not have a category covering anything nearly associated with crisis management for any educational field. These examples show how this research is new and needs to be discussed in the field.

This study has changed my perceptions of crisis management and how this particular university handled it. The move to the formation of having a standalone Emergency Operation Center was a good one. For the longest time, crisis management seemed to come in the form of a binder sitting on a bookshelf. Having a designated group of people and a facility specifically designed for the crisis team is what is needed during this time of increased nationally recognized high profile crises. Campuses, especially large campuses like LSU, are cities unto themselves. They need to be constantly prepared for the bad things that could happen within and around their borders.

As colleges and universities move toward having a more defined and active EOC, they need to make sure they are standardized with federal guidelines. Universities are known for having their creative titles for different administrators and different positions. In case of large scale emergencies where the institutions may need to work with outside agencies such as the federal government, communication and operations can be eased if the terminology is similar. Additionally, institutions looking to create their own emergency operations do not need to create the program from nothing. Utilizing other universities’ structures and federal guidelines will assist with the design of the program. Higher education institutions need to take the opportunity of the increased dialogue in crisis management to come together and work on possibly standardizing the terminology and access of their information.

Higher education institutions need to commit adequate resources to the crisis management programs. After events such as hurricanes and school shootings, it has been easy for
administrators to put money towards the emergency operations centers because it is considered a hot or important topic. But after time, if a major crisis does not occur, this program may seem like an area where funding could be eliminated. Ideally, a university would never want to mobilize their crisis unit, but it is better to have it available and fully operational then not to have one at all.

The crisis management team needs to have the correct personnel on the team. They need to have the necessary skills, knowledge of campus, leadership abilities, and connections be assigned to the team based on their abilities and not their position or title. Communication needs to be passed through campus about who is on this team and how the team operates. There should be a clear understanding of the revised chain of command on the campus if a crisis is in effect.

Team members need to be adequately and routinely trained in crisis management. They need to form a bond with their fellow team members. Team cohesion needs to be achieved before an actual crisis. Having a team that works together well assembled beforehand will allow for the team to function better during an actual crisis, hopefully eliminating problems that could occur based on personnel dynamics or egos. By investing in training and building a functioning team, the institution shows a commitment to the operations. With this investment, the institution needs to grant the crisis management team the power to make the decisions during the crisis. Other administrators of authority during normal operations should not have the power to usurp the authority of the crisis management team.

The leaders on the team serve an important role with a lot of responsibility. Many critical decisions will be placed upon the team members. The leaders need to have the ability to make educated quick decisions during stressful situations. The leaders need to make the best decisions possible, hopefully through an ethic of care. They need to be looking out for the greater good and
helping people first, even if that may push the boundaries of rules and regulations. There is a chance the leaders will make the wrong decisions, but they should not be punished if they made the wrong decision if done for the right reasons or with the limited knowledge they had available to them. If the leader makes a mistake, they need to be able to admit they made a mistake and move forward with corrective actions instead of trying to cover it up or justify the decision they made.

Crisis management should not be limited to the crisis management team. Everyone in the campus community needs to understand their role and responsibility during a major crisis. The crisis management team needs to communicate with the individual departments about their responsibility during a crisis. Communication needs to be clear and expectations laid out for them, since many of the departments within the university will be on the frontline dealing with different constituents. Staffs throughout the campus need to discuss crisis management and work through scenarios that could occur. Crisis may be something people do not want to discuss, but it needs to be done.

Staff members need to be empowered and put into a position where they feel like they are involved. Being part of the discussion at their particular level connects them to the institution during a crisis. Clear expectations need to be given to employees about their role. If a situation occurs where the institution is divided into essential and non-essential personnel, then clear expectations need to be given for those who are serving in the non-essential personnel role. If there is no clear expectation set forth in advance, then people should not be judged harshly if they decide to leave town or do not come to campus to volunteer or do their job. Discussions and guidelines should be established regarding personal responsibility with job responsibility.
Human resource departments need to look at fiscal compensation for long term crisis situations where one group is required to work and another group is not.

Finally, administrators need to do their best not to become relaxed when it comes to crisis management. If a major crisis does not happen or if there are too many near misses, it may become easy for people to think the crisis will never happen to them. Some will become conditioned to believe a major crisis will never happen to them or at their type of institution. It would be easy to think crises only happen at big state institutions or only in certain parts of the country, but a crisis can occur anywhere. It may be easy for an institution to prepare for one certain type of crisis and become experts in that particular area, but they need to prepare for other things that may occur. One never knows when a campus shooting may occur or a fraternity house will catch fire. Being prepared with an action plan is the institutional mentality needed in higher education today.

Limitation of the Study

In regards to qualitative research, Patton (2002) stated, “By their nature, qualitative findings are highly context and case dependent” (p. 563). Therefore, this study may exhibit the same limitations other qualitative studies have in regard to research methodology. For this study, I concentrated on one academic institution, Louisiana State University. The case study of this one particular institution was done by looking at how leadership influenced the institutions and the changes made regarding crisis management. This study provides a “snap shot in time” of one particular institution and the efforts they made during that period.

Within this one institution, many people are involved with some aspect of crisis management from their specific department to campus wide involvement. A large scale crisis such as a natural disaster like a hurricane could involve or impact almost everyone on the
campus. This study took a purposeful look at certain people and their roles and experience with crisis management to tell one of many possible stories. Patton (2002) said, “Purposeful sampling involves studying information-rich cases in depth and detail to understand and illuminate important cases rather than generalizing from a sample to a population” (p.563). Only a limited number of administrators were interviewed and most administrators who were on the campus during any of the hurricanes would probably have a unique experience and opinion to tell.

This study tells a specific story of one institution and the experience it had, and consequently it cannot be generalized to all intuitions. While this story may not be able to be generalized to all institutions and administrators, it does provide important insight that could be beneficial to others. Institutions are currently modifying and developing their crisis management plans and even at this institution, this plan is not finalized, therefore the research is once again, only a snap shot of where this institution is at this point.

**Implications for Practice**

Academic research in crisis management is important as educational institutions look to evolve and ultimately improve their current practices. This research will hopefully open up, continue dialogue, and add to the current discussion of crisis management. Both researchers and practitioners need to keep updated on the current trends and discussion in the field. For many years and even today, many people have considered crisis management as a problem for the practitioners and little empirical research has been done.

Administrators can use this research to open up dialogue about their own crisis management plans and actions. A dialogue should be occurring on the campuses about crisis management and this dialogue should be held campus wide and by individual departments. The people interviewed appreciated the training they had and administrative leaders need to take
advantage of opportunities to train their staff members before crises occur, utilizing the crisis matrix (Zdziarski, Rollo, & Dunkel, 2007).

Administrators need to look at their policies and statements about essential and non-essential personnel. Administrative leaders need to make it clear to their staff about their expectation for them during a crisis situation, especially a large scale crisis such as a hurricane. If there is an expectation for personnel to come in once their personal property has been secured or to “volunteer” if their actual job function is not needed, then it needs to be discussed with them in advance. Administrators cannot penalize employees if the employee did not take the initiative to come to work and help out. Human resource departments should examine their policies with regards to pay during emergency situations.

From the study, those more involved with crisis management have a better sense of what is going on with the EOC and their operation and what to do in a crisis. Those in mid-manager and new professional levels still feel a disconnection on what is going on in regards to crisis management. There is still confusion on what one should do during crisis situations which are not hurricanes, the crises which they routinely prepare for during the course of the year. Administrative leaders need to look at what they are communicating to their employees about crisis management and what resources they are providing for them. While it is easy to give everyone a “red folder” or “cheat sheet” on what to do during a crisis, it may be more beneficial to have discussions and scenarios during a staff meeting.

Finally, administrators need to understand the importance of crisis management training but realize due to the nature of crises there is a inevitably a significant degree of unpredictability. Even with the structure and training, they may not have control of the situation. Outside federal, state, and local agencies may take control of the crises event and the university administrators
and their plans may be superseded. Therefore, preparing for a crisis situation should not lead to a false sense of control.

Administrators in senior leadership positions need to be careful of living in an “Ivory Tower of Crisis Management.” They need to be willing to communicate and train staff through all levels of the university about crisis management and the needs and situations they may face. They need to understand while they may be actively involved with crisis management and enduring monthly training, keeping the knowledge to themselves, having a false sense of security that everyone is familiar with it, or that they are prepared for anything may be dangerous.

**Directions for Further Research**

The many different aspects of crisis management needs to be continuously researched and discussed more in academic settings. While often seen as a field for the practitioners, the actions of the practitioners should be backed by research as other areas of higher education are done. Research for crisis management in the past has often been mainly confined to the business literature, but higher education needs to take the current opportunity to explore this plentiful area for further study. Academic and higher education organizations need to find ways to have regional and national dialogue regarding the research being conducted on crisis management.

Future studies can be done at other institutions that have dealt with crises or have recently made modifications to their crisis management plans. Many institutions along the Gulf Coast were impacted by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav. Additionally, institutions in the Midwest have recently been impacted by flooding and tornadoes and institutions on the West Coast have faced forest fires. Multiple institutions have recently been impacted by shootings. These institutions can be examined about their responses and changes they have made to their crisis plans.
Within the institutions, including the one looked at for this study, different departments could be examined with regards to crisis management. Crisis management and leadership could be examined from the point of view of student affairs, athletics, development, and academic affairs to name but a few. While this study was an overview of the entire university, many of the individual departments and divisions had to provide specific assistance to their constituents and possibly made changes from what they learned from their experiences.

A more in-depth study of essential and non-essential personnel could be conducted. It will be important to find out if there is a large disconnect between the two populations. Continued research in this area could be beneficial not only to crisis management preparedness, but to organizational management at institutions.

Specific research could be conducted on communication methods. Content analysis could be conducted on websites, emergency text messages, and mass e-mails. The content analysis could examine what the institution is saying to their constituents along with what is being implied or held back from them. Research can be conducted to try and determine the most effective communication methods to specific target groups during a time of crisis. This research could lead to possible standardization in language, communications styles, and policies and procedures.
REFERENCES


Zdziarski, E. L. (2001). *Institutional Preparedness to Respond to Campus Crises as Perceived by Student Affairs Administrators in Selected NASPA Member Institutions*. Texas A&M University, College Station.


APPENDIX A: IRB
Application for:
Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects

This application is used for projects/stud's that cannot be reviewed through the exemption process.

- Applicant, please fill out the application in its entirety and include two copies of the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below. Once the application is completed, please submit it to the IRB Office for review and please allow ample time for the application to be reviewed. Expedited review usually takes 2 weeks. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 3 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

- A complete application includes all of the following:
  (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru E.
  (B) A complete copy of any grant proposal relevant to the project.
  (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
    - If this proposal is a part of a grant application, include a copy of the grant proposal, the investigative brochure (if one exists) and any recruitment materials including advertisements intended to be seen or heard by potential subjects.
  (D) The consent form that will be used. A copy of the Waiver of Signed Informed Consent is attached and must be completed only if there is the intention to use an unsigned consent form. The script to be used as the unsigned consent script must be included with the waiver of signed informed consent.
  (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php.

1) Principal Investigator: Roland Mitchell  
Rank: Assistant Professor  
*PI must be an LSU Faculty member

Dept.: Education  
Ph: 225-578-2156  
E-Mail: rwmitch@lsu.edu

2) All Co-Investigators: please include department, rank, phone, and e-mail for each
   2) Steven McCullar, Graduate Assistant, College of Education, 225-610-6273, mccullar@lsu.edu

3) Project Title: Crisis Management and Higher Education Leadership: A Study on How Higher Education Administrators Handle Crises and the Changes a University Made Post Hurricane Katrina

4) Proposed Start Date: 11/16/2009  
5) Proposed Duration Months: 12
6) Number of Subjects Requested: 50  
7) LSU Proposal Number
8) Funding Sought From: NA
ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR named above

I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers) in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance (FWA00005692) with OHRP and 45 CFR 46 (Available from http://www.lsu.edu/orb). I also understand that copies of all consent forms must be maintained at LSU for three years after the completion of the project. If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Signature of PI _______________________________ Date ____________

ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR named above. If multiple Co-Investigators, please create a "signature page" for all Co-Investigators to sign. Attach the "signature page" to the application.

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature of Co-PI(s) _______________________________ Date ____________

Part 1: A. Is a HIPAA Agreement Needed?

Are you obtaining any health information from a health care provider that contains any of the identifiers listed below?

A. Names
B. Address: street address, city, county, precinct, ZIP code, and their equivalent geocodes. Exception for ZIP codes: The initial three digits of the ZIP Code may be used, if according to current publicly available data from the Bureau of the Census: (1) The geographic unit formed by combining all ZIP codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people; and (2) the initial three digits of a ZIP code for all such geographic units containing 20,000 or fewer people is changed to '000'. (Note: The 17 currently restricted 3-digit ZIP codes to be replaced with '000' include: 036, 059, 063, 102, 203, 556, 692, 790, 821, 823, 830, 831, 878, 978, 694, 890, and 893.)

C. Dates related to individuals
   i. Birth date
   ii. Admission date
   iii. Discharge date
   iv. Date of death
   v. And all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age. Such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older.

D. Telephone numbers;
E. Fax numbers;
F. Electronic mail addresses;
G. Social security numbers;
H. Medical record numbers; (including prescription numbers and clinical trial numbers)
I. Health plan beneficiary numbers;
J. Account numbers;
K. Certificate/license numbers;
L. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers including license plate numbers;
M. Device identifiers and serial numbers;
N. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs);
O. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers;
P. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints;
Q. Full face photographic images and any comparable images; and
R. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code, except a code used for re-identification purposes; and
S. The facility does not have actual knowledge that the information could be used alone or in combination with other information to identify an individual who is the subject of the information.

☐ YES Your study fails under the HIPAA (Health Information Privacy and Accountability Act) and you must obtain either a limited data set use agreement or a HIPPA authorization agreement from the health care provider. This agreement must be submitted with your IRB protocol.

☐ NO You do not need a HIPAA agreement.

B. Are pregnant women specifically excluded from participation on the consent form??

☐ YES Skip to part C.

☐ NO You need to document the following:

☐ 1. Is the purpose of the activity to meet the health needs of the mother and:

☐ a. Fetus will be placed at risk only to minimum to meet mothers needs.

☐ b. Fetus risk is minimal.

☐ 2. Have mother and father given informed consent including potential affects on the fetus?

☐ 3. Father's consent can be omitted when:

☐ Purpose of activity is to meet health needs of the mother

☐ His identity can not be ascertained.

☐ He is not reasonably available

☐ Pregnancy is from rape.
C. Are any of your participants incarcerated?

☐ YES You must document the following information:

☐ 1. Is the study minimal risk? (it must be)

☐ 2. Research fits one of the allowed categories below:
   • Causes or effects of incarceration.
   • Study of prisons or prisoners.
   • Conditions affecting prisoners as a class.
   • Practices that may improve health or well-being of subjects.

☐ 3. Are the risks commensurate with risks accepted by non-prisoners?
   • Selection of subjects is fair - controls random
   • Language is understandable.
   • Study does not affect parole.
   • If necessary, follow up care will be provided.

☐ NO

D. Are children involved?

☐ YES You need both a parental consent form and a child assent form.

☐ If the study has greater than minimal risk and no direct benefits, then you must show that the risk is only a minor increase above minimal, and it involves experiences that are commensurate with ordinary medical, psychological, social or educational situations.

☐ NO

Part 2: Project Abstract - Provide a brief abstract of the project.

☒ I have attached a project abstract to this application.
Part 3: Research Protocol

A: Describe study procedures

Describe study procedures with emphasis on those procedures affecting subjects and safety measures. Also provide script for telephone surveys.

☑ I have attached a description of my study procedures to this application.

B: Answer each of the following questions.

1. Specify sites of data collection.
   Louisiana State University - Baton Rouge, LA

2. If surgical or invasive procedures are used, give name, address, and telephone number of supervising physician and the qualifications of the person(s) performing the procedures. Comparable information when qualified participation or supervision is required or appropriate.
   NA

3. Provide the names, dosage, and actions of any drugs or other materials administered to the subjects and the qualifications of the person(s) administering the drugs.
   NA

4. Detail all the physical, psychological, and social risks to which the subjects may be exposed.
   The risks to the participants is minimal. Participants will have to recollect their experiences during Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav. Participants’ participation will be confidential, but assumptions about identities could occur due to their positions in the administration.
5. What steps will be taken to minimize risks to subjects?
Confidentiality will be maintained by pseudonym usage and direct position titles used at a minimum.

6. Describe the recruitment pool (community, institution, group) and the criteria used to select and exclude subjects.
Administrators at Louisiana State University will be used because of their unique experience with Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Gustav. People will be chosen because of their experiences in crisis management or their experiences during the hurricanes.

7. List any vulnerable population whose members are included in this project (e.g., children under the age of 18, mentally impaired persons, pregnant women, prisoners, the aged.)

8. Describe the process through which informed consent will be obtained (Informed consent usually requires an oral explanation, discussion, and opportunity for questions before seeking consent form signature.)
Informed consent will be obtained through oral explanation of the project, a discussion of the interview process, and opportunities for questions before they sign the consent form. If for any reason they would like to withdraw from being a participant in the project, they can withdraw.

9. (A) Is this study anonymous or confidential? (Anonymous means that the identity of the subjects is never linked to the data, directly, or indirectly through a code system.)
(B) If a confidential study, detail how the privacy of subjects and security of their data will be protected.
This study is confidential. The data will be maintained in a safe location in a private residence not accessible to those outside of the researchers. Participants will be given a pseudonym and administrative titles will be generalized when possible.
Part 4: Consent Form (including Assent Form and Parental Permission Form if minors are involved)

➤ Please note: The consent form must be written in non-technical language which can be understood by the subjects. It should be free of any exculpatory language through which the participant is made to waive, or appears to be made to waive any legal rights, including any release of the investigator, sponsor, institution or its agents from liability for negligence. (Note: the consent form is not a contract.)

➤ For example consent forms and a complete checklist of required items, please refer to our website, www.lsu.edu/irb. Remember, IRB contact information must be included on the consent form!

➤ To waive signed consent, IRB must be provided with the script that will present the informed consent information to human subjects regarding the study/research. Also, note that waiving signed consent requires full IRB approval, which may delay approval of your study.

I am requesting waiver of signed informed Consent because:

☐ (a) Having a participant sign the consent form would create the principal risk of participating in the study.
   or that

☐ (b) The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which having signed consent is normally required.

Expedited review usually takes 2 weeks. See our website for information about meeting dates. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 3 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.8702
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

Print Form
ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Roland Mitchell  
Education

FROM: Robert C. Mathews  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 15, 2010
RE: IRB# 3031

TITLE: Crisis Management and Higher Education Leadership: A Study on How Higher Education Administrators Handle Crises and the Changes a University Made Post Hurricane Katrina


Review type: Full ___ Expedited X ___  Review date: 1/15/2010

Risk Factor: Minimal ___ X ____ Uncertain ______ Greater Than Minimal ______

Approved ___ X ___ Disapproved ______

Approval Date: 1/19/2010  Approval Expiration Date: 1/18/2011

Re-review frequency: (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved: 50

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) ______

By: Robert C. Mathews, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING – Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb
Informed Consent for Participation in Research for Dissertation

My name is Steven McCullar, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education. I am completing my doctoral studies with a dissertation that will (when finished) document and analyze university leadership and their decisions during times of crisis.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to conduct a series of interviews regarding your role in crisis management and/or fill out a questionnaire regarding your experience during a crisis situation. The purpose of the observations is to gather empirical data to establish the grounding for conversations concerning leadership during crisis management. The purpose of the interviews will be to gather information regarding your experiences during a crisis situation. The interview will last for approximately one hour. However, if more time is needed, or additional interviews are required, they can be scheduled at your convenience. Your responses will be recorded on audiotape, but only so the researcher may transcribe your responses as accurately as possible for exact representation of our conversation. The participant, the researcher, and the researcher's doctoral committee will be the only persons to have privilege to these interviews. The only alternative for which the tapes may be heard by anyone other than those listed is by written permission from you, the participant.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. At no point do you have to allow your real name or title to be revealed if you so choose. A fictitious name may be used. During the interview you may refuse to answer any questions. After the completion of the interviews, you will receive your transcribed interviews. At that point, if you wish to make any changes to the transcription, you may. At any time, if you wish to withdraw from this research project, you have the opportunity.

Little or no potential risks are identified. The benefits would include personal growth for each participant through opportunities for reflection and dialogue about their experience.

I truly appreciate your participation in this project. I want you to be as comfortable as possible. Please feel free to talk to me about any concern you might have. My phone numbers are (H) 225-610-6273, (W) 225-578-8188.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 225-578-8692.

Please sign below indicating that you are aware of your participation in the project and are agreeing to be an informant in the project.

Participant's Name ___________________________ Date _________

Researcher's Name ___________________________ Date _________

Study Approved By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/frb
Approval Expires: 12/13/2014

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Project Report and Continuation Application

(Complete and return to IRB, 203-B1 David Boyd Hall.
Direct questions to IRB Chairman Robert N. Mathews 578-8892.)

IRB#: 3031 Your Current Approval Expires On: 11/19/2011
Review type: Expedited Risk Factor: Minimal
PI: Roland Mitchell Dept: Education Phone: 578-2156
Student/Co-Investigator: Steven McCuller

Project Title: Crisis Management and higher education leadership: a study on how higher education administrators handle crises and the changes a university makes post hurricane katrina

Number of Subjects Authorized: 50

Please read the entire application. Missing information will delay approval.

I. PROJECT FUNDED BY: LSU proposal #:

II. PROJECT STATUS: Check the appropriate blank(s); and complete the following:

X 1. Active, subject enrollment continuing; # subjects enrolled: 9

____ 2. Active, subject enrollment complete; # subjects enrolled:____

____ 3. Active, subject enrollment complete; work with subjects continues.

____ 4. Active, work with subjects complete; data analysis in progress.

____ 5. Project start postponed

____ 6. Project complete; end date: / / 

____ 7. Project cancelled: no human subjects used.

III. PROTOCOL: (Check one).

X Protocol continues as previously approved

Changing are requested:
• List (on separate sheet) any changes to approved protocol.

IV. UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS: (did anything occur that increased risks to participants):

X State number of events since study inception: 0 since last report: 0

X If such events occurred, describe them and how they affect risks in your study, in an attached report.

X Have there been any previously unreported events? Y/N .

(If YES, attach report describing event and any corrective action).

V. CONSENT FORM AND RISK/BENEFIT RATIO:

Does new knowledge or adverse events change the risk/benefit ratio? Y/N .

Is a corresponding change in the consent form needed? Y/N .

VI. ATTACH A BRIEF, FACTUAL SUMMARY of project progress/results to show continued participation of subjects is justified; or to provide a final report on project findings.

VII. ATTACH CURRENT CONSENT FORM (only if subject enrollment is continuing); and check the appropriate blank:

X 1. Form is unchanged since last approved

____ 2. Approval of revision requested herewith: (Identify changes)

Signature of Principal Investigator: ____________________________ Date: 12/20/08

IRB Action: Continued approval, Approval Expires: 12/19/2009

Disapproved

File closed

Signed: ____________________________ Date: 12/19/2008

Form date: April 16, 2008

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APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Informed Consent for Participation in Research for Dissertation

My name is Steven McCullar, and I am a doctoral student in the College of Education. I am completing my doctoral studies with a dissertation that will (when finished) document and analyze university leadership and their decisions during times of crisis.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to conduct a series of interviews regarding your role in crisis management and/or fill out a questionnaire regarding your experience during a crisis situation. The purpose of the observations is to gather empirical data to establish the grounding for conversations concerning leadership during crisis management. The purpose of the interviews will be to gather information regarding your experiences during a crisis situation. The interview will last for approximately one-hour. However, if more time is needed, or additional interviews are required, they can be scheduled at your convenience. Your responses will be recorded on audiotape, but only so the researcher may transcribe your responses as accurately as possible for exact representation of our conversation. The participant, the researcher, and the researcher's doctoral committee will be the only persons to have privilege to these interviews. The only alternative for which the tapes may be heard by anyone other than those listed is by written permission from you, the participant.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. At no point do you have to allow your real name or title to be revealed if you so choose. A fictitious name may be used. During the interview you may refuse to answer any questions. After the completion of the interviews, you will receive your transcribed interviews. At that point, if you wish to make any changes to the transcription, you may. At any time, if you wish to withdrawal from this research project, you have the opportunity.

Little or no potential risks are identified. The benefits would include personal growth for each participant through opportunities for reflection and dialogue about their experience.

I truly appreciate your participation in this project. I want you to be as comfortable as possible. Please feel free to talk to me about any concern you might have. My phone numbers are (H) 225-610-6273, (W) 225-578-5083.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 225-578-8692.

Please sign below indicating that you are aware of your participation in the project and are agreeing to be an informant in the project.

Participant's Name______________________________ Date __________

Researcher's Name ______________________________ Date __________
Interview Questions for Crisis Management and Leadership Study

General Questions
1. What is your position at the university and what is your responsibility with regards to crisis management?
2. What is the perception of the importance of crisis management?
3. What perceptions do university administrators possess concerning if they and their institution are prepared for a major crisis?

Questions About Hurricane Experience
1. What were your most vivid memories of Hurricane Katrina and Gustav?
2. Discuss your role and experience during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita?
3. Discuss your role and experience during Hurricane Gustav?
4. What were the differences in crisis management planning for Katrina as compared to Gustav?
5. How did the differences between Hurricane’s Katrina and Gustav impact and influence these perceptions of the crisis management process?

Leadership Questions
1. What makes a good leader during a crisis?
2. What aspects of crisis management do you as a university administrators consider to be most important?
3. When composing a crisis management team what characteristics do University administrators consider to be most important in the individuals?
4. When composing a crisis management plan for an institution what characteristics do university administrators consider to be most important?
5. What perceptions do you, as a university administrator, have concerning your own readiness for a crisis situation?
6. What perceptions do you, as a university administrator, have concerning the institutions readiness for a crisis situation?
7. What skills and characteristics do administrators think are important for the crisis management team members?
8. What importance has been placed on crisis management?
9. What opportunities and experiences have been gained from experiencing the unique crisis situation?
10. What skills and characteristics do administrators think are important for members of a crisis management team?
11. How did Hurricane Katrina impact and influence the crisis management process?
12. What role does the crisis management team have in a post-Katrina environment?
13. Since Hurricane Katrina, what changes have been made and how, if at all, do these changes influence the day to day activities of you and your staff?
APPENDIX D: CONCEPT MAPS
CREATION OF AN EOC
UNIVERSITY PERSONNEL

Direction from Supervisors/Supervisors (9-2)

Essential Personnel (39-2)

Volunteers (32-2)

Expectation to help (30-4)

Bonding with those you work with during a crisis (1-3)

Paid for not working (17-4)

Family or other non university responsibilities during crisis (33-2)

Don't work beyond your capabilities (1-1)

Working beyond your limits (17-2)

Hardships of dealing with job responsibility and disaster (5-6)

Reporting Structure (6-7)

Mid Managers (2-3)

Silos (14-1)

General Faculty/Staff training and information given for crisis (5-5)

Hardships of dealing with job responsibility and disaster (5-6)

Direction from Supervisors/Supervisors (9-2)

Don't work beyond your capabilities (1-1)

Working beyond your limits (17-2)

Staff meetings discussing crisis management (8-6)

Volunteers (32-2)

Working beyond your limits (17-2)

Hardships of dealing with job responsibility and disaster (5-6)

Reporting Structure (6-7)

Mid Managers (2-3)
IS CAMPUS PREPARED

- Unknown when a crisis will occur (1-1)
- Not taking a crisis seriously (1-2)
- Can we become lax or over-prepared, if crisis doesn't occur or routine (21-2)
- Importance of crisis management (7-3)
- Campus as a city (68-1)

Is campus prepared? (9-5)
VITA
Steven McCullar was born in Fresno, California, to Ryan and Linda McCullar, both from Memphis, Tennessee. Steven spent most of his early childhood in Springfield, Illinois, until his parents moved back to Memphis, Tennessee, before his sophomore year of high school. After graduating from Ridgeway High School, he decided to attend on scholarship Memphis State University which became The University of Memphis while he was a student.

While at The University of Memphis, Steven was an involved student serving as an officer in many student organizations such as the Student Activities Council, Student Government Association, Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature, and Model United Nations to name but a few. He also became a member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. His involvement and academic achievements brought him membership in Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Eta Sigma, Sigma Alpha Lambda, and Golden Key National Honor Societies. Steven graduated *Cum Laude* from The University of Memphis with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 1997.

Steven pursued his passion of higher education by pursuing a Master of Education Degree at the University of Arkansas. He served as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Student Involvement advising committees of the student programming board. His involvement with professional organizations began at Arkansas when he served on a regional conference committee and presented his first educational sessions. While at the University of Arkansas, Steven was recognized with the Donald L. McCullough Memorial Graduate Student Scholarship and the South Central Region NACA Graduate Student Scholarship from the National Association of Campus Activities. Steven graduated from the University of Arkansas with a Master of Education in 1999.
After graduating, Steven took his first professional job at The University of Alabama. He was there for six years, reaching the position of Assistant Dean of Students. During his time there, Steven was responsible for advising such areas as the programming board, student government senate, honors week program, African American Heritage Month program, and the Volunteer Center. His programs were recognized nationally, with the programming board being recognized as the top programming board in the country and an event his students created being featured on the *CBS Early Show*. He supervised full time staff members, student volunteers, and student workers and served as an On Call Dean helping students in trouble after hours.

His professional involvement grew with many different professional organizations and he presented at many local, regional, and national conferences. Steven also had the opportunity to begin his publishing career by writing articles for *Programming Magazine*. While at Alabama, he was recognized with the University of Alabama Student Service Award, the Student Government Presidents Award, the Sam S. May Award, and the National Association of Campus Activities New Professional Award.

Steven left The University of Alabama in 2005 to work at Louisiana State University as the Associate Director of the LSU Union and Director of Programs. In his short tenure there, Steven increased student involvement and participation in the organization and created Volunteer LSU, the first official student volunteer group on campus. He continued his publications and national presentations. After working initially part time on his doctorate, he decided to pursue his academic endeavors full time in order to concentrate on the course work. He stepped down from his position and became a Graduate Assistant in the College of Education working with development, alumni relations, web design, and sponsored programs.
Steven chose crisis management as his area of focus while working on his dissertation. His works in Student Affairs for over a decade lead him toward this research interest. Through all of his jobs, crisis management of some nature was always a component of the position. In his mind, there seemed to be a void in this research area in the higher education literature. With the successful defense of his dissertation on March 2, 2011, Steven has added a small piece to the literature of higher education and crisis management.

In his free time, Steven enjoys reading, watching movies, attending collegiate athletic events, playing racquetball and socializing with his friends. Steven is a Life Time Member of his original Alma Mater, The University of Memphis, and serves as the President of the New Orleans and Baton Rouge Chapter of the Alumni Association. He can often be found accompanied by his dogs Yoda and Daisy.