ABSTRACT

IT’S A DANGEROUS WORLD IN THERE: LEADERSHIP METHODS AND ACTIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND TIMES OF CRISIS

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Over the past twenty years, shootings and other violent incidents, acts of terrorism such as the attacks of September 11, 2001, and natural disaster events such as hurricanes or floods have occurred with increasing frequency. Situations like these pose significant challenges for school administrators when a normally-peaceful educational environment is quickly transformed by significant acts of aggression from within, or by external threats that impact the educational domain with little or no advance warning.

Contingency-based, situational leadership has proven to be effective when used in both educational and non-educational settings during normal, non-emergency periods. The purpose of this study is to determine if a contingency-based leadership style can also be effective during school-related emergency situations and crisis events.

The leadership methods and actions of school presidents and school district superintendents were studied in the context of leading their school(s) or school district before, during, and after emergencies or times of crisis. Information concerning the leadership style preferences and perceived valuation of identified leadership components was obtained through written surveys, and oral interviews during which school administrators described their leadership philosophy and actions during a major emergency or crisis event.
The results obtained show that each chief administrator made extensive use of contingency-based, situational leadership principles while working with subordinates to devise and implement a coordinated emergency or crisis event response.

The primary leadership concept that allowed administrators to carry out a successful crisis event response was delegation of authority. Effective delegation of authority was supported by five major themes: Communication, Competence, Credibility, Decision-Making, and Planning. These themes allowed subordinates to utilize and implement guidance contained within comprehensive written crisis response documents; coordinating efficiently with school and school district staff, students, outside response agencies, and each other; both during and after the crisis event.
IT’S A DANGEROUS WORLD IN THERE: LEADERSHIP METHODS AND ACTIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND TIMES OF CRISIS

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND FOUNDATIONS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank my advisor, Dr. Patrick Roberts; as well as the other members of my committee; Dr. Carolyn Pluim and Dr. Bradley Hawk. Their collective knowledge has been an invaluable resource throughout this journey. I would also like to thank my classroom professors, particularly Dr. Kelly Summers; for demonstrating supreme patience while encouraging and guiding me during very early stages of the planning/research process.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, James R. and Lillian Drake. They have provided constant encouragement and support throughout this process. It is also dedicated to Mr. Calvin Stark, Mr. Gerald Doughty, and Mr. Robert Charnot; outstanding educators who serve as towering examples of professionalism, true ethical leadership, and courage. Additionally, I want to thank Mr. Rudy Pullins; a “best friend” who has been like a brother throughout the years; always there in my corner. And finally, Mr. Bill Damon; An educational colleague and true friend who has given tremendous support to all of my plans and projects – even when the logic inherent in what I wanted to do was not immediately apparent.
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On April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School in unincorporated Jefferson County, Colorado, two high-school seniors enacted a horrific assault during the middle of the school day during which they hoped to kill hundreds. They planted large propane bombs in the school cafeteria, and planned to set these off during a lunch period when there would be a large number of students present. The perpetrators positioned themselves just outside of the cafeteria moments before the bombs were set to explode. They hoped to shoot any remaining students not killed by the bombs as they ran out of the cafeteria in the aftermath. Although this element failed when the bombs did not go off as planned, the pair continued on by shooting people indiscriminately as they brazenly walked the halls and hunted for potential victims. When the day was done, twelve innocent students and one staff member had been killed, and twenty-one more people were injured. (Columbine Review Commission Report, 2001.)

School administrators at Columbine had no prior knowledge or indication that such a horrific event was about to happen at their campus, and thus were unable to prepare for it. An attack on this scale was unprecedented at the time. (Shen, 2012). Even now it remains one of the most deadly shooting attacks in an American public high school, second only to the events of February 14, 2018 at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida (NBC News, 2018).

On the morning of September 11, 2001, a series of four coordinated attacks on the United States by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda killed 2,996 people and injured over 6000 others.
while causing at least $10 billion dollars in property and infrastructure damage, and over $3 trillion dollars in total costs (Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, 2004.) Four passenger airplanes operated by two major U.S. passenger air carriers were hijacked by nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists. Two of the planes were crashed into the North and South towers of the World Trade Center in New York, causing both of the towers to collapse with debris and the resulting fires causing partial or complete collapse of all other buildings in the World Trade Center complex; as well as significant damage to ten other large surrounding structures.

A third plane was crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia, and the fourth plane was initially was directed toward Washington, D.C., but went down near Shanksville, Pennsylvania after brave passengers tried to re-take the plane from its hijackers (Morgan, 2009.) 9/11 was the single deadliest incident for firefighters and law enforcement officers in the history of the United States, with 343 and 72 killed respectively (United States Congressional Record, 2002, p. 9909.)

Although the 9/11 attacks did not directly strike any public or private schools, students, staff, and school administrators across the country were impacted by the confusion, stress, and trauma that resulted from this event. As news reports of the attack started to appear, many people did not understand what had happened. Some schools sent students home early, especially those in the immediate New York City area (Morgan, 2009).

In the days, weeks, and months afterward, a substantial number of students, staff, and administrators across the entire nation continued to struggle with the emotional devastation and psychological effects caused by thousands of deaths, injuries to friends and relatives, the loss of
family members or other loved ones, as well as by the shocking nature of the attack itself (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2002).

An event such as this, a direct non-military attack on civilians resulting in the loss of human lives, had never before been seen on such a scale. It affected people not just in America, but around the world (Morgan, 2009.) The 9/11 attacks posed unique challenges for school administrators in the immediate New York City area, who had to suddenly overcome logistical issues caused by loss of subway, bus and other means of transportation; outages of electrical, gas, water, and internet service; as well as disruption of city infrastructure and other mechanical systems used by students and staff on a daily basis (United States Department of Transportation, 2002.)

The 9/11 terrorist attacks resulted in serious problems for school administrators in other states and cities across the country, who suddenly had to deal not only with immediate emotional reactions of students and staff to the horrific narratives, photos, and images being reported through the news media, but also the longer-term psychological effects that this event had upon significant numbers of children and adults, many of whom suffered varying degrees of emotional trauma and post-traumatic stress (Schechter, Coates, & First, 2002.) In this instance, school administrators were once again confronted with a situation the likes of which had never been seen before (Klein, Devoe, Miranda-Julian, & Linas, 2009.)

Hurricane Katrina was the eleventh named storm, and fifth hurricane of the 2005 Atlantic Ocean hurricane season. At the time, Katrina was the most expensive natural disaster, as well as one of the five deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. The storm is currently
ranked as the third most intense United States tropical cyclone to reach land, trailing only the 1935 Labor Day hurricane and Hurricane Camille in 1969 (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration - National Hurricane Center, 2005.) Overall, at least 1,245 people died in the hurricane and subsequent floods of Katrina, making it the deadliest United States hurricane since the 1928 Okeechobee hurricane. Total property damage was estimated at $108 billion (2005 USD), roughly four times the damage caused by Hurricane Andrew in 1992 (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration - National Hurricane Center, 1993.)

Hurricane Katrina originated over the Bahamas on August 23, 2005. After very briefly weakening to a tropical storm as it passed over Florida, Katrina emerged into the Gulf of Mexico on August 26 and strengthened to a Category 5 hurricane over the warm gulf waters before making its second landfall as a Category 3 hurricane on August 29 in southeast Louisiana.

Katrina caused severe destruction along the Gulf coast from central Florida to Texas, much of it due to the storm surge and levee failure. Severe property damage occurred in coastal areas. Although advance warning allowed time for most people to evacuate, some forecasts did not give an accurate assessment of just how strong the storm would be when it reached heavily populated areas such as New Orleans.

Additionally, many people mistakenly believed that the city’s system of levees would protect them from any storm surge that might result from Katrina. Because of these factors, they did not evacuate the New Orleans area. However, the levees did not hold. Over fifty breaches in New Orleans’ hurricane surge protection caused of the majority of the death and destruction during Katrina on August 29, 2005. Eventually 80% of the city and large tracts of neighboring
parishes became flooded, where the floodwaters remained trapped for weeks afterward (Anderson et al. 2007.)

Because of the flooding caused by Katrina and failure of New Orleans’ levee system, administrators at many public and private schools had to suddenly deal with stranded students and staff, shortages of food and water, inoperable restrooms and other school facilities which could not be used, all during a period when there was no electrical power, natural gas, or municipal water and sanitation (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration - National Hurricane Center, 2005).

These conditions posed not only critical immediate human health problems, but also long-term issues as administrators were forced to consider how they could continue to provide educational and social services for children even as their schools were still under water (Ladd, Marszalek, & Gill, 2006).

Impact of Crisis Events

These three events are vastly different, yet they all share a common theme and pose similar basic challenges for school administrators who are forced to deal with crisis/emergency situations: A sudden, disruptive event of great magnitude that poses a grave threat to life and property. What makes these events so challenging is that while dangerous things are happening, important decisions must be made; usually under severe time constraints and on the basis of limited information.
Besides the situations already described, school administrators may face other external natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires, tornados, and biological attack or pandemic disease. Within the school setting, students or staff may be exposed to violence and death caused by suicide, gang activity, snipers, hostage-taking, or sexual assault. Afterward, some students and staff can experience a severe emotional response: fear, grief, or post-traumatic stress syndrome (United States Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crimes – USDOJ/OVC, 2002).

When a significant portion of a school’s population is affected by crisis and intervention efforts are non-existent, too little, or ineffective, the aftermath can interfere with the ability of students to focus on their studies, and may compromise the professional job performance of staff members. In these cases, long-term psychosocial and educational problems may ensue. This will impact a school’s ability to function long after the emergency has passed. Prompt, effective crisis intervention following such a situation can help individuals cope with the impact of natural disasters and other harmful events (USDOJ/OVC, 2002).

Preparing for Crisis Events

Both during and immediately after a crisis, the first priority is to ensure physical safety of students and staff; responding quickly and effectively in order to gain control of the situation thereby minimizing the impact of the emergency for all concerned (Kamien, 2006, p.665). In order to provide an effective coordinated response, many schools and school districts have prepared crisis response plans that attempt to anticipate various types of crisis events which
could occur, and then provide an organized coordinated plan that will give school administrators an effective response to implement in such a situation.

Such a crisis plan will typically include contingencies for multi-hazard emergencies, procedures for contacting and working with first responders and other community organizations, guidelines for communicating with parents and the media during a crisis, instructions for use of school facilities for non-school community emergencies, crisis team and staff roles during emergency situations, a structured incident command system, advance preparation of critical facility information, preparations and drills for practicing various lockdown, evacuation, and hazardous material situations, and placement of emergency supply kits at appropriate locations (Kamien, 2006).

According the U.S. Department of Education, 95 percent of public schools and public school districts report the existence of a written crisis plan for natural disasters; with 94 percent of schools reporting that they have a written plan for bomb threats or other similar incidents (United States Department of Education – School Survey of Crime and Safety: USDOE-SSOCS, 2010).

However, it is less clear to what extend students, staff, and school administrators are familiar with their school’s written crisis plan, or if they understand what is to be done during various emergency situations. Although 82.3 percent of public schools claim to conduct drills for natural disasters such as fire, tornado, or hurricanes, only 58.6 percent report holding drills for bomb threats or incidents, with 51.9 percent, 41.4 percent, and 30.7 percent of schools drilling students and staff on shootings/armed intruders, hostage taking, and biological attack situations respectively (USDOE - SSOCS, 2010.)
According to the USDOE-SSOCS study, a higher percentage of suburban schools (58 percent) drill students on their crisis plan procedures in case of a shooting than urban schools (49 percent), even though incidents involving guns and gun violence may be more pervasive in an urban setting.

What these figures serve to illustrate is that while many schools and school districts maintain written crisis management plans, it is unclear as to how much time school leaders actually spend rehearsing and considering how they might react to and manage various types of crisis situations. The number and percentage of school administrators who have prepared detailed instructions, with specific action steps designed to carry out their written plans in the event of an actual emergency, is also uncertain.

Additionally, the crisis management plan can only give general guidelines for emergency scenarios. Each particular crisis situation may unfold somewhat differently, with a unique dynamic and trajectory. Being able to anticipate possible problems and make adjustments on the fly can have a significant effect on how the crisis ultimately impacts staff, students, and the community.

Over the past fifteen years, other serious incidents of violence have occurred in public schools. This has happened at places such as Sandy Hook Elementary, where on December 14, 2012, a gunman in Newtown, Connecticut fatally shot 20 children aged between 6 and 7 years old, as well as six adult staff members; and on April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia when a student there shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 others in two separate attacks.
These incidents, as well as others, have shown that a normally-peaceful educational environment can be quickly transformed by significant acts of aggression from within, or by external threats that enter the public school domain; often with little or no advance warning.

**Crisis Response Leadership and Actions**

Wenger (1975) exposed several myths related to crisis situation response: Wenger and his associates found that in natural disaster situations, the majority of initial search-and-rescue activity is done by the victims themselves, rather than by the people and organizations most often thought of as first responders. What this indicates is that in a crisis or emergency situation scenario, most of the initial response will be taken by those who are directly affected. It follows then, that during such an emergency situation in a public school, much of the initial reaction and response will depend upon the school’s leader, school staff, and students.

The elements that make up a district’s crisis response plan are all important, needed components. However, what may be even more important is the order and timeliness with which these components are introduced, and the effectiveness with which each of these elements is employed during the crisis situation. It is imperative then, that students and staff have effective leadership and direction to guide them until emergency responders can come to assist.

Typically, the first notification of an emergency situation is a call to 911. The public safety answering point (PSAP) is then responsible for sending the right personnel to the scene, so they may start to control the event. Agencies normally involved in this response may include fire departments, police, and EMT/medical service providers. First responders use standard
incident command procedures so that their efforts are coordinated, and decisions follow a predetermined emergency system protocol (Kamien, 2006, p. 670).

But minutes, hours, or even days may elapse between the time a crisis begins, the period during which authorities are made aware of what is happening and then decide how to respond, and the moment that help actually arrives. The decisions and actions of a school administrator during this initial period may have a significant effect on the course and the ultimate outcome of the emergency situation. And even after first-responders arrive, the leader of a school or school district cannot simply hand over responsibility for crisis response operations. Throughout the duration of a crisis event and for some time afterward, the leader still has an important role to play (Kamien, 2006).

Effective leadership from school administrators during a crisis can have an immediate and significant impact on the progression and outcome of a crisis situation. It may prevent and reduce incidents of violence against students and staff, reduce security risks and liability, and improve school-community relations in the area of safety and emergency situation preparedness by implementing practical risk-reduction measures that can be taken to ensure a physically and psychologically secure school environment (SSOCS, 2010.)

Schools are well-organized systems that function with great efficiency under normal conditions. School districts usually have both short- and long-term plans for regular initiatives such as the improvement of curriculum and instruction, capital improvement projects, renovation and construction of district facilities, acquisition, budgeting, and expenditure of district finances, the implementation of technology, and organization of extra-curricular programs and activities.
These plans are often created through school and district committees, with input from many individuals operating within a well-defined structure; guided by administrators who work within the parameters of clearly-outlined job responsibilities. The way in which school administrators organize and guide these regular school initiatives is a direct reflection of their personal leadership philosophy, and their preferred leadership style.

However during a crisis, schools and school leaders face very unusual demands. There may be little or no time to solicit ideas and input from students, staff, or community members. Decisions must often be made quickly, and with a limited amount of relevant information. This may require a much different leadership approach, and different leadership methods and tactics than the administrator would use under normal conditions.

**Purpose of the Study**

Many public school administrators today practice an inclusive form of leadership, communicating with colleagues and staff frequently to obtain their input and ideas on a wide variety of issues while encouraging followers to be creative, and contribute actively to problem-solving (Bass, 1998.) However, during a crisis situation when decisions must be made quickly, school administrators may have to alter their leadership approach, sometimes quite drastically. We understand that a crisis or school emergency situation may require a much different type of response than more ordinary, everyday problems. If these atypical situations require an extraordinary response, then perhaps very different leadership methods are needed in order to effectively deliver such a response.
The Hippocratic Oath requires first and foremost that medical doctors shall do their patients no harm. Similarly, one of the most fundamental duties owed by school administrators to students and staff members is to provide a secure learning environment, while shielding them from danger. This principle applies at all times, under normal conditions as well as during emergency situations. To fulfill this duty, it is incumbent upon school administrators to be knowledgeable and well-versed in effective emergency response procedures; capable of leading and protecting staff and students during crisis events by keeping them physically safe and emotionally secure.

To successfully handle school emergency and crisis events, school administrators need a thorough knowledge of effective crisis response procedures, and the ability to quickly formulate a specific, detailed action plan that will be effective in that particular situation. For this, we can study the actions of school administrators who have actually dealt with school emergencies and crisis situation events.

**Significance of the Study**

Valuable knowledge may be gained from leaders who have experienced school crisis events firsthand. We can learn how these administrators first became aware of and analyzed a crisis situation, then planned and carried out an organized, coordinated emergency response. By doing so we may determine precisely which leadership principles, qualities, or characteristics were most important in order for them to effectively direct subordinates while interfacing with first-responders and other emergency services personnel.
Emergency and crisis situation leadership has been studied as it relates to fields such as the military, police science, or hospitals and medical personnel. An initial survey of the literature shows that some articles and books have been written on this topic as it relates specifically to planning for emergency scenarios in public schools, and re-building school communities after an emergency or crisis situation has passed: These sources include works by Beabout et al. (2008), and Hintz, (2013). A few studies have been done on school crisis plans and school administrators’ preparation for implementing such plans: Aspiranti, Pelchar, McCleary, Bain, & Foster, (2011).

However, no research was found specifically focused upon the leadership actions, principles or leadership style employed by school administrators during a crisis or school emergency situation, or the mindset of school administrators regarding their approach to formulating and implementing a school or school district crisis response during an actual crisis event. Because of this gap, it is proposed that research be undertaken to study the leadership actions, principles, and methods that school administrators have actually used during crisis and emergency situations; comparing these are to the leadership methods, style, and approach typically employed by the same school administrators for major school and school district non-emergency projects and initiatives.

Ascertaining the leadership methods and styles preferred by school district superintendents and school presidents during normal, non-emergency periods and determining the extent to which these administrators regularly used various types of situational, contingency-based principles or other specific leadership constructs prior to facing actual emergency and
crisis situations may allow the researcher to assess and better understand how these school superintendents and presidents transitioned into their chosen emergency/crisis leadership modes.

This will be discerned by learning whether it was their familiarity with situational, contingency-based leadership principles, experience with other leadership methods they had typically utilized during non-emergency periods, or a combination of various leadership factors and styles that these superintendents, CEOS, and/or school presidents relied upon for guidance when confronted with an unexpected school-based emergency situation or crisis event.

**Research Question**

The research study proposed seeks to answer one key question:

- Are contingency-based leadership principles evidenced in the actions and leadership styles of school district superintendents, CEOs, and school presidents when formulating and implementing a response to school-related emergency situations and crisis events?

**Study Delimitations**

Participants in the proposed study will be public or private school administrators; school district superintendents, or school presidents with supervisory responsibility for public or private elementary schools or high schools, or public/private elementary, high school, unit (K-12) school districts, or colleges/universities. In order to obtain candidates for inclusion in this study, a call
will be made for school district superintendents or school presidents who self-identify as having been actively employed by a school, school district, or college/university during a time of significant crisis or emergency.

For the purpose of classifying participants in this study, a significant crisis or emergency situation is defined by the following characteristics: A situation that posed an imminent, serious hazard including a grave threat to life and property. For the purposes of this study, a qualifying crisis/emergency situation will be further defined to include the following: Tornado, hurricane, tropical storm, flood, winter storm/blizzard, armed intruder, bomb threat, bombing, kidnapping, terrorist attack, shooting, hostage-taking, automobile/bus/train accident, as well as unexpected death of a student or staff member.
CHAPTER TWO – LEADERSHIP AND CRISIS EVENTS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide both historical overview and perspective concerning emergency situations that have occurred over a wide range of various non-educational contexts and settings, and to examine the leadership methods and styles that have been used in response to these crisis events. In doing so, I will also outline the development of both Transactional and Transformational leadership theory, discussing their relative strengths and weaknesses while touching upon a number of other leadership theories that make use of various transactional and transformational elements.

The conceptual framework for my proposed study will also be introduced and explained. Finally, I will give an overall summary of findings from my review of literature concerning emergency situation and crisis event leadership, while providing further justification for the study proposed.

Contingency Leadership Theory

The conceptual framework for this proposed study is Contingency Leadership theory. The Contingency Theory of leadership, first developed through the work of Fred Fiedler, is based upon the premise that leaders will respond to various situations by employing different
leadership styles and methods, depending upon circumstances and conditions in existence at that time.

According to Fiedler (1967), the specific style and methods employed by a leader using the contingency-based approach depends first upon whether the leader prefers to be more task-oriented, or more relationship-oriented in accomplishing workplace assignments. The other primary consideration for a contingency-based leader is situational favorability. This consists of three factors:

- The relationship that the leader has with subordinates – the levels of trust and respect that exist within the group, and how much confidence subordinates have in their leader.
- Task structure – whether low or high.
- The leader’s position of authority, and degree of influence and control over subordinates.

In a study involving the application of contingency theory, Forsyth (2006) found that situational control is critical to leadership efficacy, and that when leader-member relationships involving a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and confidence were found to exist, this allowed groups to function more effectively. When leader/member relations were poor, groups were not as effective and the leader was required to devote significant attention to regulating behavior and controlling conflict among group members.

Fielder’s research (1967) showed that even in situations where the group’s goal was clear, group efficacy was compromised when members did not know or understand specifically how the goal should be achieved. In these cases, the leader’s competence and credibility was
essential to successful group performance. This has particular application for crisis and emergency situations, where people may have a clear understanding of what needs to be done, yet do not know or understand the specific actions required to reach their goal.

The school leader’s knowledge and understanding of crisis leadership, and his/her competence in handling crisis events through the application of effective leadership actions and techniques can make the difference between success or failure in such cases; ultimately determining whether the crisis is minimized or averted, and if lives are saved or lost.

Fiedler (1967) and Forsyth (2006) both found that leader position power is a determining factor in contingency-based leadership, and that leaders with well-defined positions of authority are most effective in motivating followers. School district superintendents and school presidents have direct authority and power over subordinates, which may facilitate compliance with their orders and instructions.

However, school district superintendents and school presidents must themselves answer to school board members, as well as federal, state, and local government officials. They are also held accountable to members of the public. Could there be instances in which school superintendents or presidents hesitate or decline to use the full range of their authority, knowing that their actions and decisions will ultimately be scrutinized and judged? If so, this consideration might impact a district superintendent’s or school president’s leadership style and effectiveness, particularly during an emergency or crisis event where the stakes are high and the consequence of failure will be severe.

Contingency theory requires that leaders understand their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of followers. In order to improve their ability to handle
school emergencies and crisis events, it would be helpful for school administrators to acquire as much knowledge as possible about crisis event management. School administrators may also benefit by acquiring a more thorough understanding of their own leadership philosophy and preferred leadership styles; as well as the leadership styles, actions, and methods that have previously been shown as most effective in successfully managing a range of non-school crisis or emergency situations.

Contingency-based leadership requires that emergency response directors must have the ability to change between leadership styles when necessary, adapting their approach to the particular crisis or emergency situation that presents itself; adjusting their leadership style and methods accordingly. In order to effectively use this situational leadership style in their own districts, school administrators may wish to consider their own responses to the following contingency-based leadership questions (Fiedler, 1967), (Forsyth, 2006):

- In my own approach to work, am I primarily task-oriented, or relationship-oriented? (Based on LPC survey results.)
- During either non-emergency or emergency situations, what is my level of influence and authority over subordinates, staff, and students? (Leader position power.)
- Will subordinates, staff members, and others promptly follow and implement my directives?
- Do I have the trust and respect of staff members?
- Do high levels of trust and respect exist among staff members for each other?
• How might my staff members perceive and respond to various task-oriented or relationship-oriented leadership styles that might be employed during a time of crisis or emergency?

• What is my level of knowledge and competence regarding possible school-related emergency situations and crisis events that could occur?

• What leadership training or support do I need; in order to be prepared to deal more confidently and effectively with potential emergency or crisis event situations?

For many public school administrators, their primary leadership orientation may be situational for both emergency and non-emergency events. This involves gathering and processing information, and then using this information and subsequent analysis to make decisions about how to direct their staff, students, parents, and community members in a customized response tailored to that particular event.

Using a contingency theory leadership model, the administrator’s analysis and decision-making process will ordinarily take into account the specific conditions associated with a current project, problem or event; as well as available resources and the characteristics of his or her staff, and his or her own preferred leadership style (Fiedler, 1967). Such a contingency-based approach provides a flexible framework that can be adjusted and then applied to the meet the conditions and demands of a certain set of circumstances. Contingency leadership models make use of both transactional and transformational leadership principles and elements as well as
derivations of these constructs, combining these elements in varied proportions according to the situation at hand and personnel involved (Forsyth, 1996).

Although little has been written specifically on the topic of leadership in schools or educational systems during actual times of crisis or emergency, others have studied crisis/emergency leadership principles and methods in other situations, and in different settings. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the methods and techniques various leaders have used to handle a wide variety of emergency situations and crisis events; looking to see if the leadership actions and styles that these individuals have employed across a broad range of non-school emergency and crisis scenarios are consistent with the basic elements and principles of contingency leadership theory.

Upon completion of research proposed for this study, the information obtained through this review of the literature will then be examined to determine if the leadership actions, methods, and styles demonstrated in these cases are consistent with the leadership actions that school district superintendents and school presidents have taken, and the leadership methods and styles they have employed when faced with emergencies and crisis events in their own schools and school districts.

**Types of Leadership**

There are numerous types of authoritarian and democratic leadership. However, most modern leadership constructs are variations on, or combinations of two fundamentally opposing styles: Transactional Leadership, and Transformational Leadership. I will now provide a
theoretical overview of both Transactional Leadership, and Transformational Leadership. I will also include a description and analysis of three other styles – Participative Leadership Situational Leadership, and Contingency Leadership; each of which may incorporate varying degrees of both Transactional and Transformational leadership elements and forms.

**Transactional Leadership**

The origins of Transactional leadership theory can be found in the research of German sociologist Max Weber. Weber (1921, 1947), having studied a broad spectrum of leaders and leadership scenarios, defined three legitimate sources of authority on which leadership could be based. He claimed that Charismatic authority derived from followers’ belief in the superior or ‘supernatural’ powers of a particular leader, thus justifying the investment of trust and power with that individual.

What Weber (1947) defined as Traditional authority is placed with certain leaders because of a particular status they may have inherited or been given by custom, birth, precedent, or usage. Weber described Rational-Legal authority as power exercised through a system of rules and procedures attached to a particular job or ‘office’ that a person holds.

Rational-Legal leadership involves the concept of a bureaucracy: An organization structured around official functions that are bound by rules; each area of which has its own specialized function. These functions are then structured within a hierarchy that follows
technical norms and protocols (Weber, 1947). What Weber described as Rational-Legal leadership forms the basis of what later came to be known as Transactional Leadership.

The Transactional leadership style outlined by Bass (1960) involves motivating and directing people by appealing to their own self-interest through a system of tangible, extrinsic rewards and punishments. Transactional leaders tend to be highly directive and action-oriented. Their relationship with subordinates may be very transitory; based on immediate needs or desires of leaders and/or followers.

Transactional leadership theory (Bass, 1960) assumes that subordinates are motivated primarily by the rewards and punishment that a leader may provide, that subordinates must obey the directives of their leader, and that the activity of subordinates must be closely monitored and controlled.

Transactional leadership theory implies that leaders are focused mainly on clearly-defined, short-term objectives and that a standardized system of rules and procedures governing subordinates is in place. Transactional leaders do not seek creativity from subordinates, and they tend to ignore or provide no reward for ideas that cannot be used to meet existing plans and goals (Bass, 1960).

In earlier times, transactional leadership was often used in government, business, and military organizations. It was also commonly employed by school administrators, and by teachers in their classrooms.

**Theory X and Theory Y**

Douglas McGregor (1960) created the X and Y theories of management and motivation.
According to Douglas’s theory X, people generally have little or no ambition for work, and must be closely monitored under strict supervision. In this situation, a system of rewards and penalties is necessary to motivate workers to perform required tasks.

Theory X maintains the average workforce is more efficient under a "hands-on" approach to management. The Theory X manager believes that all actions should be traced to their source, and the responsible individual given a direct reward or a reprimand according to the action's outcomes. In this way, McGregor’s theory X aligns closely with Max Weber’s transactional leadership theory.

According to McGregor (1960), there are two opposing approaches to implementing Theory X: The "hard" approach, and the "soft" approach. The “hard” approach depends on close, aggressive supervision, physical and/or verbal intimidation, and the threat of imminent punishment or reward, depending upon whether objectives and goals are met.

The “soft” alternative relies more on suggestions and encouragement to do what the leader wants and less on direct orders or threats; yet keeps the possibility of negative consequence or positive reward ever-present as a motivational device.

McGregor’s Theory Y stands in stark contrast to his Theory X. Theory Y workers are assumed to be internally motivated, to enjoy their labor and their place within the organization, and to work without financial or other tangible reward as their primary motivation (McGregor, 1960).

Many years ago, school administrators and teachers were held to a strict standard in fulfilling their professional responsibilities; their manner of dress, physical appearance, and lifestyle choices were closely scrutinized and regulated. Students were expected to comply with
the demands of their teachers without question; they could be subject to various types of discipline including corporal punishment for failing to do so. As time went by, societal norms and values changed. It came to be seen that this type of hard, transactional approach could be ineffective and often counter-productive; especially in educational settings.

Theory Y employees consistently attempt to better their own personal standards of performance; taking responsibility for their work without the need for constant oversight or supervision. Because of this orientation, Theory Y managers may relate to workers on a more personal level; facilitating their personal and professional growth while encouraging independence and creativity (McGregor, 1960).

Today, teachers and other educational personnel are assumed to be intrinsically motivated by a desire to help children and improve society. School administrators are expected to support the professional growth and development of staff members, while providing an environment in which teachers are allowed to utilize the full range of their talents and skills.

Studies done after McGregor by Stogdill (1974) and Avolio (2007) found that using a Theory Y approach can create a greater sense of worker unity, and promote a more positive atmosphere in the work place. Other subsequent studies, including those conducted by Aydin (2011), have found that academic and research professionals perform best when managed primarily with a Theory Y style.
Transactional and Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns (1978) built upon the ideas of Max Weber, Douglas McGregor, and others in developing his interpretation of the two distinctly different Transactional and Transformational leadership types.

Similar to Weber and McGregor, Burns saw transactional leadership as a style in which leaders focus on the relationship between the leader and follower using rewards, punishments, and clearly-defined authority.

Following Douglas McGregor’s Theory Y, Burns conceptualized transformational leadership as a style in which leaders focus on the beliefs, needs, and values of their followers in order to inspire, uplift, and motivate them.

Characteristics of Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) described and outlined the differences between transactional and transformational leadership: Transactional leadership is responsive, and workers are expected to adapt to the established organizational culture. Transactional leaders accomplish objectives by appealing to workers’ own self-interest; their desire to receive tangible rewards and avoid various forms of punishment. Burns described this as management-by-exception; the primary goal being to maintain the status quo and avoid problems while using corrective action to improve performance.
According to Burns (1978), Transformational leaders are those who engage with followers, focusing on higher order intrinsic needs, and raising consciousness about the significance of specific outcomes and new ways in which those outcomes might be achieved. Transformational leadership involves demonstrating active behaviors that provide a sense of unity and mission; raising leaders and followers alike to higher levels of motivation and morality. Transformational leaders encourage creativity and innovative thinking, while supporting the personal and professional growth of followers.

In this sense, Transformational leadership is proactive; changing and improving organizational culture by implementing new ideas. Under such a system, objectives are achieved primarily through the application of widely-held ideals and moral values throughout the organization; followers put the interests of the organization before their own. Organizational improvement comes from individualized consideration; the organizational climate created by this approach encourages people to work together toward common, shared goals and stimulates them to find innovation solutions for problems.

This is the approach used today in most successful organizations (Bass & Avolio, 1994.) Business leaders have found that productivity increases when workers are given a voice in determining how company goals should be reached, and more autonomy in doing the work needed to attain these goals. Military commanders understand that missions have more successful outcomes when subordinate officers and personnel have greater latitude in planning them, and in determining how to allocate and utilize the personnel and materials needed for these actions to be carried out (Daniels, 2016).
Educational leaders know that teachers and support staff will be more engaged, and more effective in facilitating the learning and development of children when they are encouraged to use their own initiative and creativity in helping to shape educational content and practice in their schools.

**Bernard Bass and Transformational Leadership**


Bass & Stogdill (1990, p. 319) describe leadership as “a social exchange that is established and maintained as long as the benefit to both sides is perceived to be greater than the costs.” Bass & Stogdill cite Hollander (1978, p.16) in further describing this relationship as a “psychological contract between the leader and follower, which depends upon a variety of expectations and actions on both sides.” At schools, staff members expect administrators to provide a secure environment in which children may learn. They also look to their educational leaders for guidance and direction; particularly during times of emergency or crisis.

Bass (1990, p. 339) states that Transactional leaders may contribute to enhancing the performance of workers by clarifying what is expected of them, explaining how to meet these expectations, providing specific criteria for performance evaluation, telling workers if they are meeting performance objectives, and allocating rewards contingent on meeting these objectives.

Bass cites Locke, Latham, Saari, and Shaw (1981) when stating that performance feedback is the most common contingent reinforcement provided by a leader (1990, p. 339).
Bass also cites Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor (1979) while claiming it is important that workers accept and agree with the performance feedback their supervisors provide, or believe they have given (1990, p. 340). However, Bass also states that contingent reinforcement given through a system of rewards or punishments has serious limitations, and that there are similar constraints on what can be accomplished simply through leader-worker feedback (1990, p. 379).

If workers do not believe the feedback they receive from their supervisor is legitimate, they may choose to ignore it; especially if there is no immediate penalty or “cost” to the individual for doing so. In a school setting, teachers may ignore the feedback and suggestions of their principal if this individual is seen as uninformed, uncaring, and/or incompetent.

**The Charismatic Leader**

Bass (1960) explored the concept of the charismatic leader; someone people are drawn to because they are found to be personally inspiring or dynamic. Bass believed that charisma was an essential component for Transformational leadership.

McClelland (1975) recognized that charismatic leadership could be used in negative ways, and differentiated between self-aggrandizing charismatic leaders who are primarily concerned with establishing and maintaining a mystical, distant psychological presence from followers in order to manipulate and direct them toward self-serving goals, contrasting these individuals with socialized charismatic leaders who desire to serve others; developing shared goals with followers and inspiring followers toward the attainment of these goals.
Bass (1985) has identified four factors generally used to define and describe transformational leaders: *Charisma, Inspiration, Intellectual Stimulation,* and *Individualized Consideration.* Bass believes that true transformational leaders serve to strengthen and develop the talents and abilities of their followers. In a study of military personnel, Seltzer & Bass (1990) found that charismatic leadership correlated highly with the transformational leadership measures of individualized consideration and leaders’ orientation toward development of subordinates.

Studies conducted by Bass and Avolio (1989), Avolio, Waldman, and Einstein (1988), and Bass, Avolio, and Goodheim (1987) all found that subordinates who had leaders they identified as having transformational qualities consistently rated their organizations as being highly effective.

While Burns (1978) saw transactional and transformational leadership as opposing, mutually exclusive ends of a single continuum, Bass (1985) suggested that transactional elements often play a role within the practice of transformational leadership and that transformational leadership qualities could augment a transactional leadership approach. This idea was confirmed in studies conducted by Waldman and Bass (1988) as well as Howell and Avolio (1989).

**Augmentation Theory**

The Augmentation Theory is based upon the idea that transformational leadership does not replace transactional leadership, but adds to it by encouraging followers to take “buy in” and
take ownership of organizational philosophy and goals (Bass, 1985). This concept was further explored and confirmed in studies done by Hater and Bass (1988), and Yammarino, Spangler, and Bass (1993). In these cases, transformational leadership in a pure form was not observed. Rather, it was seen that a particular individual could simultaneously demonstrate a number of different leadership behaviors - each containing transformational, transactional, and even laissez-faire elements in varying degrees.

An example of this augmentation principle involves a study of workplace safety from Great Britain. Clarke (2013) found that active transactional leadership is important in ensuring employee compliance with safety rules and regulations, while transformational leadership methods produced greater employee participation in workplace safety programs and support for job-related safety concepts and protocols. As a result, a combination of both transformational and transactional leadership styles appeared to be most beneficial for worker safety.

Because transformational leadership typically exists in combination with other leadership methods and forms, questions have been raised about whether followers and leaders are able to recognize and accurately discern transformational leadership practice and its associated elements.

Lievens, Van Geit, and Coetsier (1997) studied follower perception of charisma, inspiration, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation provided by transformational leaders, finding these four key transformational elements to be very closely correlated. They discovered that one of the challenges inherent in analyzing transformational leadership practice lies in followers being able to accurately identify and differentiate between these four key factors when looking at transformational leadership behaviors.
This has serious implications for educational settings. Followers may decide not to follow the advice or directives of a competent leader who uses an augmented approach that is primarily transactional; becoming less energetic and less engaged simply because they perceive the leader as “hard”, insensitive, or uncaring.

Conversely, followers may willingly adopt suggestions and eagerly take direction from a leader who employs an augmented transformational-laissez-faire style and gives them more independence, even if the leader is not particularly knowledgeable or competent. In this situation, followers might enjoy having greater professional autonomy, and mistakenly believe that this freedom indicates a greater degree of sensitivity, concern, and caring on the leader’s part.

**Discerning Transformational Leadership Elements and Behaviors**

Bass and Avolio’s (1995) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is widely used to assess both transactional and transformational leadership qualities. However, even Bass and Avolio (1989) recognized that the MLQ results may be subject to bias. One type of MLQ bias that has been identified is the halo effect.

When respondents attempt to identify strengths and weaknesses of a leader, they may have trouble differentiating between various transformational behaviors, causing them to attribute separate, specific transformational characteristics to the same leadership domain. This has been seen in the results of studies conducted by Bycio, Hackett, and Allen (1995), Tepper and Percy (1994), and Den Hartog, Van Muijen, and Koopmen (1994); all of whom reported that
on the four transformational leadership scales of charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration; scores were consistently highly correlated.

It has also been proposed that leadership assessment scores may often be biased by social desirability. Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1995) stated that ratings of leaders might not reflect their actual leadership behavior, but may be influenced by social response bias. Avolio and Bass (1991) reported that descriptions of “ideal” leaders typically contain primarily transformational characteristics. If transformational characteristics are viewed as more socially desirable, then there may be a bias on the part of followers to “see” these traits in leaders they consider good or ideal, regardless of whether leaders actually possess these desirable qualities.

There is considerable evidence that transformational leadership is effective. However, Yukl (1999) identified some conceptual weaknesses in earlier transformational and charismatic leadership theories. These include ambiguous constructs, insufficient description of explanatory processes, a narrow focus on dyadic processes, omission of some relevant behaviors, insufficient specification of limiting conditions (situational variables), and a bias toward heroic conceptions of leadership.

A leader’s influence on followers is often described in terms of the leader’s behavior and actions that affect mediating variables relevant to task performance, such as arousal of motives or emotions, increased self-efficacy or optimism, modification of beliefs about reward contingencies, and increased task commitment. Yukl (1999) states that transformational leadership theory would be stronger if the essential influence processes were identified more clearly, and then used to explain how each type of influence behavior affects specific mediating variables and performance outcomes.
Most theories of transformational leadership are conceptualized primarily at the dyadic level (Yukl, 1999). The major interest is to explain a leader’s direct influence over individual followers, not leader influence on group or organizational processes. In general, leadership is viewed as a key determinant of organizational effectiveness. However, the causal effects of leader behavior on the organizational processes that ultimately determine effectiveness are seldom described in any detail. According to Yukl (1999), how leaders influence these group processes is not explained very well by the various transformational leadership theories.

Yukl further states that in regard to ambiguity about transformational behaviors, the identification of specific types of transformational behavior (in research up to that point in time) seems to be based mostly on an inductive process (factor analysis), and that the theoretical rationale for differentiating among the behaviors is not clearly explained. Each transformational behavior includes a number of diverse components, which makes definition of these behaviors even more ambiguous. The partially overlapping content and the extremely high inter-correlation found among the transformational behavior factors on leadership assessment instruments such as MLQ raises doubts about their construct validity (Yukl, 1999).

**Moderators of Transformational Leadership**

Bass (1996, 1997) has proposed that transformational leadership is beneficial for followers as well as their organization, regardless of the situation. In support of this position, Bass (1997, 1998) has shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness at different levels of authority, in various types of organizations.
However, Bass (1985, 1996) and others such as Pawar and Eastman (1997) and Pettigrew (1987) have proposed that situational variables may increase the likelihood of transformational leadership, or moderate its effect on followers. Conditions causing this may include an unstable environment, an organic corporate structure (rather than a mechanistic bureaucracy), an entrepreneurial creative culture, and dominance of boundary-spanning units over the technical business/organizational core.

An important consideration when evaluating transformational leadership is whether a leader applies transformational principles equally and consistently, with all followers. The underlying principle of multi-level leadership is that leaders adapt their behaviors to the individual subordinate, rather than treating everyone the same. Thus, leaders may tailor their interactions, utilizing a somewhat different style with each follower.

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) described this in terms of a leader-member exchange (LMX), whereby the leader influences the motivation of followers by establishing a more intimate, “warmer” relationship with certain individuals, and a more distant, less-involved relationship with others. This can be seen in schools where the principal allows some staff members great latitude because they are highly effective, friendly to administration, or useful “spies”, while other “less cooperative” staff members are managed very closely using direct orders or threats.

Yammarino and Bass (1990), and Waldman and Yammarino (1999) have advocated the multi-level analysis perspective as an alternative approach to understanding transformational leadership. Their suggestion that leaders may use transformational behaviors to a different degree with their various followers contrasts with the universal perspective of the transformational leader as one who inspires all followers by way of a common vision. The
multi-level analysis view proposes that leaders use transformational behaviors with those subordinates who are receptive; and within those relationships and conditions that are supportive of these behaviors.

Transformational leaders are more effective in some environments than they are in others. More recent research indicates that this may be due, at least in part, to individual follower differences based upon the fact that some followers are more receptive and responsive than others to the efforts of a transformational leader. This has serious implications for school leadership, particularly during emergency situations.

In times of crisis, teachers and other school staff may decide whether to follow, modify, or ignore directives from their leaders depending upon their own perceptions of the leader’s credibility and degree of concern for staff members’ well-being, based upon previous experience working under that person and their perception of that individual’s prior non-emergency leadership style.

Misunderstandings that result from this may have dire consequences; particularly during crisis events when inaction, failure to act promptly, or inappropriate action by staff members may subject themselves and children under their control to the possibility of serious injury or death.

Nahum-Shani and Somech (2011) studied the relationship between leadership styles of Israeli school principals and the organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) of their teachers. In their study, it was seen that followers’ individual cultural-based differences as reflected in teachers’ idiocentrism (self-interest) and allocentrism (group interest) orientation moderated the
relationship between principals’ transformational and transactional leadership methods, and followers’ OCB.

Under transformational leadership, followers’ allocentrism increased while idiocentrism decreased. Under transactional leadership, followers’ idiocentrism increased while allocentrism decreased. This demonstrates that the leadership style employed by school administrators can have a powerful effect upon follower values and beliefs. Thus, depending upon their personal organizational citizenship orientation and behaviors, teachers may then react differently during times of crisis depending upon the leadership style of their administrator(s).

More recent research has focused on specific elements that comprise transformational leadership practices, and the role of moderators in the relationship between transformational leadership and performance; factors that may strengthen or weaken this connection.

Zhu, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2009) studied the effect of follower characteristics as a moderator on the link between transformational leadership and employee work engagement. It was seen that positive follower characteristics such as taking initiative, and being proactive, independent, and responsible improved the effect of transformational leadership by strengthening followers’ work engagement. This agrees with earlier research done by Ehrhart and Klein (2001), who found that employees with these positive traits tend to have higher initial expectations for their own performance, and often prefer to work for a transformational leader.

Chi, Lan, and Dorjgotov (2012) studied science research and development professionals in Mongolia, finding that knowledge management had a moderating effect on transformational leadership in relation to overall organizational effectiveness. Here, it was seen that managing prior knowledge in a way that leads to the formation and sharing of new knowledge, through the
use of transformational leadership principles, is very effective in specific research and development settings.

Sheng-Min and Jian-Qiao (2013) studied the moderating effects of power distance (difference in job function level) and structural distance (degree of organizational separation between employees on different job function levels) on employee voice behavior as demonstrated by employee willingness to question current workplace policy, or give constructive workplace suggestions. Transformational leadership encourages employees to make suggestions for improvement. However, speaking up in this way also carries a degree of risk. New ideas that benefit others and the organization may generate appreciation and raise morale, but proposals that are unsuccessful and hurt others may damage relationships; causing resentment and distrust.

Liu and Liao (2013) found that structural distance was a significant moderator in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee voice; when employees are in a position of high structural distance between themselves and leaders they are more willing to speak up or make suggestions regarding company goals, policies, or procedures when encouraged to do so through transformational leadership.

Conversely, it was seen that power distance was a negative and stronger moderator than structural distance. With increasing disparity between job position/job function levels, workers became more reluctant to offer input or suggestions; believing that they should defer to their superiors. In situations involving a high power distance, transformational leadership was seen as a paradox; weakening the relationship between employees and leaders.
Similarly, Triana, Richard, and Yucel (2017) found that status incongruence (differences in age, education, work experience, and organizational tenure) between superiors and subordinates affects a transformational leader’s ability to generate task and organizational commitment among workers. In their study, low status incongruence (smaller difference) strengthened the positive relationship between transformational leadership practices and subordinate affective organizational commitment for both male and female leaders. The relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate affective organizational commitment was less positive when status incongruence between leaders and workers was high.

In a study of Spanish military units, Garcia-Guiu, Moya, Molero, and Moriano (2012) found that group identification and group cohesion were moderating variables affecting the impact of transformational leadership on the effectiveness of these units.

Yuan, Hsu, Shieh, and Li (2012) studied technology workers in Taiwan and found that emotional intelligence played a moderating role in the effectiveness of transformational leadership on work task performance and the development of positive organizational citizenship behaviors.

Herrmann and Felfe (2013) examined the field of management consulting and found that task novelty and personal initiative had moderating effects on transformational leadership and worker creativity, determining that the influence of transformational leadership in this setting depended upon both task and follower characteristics.

Knowledge management, power distance, structural distance, status incongruence, group identification, group cohesion, emotional intelligence, task novelty, and personal initiative factors all exist within educational systems and schools. The way in which these factors are
developed and managed by principals and other administrators will likely impact and have a moderating effect on the effectiveness of leadership styles and methods that these individuals employ in their daily professional relationships with teachers and other staff members.

**Psychological Aspects of Transformational Leadership**

It has long been assumed that satisfying higher-level emotional and psychological needs is a central mechanism through which transformational leaders influence their followers. This assumption was confirmed by Kovjanic, Schuh, and Jonas (2013), who established causality between transformational leadership practices, satisfaction of followers’ emotional/psychological needs, and worker engagement. Their study found that transformational leadership satisfied workers’ need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, with leaders’ competence and relational abilities directly influencing their followers’ work and workplace task engagement.

Kumako and Asumeng (2013) studied transformational leadership and followers’ psychological safety, finding a positive relationship between team psychological safety and team learning behavior, with transformational team leadership moderating this relationship. They found that transformational team leadership facilitated psychological safety among workers. This was seen to be important in creating a climate that enabled team members to ask questions and express opinions more freely, while engaging in more advanced learning behaviors; leading to improved team performance and greater overall effectiveness.

Transformational leaders who successfully bridge the power and status differentials between leaders and followers are more likely to have a team that feels psychologically safe and
is better prepared to meet team and organizational goals. This is the challenge for educational leaders, particularly in those school systems where principals or district administrators are perceived to be “distant”, “out of touch” or unapproachable.

Team leaders’ transformational behaviors that provide idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation for followers are more likely to facilitate an organizational structure and environment that is conducive for employee learning and professional growth.

As seen in the research cited thus far, workplace teams are more productive when team members believe that their leader sincerely cares about their safety and well-being. The development of trust among followers is what allows leaders to function effectively in critical situations when success often depends upon the willingness and ability of subordinates to carry out the leader’s directives quickly and efficiently.

When leadership authority is extended to subordinates, this may facilitate the development of organizational trust if these subordinates also come to be seen as caring and competent.

**Contingency and Situational Leadership Models**

Fiedler (1967) developed a contingency model of leadership, based upon the premise that the most effective behavioral style of leaders is one that varies, depending upon the situation. This theory states that task orientation (a more transactional approach) works best for leaders in situations where the leader is viewed either extremely favorably or extremely unfavorably by
followers, or when the leader has either a very high or a very low level of control. Conversely, a relations-oriented method (transformational approach) is more suitable in situations where the leader is viewed only moderately favorably, or has only a moderate level of control over followers.

Building upon the work of Fieldler (1967), Korman (1966), and Argyris (1962), Hersey and Blanchard (1969) also constructed a situational leadership model based on their belief that the most effective behavioral style of leadership is one that varies with the situation, and that the task to be accomplished and psychological maturity of the followers is crucial to determining which behavioral style of leaders will be most effective in each particular case.

Situational Leadership as described by Hersey and Blanchard has been promoted by some as the preferred approach for administrators in many private and public settings, including schools and educational institutions. Indeed, principals and other school administrators may find that they need to use different leadership methods and styles with various staff, students, parents, and community members in order to achieve their goals.

However, questions remain as to whether leaders are able to accurately gauge the “readiness” of followers or constituents with consistency, and whether leaders are able to meet the needs of followers in various situations by effectively shifting their own leadership style from one approach to another; in order to deliver the “appropriate” type of leadership under changing internal or external conditions (Bass, 1990.)
In distinguishing between directive and participative leadership, Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) proposed that the amounts of leader direction and worker participation in decision-making comprise opposite ends of a spectrum; between which there may be many possible variations.

Berlew and Heller (1983) stated that directive leadership and participative leadership can each take many different forms, depending upon how the meaning of these terms is defined. Participative leadership implies that workers have freedom to participate actively in problem-solving and decision-making; the leader may remain an active part of this process.

Participation may also consist of delegating responsibility for decisions. However, Bass (1985) says that this should not be confused with a laissez-faire approach. Leaders who delegate their authority are still responsible for ensuring that workers accept and utilize the powers they have been given. One of the risks of delegating authority to subordinates is that some individuals may misinterpret this action of the leader’s part, and believe they have been given more power than they actually have. This may cause problems; if followers make decisions or take actions that are outside of their personal domain of responsibility.

However, a participative leadership style has been found to be beneficial in many situations. Other researchers such as Coch and French (1948), Marrow, Bowers, and Seashore (1968), and Likert (1977) all found that when workers had a voice in decision-making, workplace productivity increased significantly, and job-related errors were reduced. Similar positive results have been seen in studies of transformational leadership, finding that followers
are more persistent and engaged when experiencing the sense of inclusion and autonomy that the more participative transformational leadership style provides.

**Transformational Leadership in Education**

Transformational leadership has become a widely-accepted and preferred method of leadership in schools and other educational environments. Researchers such as Popper and Lipshitz (1992) have documented the supposed shortcomings of transactional leadership, claiming that this style leads to short-lived, limited interactions between school administrators and teachers that soon fade or disappear after the immediate need for these interactions has passed.

In contrast, transformational leadership is seen to be more complex and potent because of its potential for producing mutually-reinforcing and mutually-sustaining relationships between teachers and their administrators that are more likely to form and persist when the motives and goals of leaders and followers merge together (Popper & Lipshitz, 1992).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that transformational leadership styles of school administrators had direct and indirect positive effects upon the progress of school improvement initiatives and on teacher expectations for student achievement, by creating an expectation of success.

Bass (1999) and Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis (2007) have stated that transformational leadership may be more effective than transactional leadership in schools and educational organizations, by creating a more positive and supportive climate for teachers and students alike.
Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) claim that the transformational style is the most effective form of leadership in schools and educational institutions if the leader’s value system is aligned with that of his or her staff, because a transformational style facilitates the creation of shared goals and objectives that can be actively supported by all.

**Summary of Leadership**

Today, Transactional leadership is generally seen as heavy-handed and undesirable whereas Transformational leadership is viewed much more favorably; particularly in educational settings. Transformational leadership is considered enlightened and effective because it encourages followers to become invested as active participants in the organization, rather than passive subjects simply following orders from their superiors.

Transformational leadership may provide many benefits, particularly within the school setting. However, it has been established that transformational leadership in a pure form is seen rarely, if ever. Transformational practices ordinarily augment and balance transactional leadership methods. Additionally, other participative or laissez-faire leadership methods may be used in combination with both transactional and transformational styles.

Transformational leadership practice consists of many inter-related elements. Research has shown that it may be difficult for both leaders and followers to accurately identify and distinguish between these elements. There are also many components (moderators) that may affect outcomes of transformational leadership. Situational factors and individual follower preferences are known to play a role.
We should be careful not to assume that transformational leadership is the best leadership style for all places, or in all cases. Schools and educational systems are complex organizations that may employ a very diverse group of individuals; people who perform a wide variety of different jobs and functions. Some people are more receptive to transformational leadership methods, and respond more positively to transformational practices than others.

Just as differentiated instruction and varied instructional methods and materials in our schools may be provided to meet the unique needs of students, it should be recognized and understood that different situations and unusual circumstances in schools, especially those situations which occur during times of unusual stress such as a crisis situation or emergency event, may call for a different leadership approach as well.

However, if followers trust and believe in their leader, then that individual may use a different leadership style during times of emergency or crisis and still be effective, because of the bond of respect and trust that has been created, and the credibility that has been established through previous positive interactions with followers.

The literature related to leadership and leadership methods used during general emergency situations and times of crisis will now be examined, as well as literature concerning leadership during times of crisis and emergency in educational institutions and schools.

**Definition of a Crisis/Emergency**

In order to accurately research the topic of crisis or emergency situation leadership, operational definitions of the terms “crisis” and “emergency” must be established. For the
purpose of this study, “crisis” or “emergency” is determined to be an imminent situation or event that poses great danger, and a grave threat to life and property. Examples of crisis or emergency events include natural disasters such as tornados, hurricanes, floods, fires, blizzards, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, or earthquakes. Man-made events may include kidnapping, physical assault, shootings, bombings, and terrorist attacks.

Klann (2003), states that a time of crisis is generally characterized by a high degree of instability, and carries the potential for an extremely negative outcome. Klann further says that because a crisis may bring the threat of physical danger such as death or serious injury or the large-scale destruction of property, these factors can be psychologically devastating because of the shock and terror created in those who are affected by such an event. For these reasons a crisis or emergency typically exerts a high impact on human needs, emotions, and behaviors.

In some cases there may be forewarning of an impending crisis, while an emergency generally occurs unexpectedly. However, a crisis and an emergency situation as defined here each involve difficulty and danger, both of which may pose a grave threat to life and property. Because their meanings are so similar, the terms “crisis” and “emergency” are used interchangeably from this point forward.

**Overview of Disaster Response**

What was seen universally in every major disaster analysis study included for the purpose of this review is that effective crisis response involves a highly-coordinated interaction between a number of different agencies and individuals, across a variety of response categories and job
functions. It was further observed that effective leadership during crisis and emergency situations does not occur in isolation. Rather, it is the product of intensive cooperation and interaction with others; within as well as outside of the organization.

**Major Themes in the Literature**

As a result of the literature review, five major themes common to all emergency/crisis situation leadership have emerged. These are: **Communication**, **Understanding/Sense Making**, **Psychology**, **Decision-Making/Competence**, and **Response/Operations**. The literature related to each will be explained and examined in more detail.

**Theme #1 – Communication**

Communication is the first, and perhaps the most basic element of crisis leadership, judging from a study of the literature related to disasters and emergencies. An effective crisis management plan provides an organized framework for the steps and actions that may be taken during a particular type of emergency.

However, an effective crisis response requires a coordinated effort from many different individuals and agencies. Because of this, dependable communication systems and clear communication protocols are essential so that leaders and support personnel from various first-responder teams and emergency service agencies can coordinate and carry out an effective response (Gallagher, 2007).
Leaders must be able to gather information quickly and efficiently before, during, and after a crisis situation. They must also be able to communicate with outside emergency response leaders as well as with others within their own organization. The ability to adapt to changing conditions during a crisis and execute appropriate strategies in response is widely acknowledged as an essential component of effective leadership (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). Leaders must know what is happening in order to make good decisions, and they must be able to communicate with others in order to have their strategies and directives carried out quickly and efficiently.

Hurricane Katrina, which struck the Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana gulf coast area in August of 2005, was one of the strongest storms in the recorded history of this region; it proved to be a severe test for communication systems there.

In their analysis of how two different colleges in Louisiana responded after hurricane Katrina, Collins, Savage, and Wainwright (2008) state that when Katrina hit the Pearl River, LA Community College (PRCC) campus in the early morning hours of August 29, 2005, it wiped out all communications, power, and municipal water service. PRCC had a traditional emergency plan in place at the time that the campus learned of Hurricane Katrina. The plan included a calling tree, as well as a process for communicating with staff both during and after a storm or other natural disaster. But because electronic computer and telephone systems were down, the college president could not send information or request help from outside agencies.

Additionally, strong winds, torrential rain, and objects such as fallen trees and concrete benches blocking roads and pathways made it difficult for people and vehicles to move across the large college campus. As a result, little could be done during the actual emergency. It was
not until Katrina had passed that the PRCC president met with his leadership team and community members (Collins, Savage, & Wainwright, 2008).

In their post-Katrina emergency response analysis, one of the primary conclusions reached by the PRCC Emergency Response Assessment Committee is that the near-total breakdown in communications throughout their school campus was a serious issue: They determined that there needed to be a more reliable way to locate and communicate with faculty, staff, and students as well as emergency responders during crisis/emergency situations such as this.

When communications methods are not synchronized, or if communication systems fail altogether during an emergency, then leaders of response agencies may become isolated from each other, or even from others within their own organization. When this happens, it is not possible to acquire, share, or transmit information and instructions as needed. Leaders are then unable to consult with others, learn of changing conditions, create an effective response strategy, or put a coordinated crisis response plan into effect (Koven, 2007).

Having an effective, reliable communications system is an important consideration for schools and school districts. School buildings are often large structures; the campus of some schools may consist of multiple buildings spread out over a wide area. Other large structures such as athletic fields and stadiums, maintenance and storage buildings, or physical plants that regulate HVAC and electrical services may also exist nearby. Without a robust communications system, it may be difficult to communicate with individuals in each of these locations quickly and effectively. This can have serious consequences during times of crisis.
Another issue related to communication systems is compatibility. If communication systems between response agencies do not “talk” with each other, their ability to mount a coordinated disaster response may be severely restricted.

**Interoperability** is a term used to describe the ability of first responders to communicate with each other before and during a disaster or crisis situation (Weiser, 2007). Interoperability has been identified as a significant problem in many crisis situations, and failure of the communications systems used by police officers, firemen, and emergency medical personnel has been cited as a primary cause of injury and death during crisis events (Peha, 2007).

Writing after the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, Brito (2007) confirmed that interoperability issues had been a major contributing factor to the destruction caused by this storm; numerous communication breakdowns had prevented government and local entities from carrying out their responsibilities because critical voice and data information could not be shared.

One example of this occurred when the Shreveport, Louisiana fire department was unable to communicate with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supervisors, as well as with police and fire department personnel in New Orleans when they went there to assist after Katrina. Brito found that incompatibility of the Shreveport fire department’s communication systems with those used by FEMA and the New Orleans police and fire departments meant that service agency personnel from each of these organizations were then forced to exchange information through written documents and face-to-face meetings. A similar situation occurred between local first responder personnel, both during and after Katrina. This factor caused a significant delay in many emergency responses (Brito, 2007).
First-responder problems with communication systems technology have been known and acknowledged for many years. Austin and Callen (2008) studied public and government response agencies at all levels, finding an urgent need to improve levels of interoperability and strengthen technology systems used for this purpose.

Faulhaber (2007) states that poor communication among first-responders leads to emergency situation events that are more deadly; because of uncoordinated rescue efforts that endanger the lives of response personnel themselves as well as lives of people who are directly affected by the emergency itself.

United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) and SAFECOM agency reports from 2003 state that the federal government was aware of significant interoperability issues, and had been concerned about these since the early 1970’s. Weiser (2007) identifies two primary reasons for this:

The first is that many agencies have communication systems based on older, outdated technology. Through a survey of first-responders, Weiser determined that in many cases the technology employed in their communication systems was more than twenty years old.

It was also found that public safety agencies generally do not consult with each other when selecting and implementing communications system technology. Each agency tends to select a single-purpose communications system that best meets the specific needs of that particular entity. And so, communications systems with broader functionality that are typically seen in the armed forces or private sector organizations are not chosen (Dedrick, 2006).

Additional reasons given by Weiser (2007) for this situation are that different types of public safety agencies and different levels of Federal, State, and local government have different
sources and different levels of funding, as well as different missions and priorities. Therefore, each agency selects a communication system based on what it can afford, and what its funding will support; as well as the specific purpose for which it will be used.

Linden, Kraemer, and Dedrick (2006) observed that members of the general public quickly become aware of and utilize new advances in cellular phone and other texting/messaging technology in their own personal communication, but that public and government agencies lag behind.

Dedrick, Xin, and Zhu (2008) determined that the field of public administration is very limited when developing interoperability technology theory, and slow to utilize current communication technology to ensure that communication systems used by first responders and other public agencies are compatible with each other.

Across a broad spectrum of different crisis and emergency situations, Kapucu (2008) found that catastrophic disasters require intense collaboration and close cooperation between first responders and other organizations. In order for this to occur, leaders must have robust, reliable communications systems that can be counted on to withstand extreme conditions, and these systems must have the ability to communicate with each other across all applications.

In many schools, principals communicate with other administrators and staff members using a variety of methods, including email, text, cellular phones, land-line phones, and radio (walkie-talkies.) Within school buildings, announcements for students and staff members are often made over public address systems wired to speakers in various locations. But each of these systems has limitations, and they are each subject to breakdowns and failure; particularly when subjected to extreme conditions and demands.
During hurricane Katrina, lack of effective communication among crisis leaders and responders meant that leaders and followers did not know who was really in charge. The initial response failure this caused led to a new stage of the disaster – a crisis of response systems breakdown, and the ensuing chaos in the city of New Orleans that followed (Farazmand, 2007).

If one or more communication systems should fail within a school during a crisis event, school leaders may not be able to consult with other leaders; they may be unable to receive instruction from superiors, or give direction to subordinates. This can lead to confusion and chaos among students and staff, especially if they hear incomplete or conflicting messages from different sources. In this instance, school leaders may not be able to quickly pass along critical information, or effectively disseminate important plans needed for the safety and protection of students and staff members.

Workplace technology such as computer systems, related software applications, and modern communications devices all provide many benefits; allowing individuals and organizations to accomplish more and process information with greater speed and accuracy.

However, in a study of sense-making, decision-making, and overall response to natural disaster and terror-related events in general, Boin (2006) found that at least in some instances, having an abundance of technology may actually make effective crisis response more difficult. The growing complexity of modern social, corporate, industrial, financial, infrastructure management, and administration structures and systems in general may produce unforeseen disturbances, especially if one component does not operate as it should. And if even one part of the system should fail completely, the entire system may be compromised.
Boin (2006) determined that with an increased dependence on technology and other critical infrastructures in municipal services, private industry, government, and the military, there is greater exposure to the possibility of malicious attack, and the potential for more extensive damage to essential systems. The complexity of these systems can make it more difficult for leaders to respond quickly and effectively when a crisis event does occur. Anticipating exactly which technology system areas are most likely to fail or be attacked, and what the subsequent effects of such failure or deliberate attack might be is one of the new challenges for both public and private crisis management.

In another study comparing news media reports, government reports, and after-event independent analysis of September 11 New York City terrorist attacks as well as hurricane Katrina, Kapucu (2011) found that actual response networks used by local first-responders as well as FEMA and other federal agencies differed from what had been outlined in pre-event emergency and disaster response plans. This was due to failure of and interoperability issues with local, state, and federal communications systems, as well as intermittent uncertainty as to how communications should have been coordinated and carried out.

Kapucu (2011) noted that during catastrophic disasters, the communication system(s) actually used or available for use and corresponding communication network management may be different than what is commonly deployed during less severe disasters; which occur more frequently and are therefore more familiar to leaders and response agency personnel.

Potential interoperability issues may exist within communication systems used by many schools and school districts as well. There is little in the existing literature that gives an indication of whether school administrators or others have explored this possibility. It is also
uncertain whether principals and other educational leaders have an understanding of communication systems used by those who will respond to school emergencies or crisis events within their buildings, and how their own communications systems interface with the communication systems and technologies used by outside agencies.

**Theme #2 – Credibility and Authority**

People may follow leaders they trust and revere because of their admiration for personal qualities such as charisma and integrity, or those they distrust and fear out of concern for their own well-being. Many factors may contribute toward establishing a leader’s power and authority. However, although they may obey the orders of certain authority figures, people may also choose not to listen to communication and information coming from leaders they perceive as lacking credibility.

A leader’s perceived credibility in the eyes of followers contributes to his or her leadership effectiveness; particularly during times of crisis or in emergency situations.

Noordegraaf (2011) conducted studies involving two different emergencies, a tornado that struck Birmingham, England and a fireworks factory explosion in Enschede, the Netherlands and found that when leaders played a caring and enabling role (Enschede), they were seen as compassionate heroes, and there was a stronger ethos of support and “togetherness” among crisis victims and other members of the public.

Conversely, when leaders were seen as uncaring and self-serving (Birmingham), their directives and recommendations were largely ignored because of public distrust. In this
situation, leadership came primarily from ordinary citizens within the community itself, who were seen by most as honest and selfless; and therefore credible.

Both of these situations serve to illustrate that leadership style and public perception of credibility impacts the ability of leaders to communicate, either limiting or enhancing their capacity for effective leadership during times of crisis.

After a serious airline crash in Amsterdam, Boin (2003) found that people looked to their “true leaders” for information and reassurance. There was a widespread distrust of regular government officials and news media figures; individuals whom people had found to be untruthful or unreliable in the past. And so, the public turned to local administrators and lower-ranking civil officers who they believed would give them honest, accurate information.

In this case, Boin found that higher-ranking officials and more established media personnel lacked credibility in the eyes of the public not necessarily because they were seen as dishonest or corrupt, but due to the fact that some of these people had been overly-optimistic during emergency and crisis situations in the past; making statements and sending out offers of support that they ultimately could not fulfill.

In this situation, leaders said they wanted to restore public confidence and be seen as strong figures for their nation and the local community. They also expressed a sincere desire to help and provide victims with care. However, this attempt failed because of the complex nature of the crisis, and the limited ability of officials to provide resources and actual support. Because of prior unrealistic promises and their inability to follow through and deliver on these, they were subsequently viewed by citizens as being unreliable and ineffective.
This has implications for school leaders as well. School district superintendents, school presidents, and other school administrators who make “pie in the sky” promises and overly-optimistic statements about their ability to obtain funding, provide educational materials, or raise levels of academic achievement may lose credibility; even if they are seen as honest and well-intentioned. In times of emergency or crisis, teachers and others may then be reluctant to follow the directives of administrators who are believed to be unrealistic in their assessment of situations, incapable of making effective plans, or unable to obtain and deliver needed resources.

**Leadership Communication Methods and Styles**

In some cases, the way in which a leader communicates may be just as important, if not more so, than the content of messages that he or she delivers. The media format(s) a leader employs, the stylistic methods a leader uses to communicate, and the language that he or she chooses can have a significant effect on how information is received and perceived.

In a study of leadership response to catastrophic floods in Queensland, Australia, Debussy (2012) found that Queensland Premier Anna Bligh was seen as inspirational and charismatic by followers because she openly expressed sadness and grief, as well as hope, confidence, and optimism when addressing the public. In contrast, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard was described as “robotic” and “disconnected” during the crisis because of her highly-structured, emotionless communication style.

Debussy’s study supports the idea that the transformational style of leadership can be highly effective during times of crisis. Premier Bligh was perceived to have much stronger
transformational leadership traits than Prime Minister Gillard; people were reassured and felt greater confidence both during and after the floods because of the more open and empowering way in which Premier Bligh spoke with them.

Fairhurst (2009) and Martinko (2009) each found that the public expects leaders to be present and visible during crisis situations. Public perception of a leader’s communication, visibility, and degree of accountability for disaster response operations plays a major role in determining how people evaluate a leader’s effectiveness during a catastrophic emergency. Such visibility may be important for school administrators too, particularly during a crisis, because people want to see that the leader is present and actively working on their behalf.

During and after hurricane Katrina, Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco was widely criticized, and her handling of the Karina disaster response was seen as ineffective although it was later acknowledged that she spent a great deal of time and energy working to coordinate relief efforts there. Because Governor Blanco tried to deflect criticism and used the news media to place blame for poor disaster response on New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin and FEMA, she was viewed by the public as unorganized and indecisive (Brinkley, 2006.)

Similarly, New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin was described by members of the public and the news media as unprepared and lacking in leadership not only because of his own indecisiveness and lack of accountability, but because he attempted to blame Governor Blanco and FEMA for almost everything. It was found that the poor relationship between Governor Blanco and Mayor Nagin contributed toward a negative public perception for both of them.

Conversely, it was seen that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 2008 response to wildfires in California created a positive public perception that enhanced his credibility there
When wildfires in southern California destroyed many acres of forestland, threatening homes and businesses, Governor Schwarzenegger arrived quickly on the scene; meeting with people and listening to their concerns.

Governor Schwarzenegger coordinated with emergency service responders, and reassured the public by outlining a response plan that was published in the media and broadcast on television news reports. In this case, public response was favorable and Schwarzenegger’s leadership was seen as highly effective, because of the “presence” that he established and the example that he set for other emergency service leaders and coordinators.

Although it was later determined that Governor Blanco had worked very hard to help the people of Louisiana after Katrina, her contributions were not appreciated or valued as highly, because she worked primarily from her office (Fairhurst, 2009). As a result, the things she did were not as visible or widely known to hurricane victims or the general public.

In late fall of 2001, there was an anthrax attack in New York City. Mayor Rudy Giuliani immediately held press conferences, during which he directly answered questions and gave accurate, useful information while appearing with other city officials. Mayor Giuliani’s performance during these press conferences was well-received, because he was seen to be empathetic and involved.

It was found that Giuliani’s leadership during the anthrax outbreak was judged to be effective not only because of the way he handled this particular situation, but also because he had responded in similar fashion during the recent September 11 terrorist attacks (Mullin, 2010). Because of the way he effectively handled the 9/11 attacks, Giuliani gained in public stature and perception. This gave him more authority and credibility during the anthrax crisis that followed.
When school leaders are able to communicate effectively and handle emergencies successfully their credibility is enhanced as well; students, staff, and parents may then be more willing to follow their direction during subsequent crisis events. The language and style of delivery that a leader uses in his/her communication both before and after a crisis can also have a significant impact upon followers.

Rudy Giuliani may have recognized this. Pennebaker (2002) conducted a review of 35 speeches given by Mayor Giuliani between 1993 and 2001, and found that Giuliani’s public communication style changed significantly over time. Over the years, Giuliani used language with more warmth in his speeches, incorporating more common social words and phrases. After the September 11 attacks, Giuliani’s language in speeches became simpler, and he focused on the future rather than the present or the past. This was seen as an attempt to relate more closely while building connections with fellow New Yorkers; further enhancing his public image and perception.

Martinko (2009) found that the public perception had a significant impact on how people responded to their leaders during crisis situations, and their assessment of events and outcomes that followed. People attributed negative crisis situation outcomes after Katrina to negative personal qualities they had identified in their leaders (Governor Blanco, Mayor Nagin), and more favorable outcomes (people, animals, and property saved; homes spared) after the California wildfires to the positive personal qualities they attributed to Governor Schwarzenegger.

From these examples, it seems that effective crisis leadership may consist not only of responding to emergency situations effectively, but also of creating a positive mindset and an expectation of positive results among followers. Leaders may attempt to accomplish this not
only through their own words and actions during an emergency, but also by mobilizing professional and communications networks so that a one’s interventions and contributions toward crisis leadership are made visible, thereby establishing a strong leadership “presence” in the eyes and minds of the public.

During a crisis event it may be helpful for principals and superintendents to be visible, communicating effectively and often with their staff; keeping people informed not only of changing conditions and situations, but also telling them about the steps that have been taken and the progress that has been made in dealing with negative effects caused by the crisis. Above all, the leader can maintain a realistic yet positive outlook; using optimistic language while creating a belief and an expectation among followers that together, they will come through the crisis event successfully.

**Impact of Communications Media**

The way in which a leader’s crisis response is portrayed through the media may also have a significant impact on how followers evaluate his or her performance. In a review of news articles that appeared in major newspapers during and after hurricane Katrina, Littlefield (2007) found that the focus and tone of these articles changed over time, reflecting different phases in their approach to coverage of this event.

At first, stories tended to concentrate on descriptions of the hurricane itself and a more neutral view of what was happening in the immediate aftermath of the storm. Positive news coverage was associated with action words such as “warned”, “prepared”, and “evacuated.”
Later, the media began to judge and assign blame through more negative coverage and articles that contained descriptive words and terms such as “overwhelmed”, “disorganized”, and “miscommunication.” It was often seen that the point of view of a particular article was not consistent with perceptions of other authority figures, or views held by the general public (Littlefield, 2007).

During a rapidly-unfolding crisis in which access to official information is severely restricted, the media may abdicate their editorial duty to weigh and assess the value of such information, preferring to resort to inflammatory headlines. When a nuclear energy plant accident in Chernobyl, Russia caused failure of the plant’s nuclear reactors and a subsequent “meltdown” disaster, very little official verified information was available while this crisis was happening, and for some time afterward. This was due not only to an ineffective, disorganized emergency situation response, but also because of the Russian government’s tight control of the news media there (Marples, 1988).

Because so little reliable information was available at the time, media outlets seized upon wildly exaggerated accounts and started reporting these as fact. This caused widespread fear and panic, especially among the local population.

The mass media comprise another important resource in crisis management. The news media is mainly a reactive force, often obliged to depend upon information supplied by sources closely associated with the crisis event. Because these situations are fast-moving and happen under rapidly-changing conditions, the media often report information which, under normal circumstances, they would reject as unsound or uncorroborated.
Understanding this, school administrators may facilitate a more organized crisis response by releasing a full and complete account of events as soon as this becomes known to them; in order to prevent panic and chaos among staff, students, and the public.

Koven (2010) found that during a disaster, officials may try to “spin” the news in order to show that they are providing strong leadership. This happened during and after hurricane Katrina when FEMA Director Michael Brown, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco, and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin all put out announcements in which they attempted to portray themselves as effective leaders during the crisis, while assigning blame for the poor overall disaster response to each other.

This lack of coordination, and outright competition between Brown, Blanco, and Nagin to show “strong leadership” also reflected poorly on President George Bush, and contributed to an atmosphere of incompetence and chaos in the city of New Orleans (Koven, 2010).

People will judge whether principals and superintendents are in control and effectively handling an emergency situation or crisis event by looking to see if these leaders are able to effectively coordinate information among themselves, and if they join together in agreement about crisis facts and strategies when making announcements to the media. Doing so projects an image of competence and control, and is likely to elicit a more effective emergency or crisis response among followers and the general public.
Theme #3 - Understanding/Sense-Making

A catastrophic crisis event involving loss of human life and widespread destruction of property can be terrifying for the public. In such a horrific situation, leaders may be hesitant to provide very much information, especially if the information they have is extremely grim. In order to inspire confidence in followers and convince them to remain calm, leaders may feel they should not say anything that could increase levels of panic or fear.

However, people deserve to know, and have a fundamental need to know what is happening during a serious public emergency. Back (2010) conducted a study of over 500,000 lines of pager texts sent and received while the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were occurring in New York City.

Examining the contents of these messages, Back found that as the attacks unfolded people continued to become angrier and also more anxious because they didn’t know what was going on. However, after 2:49pm Eastern Standard Time, when Mayor Rudy Giuliani addressed the media and issued a statement outlining the staggering number of deaths and the extent of physical destruction caused by the attacks, text message expressions of sadness and anger continued to rise but expressions of anxiety declined (Back, 2010).

This finding may serve to illustrate that people want to know what is happening during a crisis, even if the news is bad. It seems that for many affected by the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it was most stressful simply not knowing what was going on. Once they had a clearer picture of events on that day, they were able to focus and express their emotions.
Leaders may believe they are reducing anxiety by withholding or delaying bad news, but followers want and need accurate information as soon as possible both during and immediately after a crisis, so they may start to adjust and respond to what has occurred.

Gaspar (2011) conducted a study of several hurricane and storm-related disasters in the United States between 1970 and 2006, analyzing voting records and patterns, as well as public opinion polls involving public officials in states affected by these disasters. Gasper found that when the response to a particular disaster is judged to be poor, state governors are blamed for not having provided greater preventive measures.

When people felt that a governor had responded quickly and communicated openly with the public, they were ranked higher in opinion polls. When governors had requested federal assistance and a disaster declaration was granted, their support among the public increased as reflected by improved ratings in opinion polls and better election results. This seems to support the idea that when an emergency situation is quickly addressed and an official disaster declaration is made, victims will be less upset and angry because their plight is officially recognized and acknowledged.

**Restorative Rhetoric**

First described by Spence, Lachlan, and Griffin, (2007), Restorative Rhetoric consists of emotionally-charged proclamations and statements delivered by a leader or other significant public figure either through the mass media, or in person. Restorative Rhetoric is created
through a leader’s ability to genuinely identify with and give voice to the concerns and needs of those affected by a catastrophic crisis event.

According to Spence, et al., (2007), Restorative Rhetoric serves three key purposes: (1) Creating a sense of security during resolution of the crisis, (2) Facilitating the emotional and psychological healing of those directly affected by the crisis as well as others who have witnessed the event, and (3) Giving people a sense of hope by instilling a preferred vision for the future.

Seeger and Griffin-Padgett (2010) found that while some individuals are directly affected by a particular crisis, there also exists a wider group that has been emotionally traumatized by the event. Leaders may use Restorative Rhetoric to help crisis victims and others cope with the physical and emotional effects of a catastrophic emergency, serving to facilitate the sense-making and healing process for those who must deal with what has just happened.

Griffin-Padgett (2010) compared New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani’s response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks with New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin’s response to hurricane Katrina in 2005 by analyzing their press conferences, interviews, and speeches given in the days, weeks, and months following each of these disasters.

In each instance, Mayor Giuliani and Mayor Nagin maintained a constant, visible presence in their cities throughout the crisis event; Giuliani appearing often at “Ground Zero” of the destroyed World Trade Centers and Nagin frequently visiting those areas of New Orleans hit hardest by the hurricane. Both mayors spoke of the brutal hardships people in these cities had to endure, directly addressing their citizens as well as the entire nation, conveying a message to constituents that they were concerned about their emotional and physical well-being.
Koven (2006) states that mayor Ray Nagin believed he could do little or nothing to help the people of New Orleans even before Katrina arrived, and so he attempted to shift culpability onto others even before the hurricane made landfall. Both Nagin and Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco quickly recognized they were unable to cope with the magnitude of the impending storm, and began to chastise the federal government for the city’s lack of preparedness (Brinkley, 2006, p56).

In a September 1, 2005 interview on local radio which was later broadcast over the Internet, Nagin strongly condemned George Bush. Nagin claimed that there was an incredible crisis happening in New Orleans, saying that thousands of people were “stuck in attics” while others “don’t have a clue what’s going on.” Nagin appealed for reinforcements, troops, and buses and announced that a national disaster existed that was “a major, major, major deal.” (CNN.com, 2005).

Nagin also expressed frustration at what he believed to be misdirected national priorities such as the war in Iraq. He implored the President and the Governor of Louisiana to “get off your asses and do something” (CNN.com, 2005). Following the radio call in, Nagin was congratulated by local officials who felt he had given voice to the frustrations felt by many in the New Orleans community.

Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) found that restorative rhetoric appears to be effective in crisis situations when the crisis event is not a result of an organization’s unethical behavior or a serious mistake made by corporate leaders. In these cases, the use of such rhetoric is seen primarily as a device that a company may use to regain public confidence in its products or services, thereby restoring its own public image.
In their study, it was seen that true restorative rhetoric requires authentic motives, or at least the outward appearance of authenticity from leaders. People in New York and New Orleans believed in the authenticity of what Mayor Giuliani and Mayor Nagin were saying. Their words resonated strongly; accurately reflecting what many in these cities were feeling and the emotions they each expressed seemed very genuine.

This authenticity, and the ability of Giuliani and Nagin to connect with people on a human level, gave people a sense of hope and relief while helping them make sense of what had happened.

Both during and after a crisis event, principals and other educational leaders may help followers understand and make sense of what has happened by communicating frequently, directly, and openly with them. They can also give voice to the fears, frustrations, and concerns of followers by addressing these through the media with honestly, concern, and compassion. This facilitates the psychological healing process for students, staff, and other victims that may be needed due to emotional trauma caused by a major emergency or time of crisis.

**Theme #4 - Psychology**

Catastrophic disasters can cause tremendous physical damage and destruction. After the crisis event has passed, cleanup begins; homes, buildings, and other structures are eventually torn down, repaired, or replaced. Restorative Rhetoric and other near-term coping mechanisms may allow people to make sense of what has just happened and regain their psychological equilibrium in the aftermath of disaster. But crisis events often have a more permanent psychological effect
that can take root during the crisis, and then persist long after physical damage has been fixed and visible evidence of the disaster no longer remains.

Repairing the physical damage caused by a catastrophic event restores needed facilities and services. However, this process serves an additional purpose. Austin (2014) interviewed experienced senior managers who had directed the reconstruction of city infrastructure and restoration of public services after a crisis, and found that this repair activity went beyond simply giving people access to basic necessities and things they needed for their daily lives. It also helped to ease fears and emotional distress in crisis victims, by providing a visible symbol of recovery and healing that gave people confidence, letting them know that conditions had returned back to normal.

After a particularly violent and shocking event at a school, such as the mass shooting that occurred at Sandy Hook (NJ) elementary, survivors and other victims may not be emotionally prepared to return to the specific building or location where such tragedy occurred. But if strong negative emotions or fears are not associated with a particular school or educational site, then it may be preferable to begin cleanup, repairs, and reconstruction of the physical structure as soon as possible.

Wright & Wordsworth (2013) conducted a study of college students in New Zealand in order to gauge the efficacy and psychological effects of measures implemented by the college after a series of earthquakes devastated their campus. Analysis of their data identified four major themes relating to actions taken by university personnel following the earthquakes. These were related to psychological and emotional needs of students, reducing student uncertainty, programmatic/pedagogical changes to courses, and behaviors relating to communication.
Throughout this recovery period, university administrators and instructors made a number of adjustments to class locations, schedules, and requirements. Classes were held in tents put up on university parking lots; some were relocated to area motels, churches, and local corporate offices. Many courses changed to an online format. When two more significant earthquakes hit during finals week, the exam schedule was compressed and many tests were administered via the internet. A significant effort was made by college administrators to maintain a positive, high-quality learning experience for their students.

Student responses indicated an appreciation for instructors who acknowledged the difficult nature of the current educational environment and the emotional impact of what they had been through. However, data also showed students preferred that instructors focus on the key course topic rather than earthquake-related events. Although many had been traumatized, they expressed a desire to return to “normal” class routines and their usual class facilities as soon as possible (Wright & Wordsworth, 2013.)

People have a psychological need to feel “in control” of events, and their immediate surroundings; a perceived loss of control often leads to fear and anxiety. Arceneaux (2006) surveyed voters in Houston, TX who participated in a mayoral election following severe flooding there and found that people evaluated local government leaders based on whether preventive measures they believed were needed had been provided.

Arceneaux found that attribution of blame to various political leaders was shaped by the direct experience of voters, and the amount of political information they had received. People who could see evidence of flood prevention measures, either through direct observation or via
pictures and descriptions given through the news media were much less harsh in their assessment of the mayor and other political leaders.

Coping and Healing

During a crisis, people want to know who is in charge; so they may know who will provide information and direction, and who they should blame if things go wrong. Arceneaux (2006) discovered that for people who had experienced the Houston floods, assigning blame for negative outcomes was not simply an outlet for anger and frustration. It also fulfilled a fundamental need and desire to maintain a sense of control, even when things happened that were well beyond the control of those who were there.

Restorative Rhetoric has already been cited as a coping mechanism used during and immediately after a catastrophic crisis by civic and government leaders; to help people understand and deal with the impact of what has just occurred. New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin stands out because of his forceful use of restorative rhetoric during hurricane Katrina. It was found that Nagin’s use of such rhetoric, through angry, accusatory statements broadcast by the news media actually helped calm fears and give hope to those affected most by the storm (Spence, et al., 2007).

It is widely acknowledged that the local, state, and federal response to Katrina was extremely poor (CNN.com, 2006). News reports emphasized Mayor Nagin’s failure to mobilize available resources that could have been used to help victims and prevent further deaths during the hurricane, Governor Blanco’s failure to effectively evacuate the New Orleans area or provide
state government assistance before Katrina hit, and the federal government’s (FEMA) failure to provide emergency shelter, food, medical supplies, and other needed resources during and after the storm.

After Katrina had subsided, days, weeks, and months went by and still many people were suffering. Large parts of the city of New Orleans remained under water; and many had been displaced from their homes. Basic services and necessities were still lacking, and people who remained there were discouraged and distressed by what they perceived as the federal government’s indifference to their plight (USAToday.com, 2015).

Mayor Nagin was constantly criticized in the media for the poor job he had done in New Orleans. Still, Nagin continued to lash out at leaders in Washington and other local officials, arguing against those who wanted to limit the rebuilding of homes and neighborhoods in New Orleans while making additional statements accusing various individuals of racial bias.

One of the most widely-known examples of restorative rhetoric from this period occurred during a hurricane relief concert which was held on September 2, 2005 and broadcast live by NBC. Upon taking the stage, rapper Kanye West deviated from prepared remarks and immediately launched into an improvised monologue that contained a number of inflammatory, racially-charged statements, including the now-famous and oft-repeated accusation that “George Bush doesn’t care about black people.” (NBC, 2005).

At first, concert hosts and other performers appeared to be shocked and aghast at what West had just said. But West’s remarks resonated strongly, especially among blacks in the New Orleans area. This statement was repeated often, particularly in the African-American community. “George Bush doesn’t care about black people” became a rallying cry for many and
a symbol of unity; especially in the aftermath of the Katrina when weeks and months went by and people continued to suffer under wretched living conditions while receiving little or no assistance from the federal government. West’s statement appeared to give voice to what many in New Orleans were thinking and feeling.

Interestingly, several other concert performers, including those who had initially seemed to distance themselves from West’s statement, later put out statements of their own praising Kanye West for his courage, while agreeing with what he had said that night. Maybe this was an attempt to repair their own public image, or perhaps they were engaging in some restorative rhetoric of their own.

Nagin’s continued use of restorative rhetoric long after hurricane Katrina was over gave people a sense that someone cared about them and their situation, when it appeared that most state and federal leaders did not (Griffin-Padgett & Allison, 2010). Nagin’s use of restorative rhetoric helped people in New Orleans deal with the long-term emotional and psychological effects of the storm, helping them deal with losing family members and loved ones, as well as their homes and other possessions.

After Katrina, Nagin’s rhetoric became more strident and more racially-based, questioning the motives of local leaders and those in Washington, while accusing them of neglect and indifference due to racial bias. Some local officials and businessmen were hesitant to rebuild parts of New Orleans, especially areas where the land was below sea-level. But this was where most black New Orleans city residents lived. Nagin refuted this thinking (Levy, 2005). While delivering a speech on Martin Luther King Day in January of 2006, Nagin used the
phrase "Chocolate City" to indicate that New Orleans would remain a majority black city. He later repeated the metaphor in several other public statements (CNN, 2006).

Nagin also said that New Orleans "will be a majority African-American city because this is what God wants it to be.” He then condemned leaders in Washington D.C. by saying God "sent us hurricane after hurricane after hurricane, and it's destroyed and put stress on this country", suggesting God's disapproval of President George Bush’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003 (Washington Post, 2006).

This was something that resonated strongly with the people in New Orleans, where the population was predominantly African-American. Lay (2009) analyzed data from pre- and post-election polls in New Orleans, finding that voter preference and behavior after hurricane Katrina was primarily based on racial group interests.

African-Americans there overwhelmingly approved of Nagin’s rhetoric and the comments he was making through the media. African-American voters agreed with Nagin, blaming the federal government and not local officials for failure of the city’s levee system and the resultant flooding caused by Katrina. Even though these same voters acknowledged that Nagin had done a poor job in preparing for and dealing with Katrina, they still re-elected Nagin as mayor, primarily because the aggressive restorative rhetoric approach he had used appealed to people and gave them confidence (Lay, 2009).
The Power of Presence

The physical presence of a leader during times of crisis gives credibility to their restorative rhetoric; it also gives reassurance to followers. Mayor Ray Nagin’s constant presence in the most damaged areas of New Orleans provided a powerful visual backdrop that gave added meaning and authority to his statements. Similarly, Mayor Rudy Giuliani appeared frequently near the damaged World Trade Centers in New York City when speaking after the terrorist attacks there on 9/11.

In some cases, a leader’s presence may possibly avert or help calm a crisis situation. Pinkert (2007) found that during an extended period of riots in Israel, crowd control was achieved only after the Jerusalem city mayor made a personal appearance at the scene. In this case, the leader’s ability to intervene while the crisis event was ongoing prevented further injury, damage, and destruction.

This does not necessarily mean that leaders should be present only if they can do so while the crisis event is unfolding. Three days after the 9/11 attacks, President George Bush went to Ground Zero in New York and gave a short speech then posed with firemen on a pile of rubble creating a powerful photo. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 had caused massive physical damage, and there was little that Bush could do to immediately help. However, being at the attack site created a strong visual image that depicted him as concerned and caring during a crisis situation (Ciulla, 2010).

Conversely, President Bush was not there during Katrina. On August 31, 2005, President Bush flew back to Washington from a vacation in Texas. Dyson (2006, p71) observed that Bush
might have stopped in New Orleans or at other locations along the battered Gulf Coast in order to interact with the people; thereby providing both real and symbolic leadership. But he did not. Instead, as Air Force One passed over the city of New Orleans, Bush simply had the plane descend so he could get a better view of the devastation that had occurred below.

During this time, photographers on board were invited to take pictures of Bush surveying the hurricane’s damage. Advisors hoped to portray Bush as a man concerned about people affected by the tragedy of the storm. But Brinkley (2006, p408) reports that this effort backfired; saying the resulting photos made Bush look uncaring and uninformed. These photos became a symbol of Bush’s supposed indifference toward the plight of those affected most by the wrath of Katrina.

Perhaps Bush felt there was little he could have done. But regardless of whether he could have personally helped in disaster relief efforts or not, Bush could have “been there” during Katrina. Ciulla (2010) found that a leader’s “being there” for constituents is a matter of moral and emotional importance, even when doing so lacks immediate practical value. A leader’s physical presence serves the expectations and needs of followers: Being present, visible, and accessible during a crisis gives them hope and reassurance.

Similarly, school leaders who are present and visible during an emergency may give a tangible sign that they are “taking ownership” of the event, and that they are available to help support followers and others who need them.
Theme #5 - Decision-Making and Competence

The easiest crisis to manage is one that never occurs. In other words, it pays for leaders to be vigilant; anticipating and taking steps to prevent situations from happening that could lead to an emergency or catastrophe.

Olaniran and Williams (2001) found that the concept of control is important in anticipating and managing a crisis situation. The anticipatory model fosters vigilance and preventive decision-making in the pre-crisis stage when warning signs of impending problems first appear, as well as during and after a crisis event. The primary emphasis of this model is on crisis prevention and de-escalation, achieved by paying close attention to early warning signs of a potential crisis and then taking the action required to avoid crisis or minimize its impact if one should develop.

Caro (2015) states that failure to heed “red flags” and other pre-crisis warning signals often leads to systemic paralysis during emergencies; this creates chaos and delayed response during a crisis that can be disastrous. Crisis situations hold many dangers; they challenge people psychologically as well as physically. Supervisors, managers, and other leaders such as school administrators who encounter crisis or emergency situations only rarely, may not understand or fully comprehend the warning signs of potentially significant danger when these appear. These individuals may not even realize that action is required at the onset of a crisis event, and once the crisis has intensified they may feel confused or overwhelmed; powerless to direct or do anything.

One of the primary challenges of crisis situation leadership may consist of establishing who will actually take control and lead during the disaster, especially if the person previously
designated for this assignment is not present, willing, or able to do so. This can be true for educational institutions as well.

The superintendent of a school district or president of a school is the “official” organizational leader, but this person may not be the one best-suited for the role and may not be able to effectively execute it under crisis conditions. If another person is assigned to take over and direct response operations at any point during an actual emergency or crisis event, then students, staff, and others will need to have a clear understanding of where and to whom they should look for direction and guidance.

Boin (2009) found that catastrophic disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and other destructive events often have a large geographic and functional “spread.” This means that catastrophic events can occur over a large physical area, and involve many different emergency response agencies. This creates a power vacuum and leads to indecision or inaction when it is not clear who “owns” the crisis, and who must deal with it.

From a survey of experienced crisis event managers, Boin (2013) determined that the ten most important tasks for successful crisis management are:

1. Early recognition of potential crisis conditions
2. Sense-making for those who have experienced a catastrophic crisis event
3. Making correct choices when faced with critical decisions during the crisis
4. Orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination between response agencies
5. Coupling and decoupling crisis response activities
7. Communication throughout the crisis
8. Rendering accountability for crisis-related decisions and response activities
9. Learning from the crisis in order to improve response to future crisis events
10. Enhancing resiliency of the organization and people affected by the crisis.
Boin found that misunderstandings between crisis managers were common. It was seen that an appreciative gap, or a difference in how people perceive and react to the same crisis event often exists between crisis directors and managers who devise the strategic crisis response, and operational leaders who must organize and implement crisis response plans. Boin determined that this is because individuals may not agree on the specific cause for a particular crisis.

Complex situations triggered by a sequence of events or by multiple events that occur simultaneously may be seen and interpreted much differently. Similarly, crisis event directors and emergency response managers may not agree on what constitutes the most effective type of disaster response. Valuable time is often lost while managers and leaders debate the precise meaning of specific events, and the potential effectiveness of various possible response options (Boin, 2013).

Boin (2013) reports that followers and the general public will assess the effectiveness of crisis management according to whether they see response personnel “getting things done”, and workers who are “making things happen.” Witnessing this type of activity, and seeing these images fulfills a symbolic psychological need, and makes people feel secure by instilling the belief that things are being taken care of.

The way in which school administrators and leaders handle a crisis by reaching out to those affected can also impact their psychological and physical well-being. Elliott and Taylor (2006) studied the actions of school district administrators when Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana’s St. Bernard Parish.

During and immediately after Katrina, many who remained in New Orleans could not escape. In this situation, rising waters from the storm caused those who could not evacuate to
seek shelter within the Parish; fifteen hundred people made their way to the Parish high school and were eventually trapped there on the second floor.

In response, the school leadership team showed strong, decisive leadership in moving the sick and disabled to the highest parts of the school, and in rationing provisions of food and water so that these supplies would not quickly run out. School officials remained and coordinated rescue efforts as people were gradually transported away as the storm subsided.

Decisive, effective leadership on the part of the school district superintendent and her staff during and after this emergency was cited as an important element in maintaining morale under difficult conditions. By observing the fact that school leaders remained calm and confident of success, followers were inspired to remain calm and confident too, believing that they would survive the difficult conditions created by Katrina and that they would soon be rescued.

When crisis response is delayed or only partially implemented, people may start to believe that crisis leaders do not know what should be done (Scholtens, 2008). This perception may increase levels of fear and panic among followers, which can further inhibit effective crisis response if people are reluctant to follow crisis leaders’ directives or if they act in ways that are counter-productive to the efforts of emergency response personnel. Examples of this could include refusal to evacuate, refusal to follow instructions given by police and other authorities, or even looting, robbery, assault, and other types of criminal activity.

This happened during and after hurricane Katrina, when local, state, and federal agencies and organizations were overwhelmed. Because standard communications systems that were in place did not work, an organized response was not possible and this led to chaos. People trapped
in the city of New Orleans soon realized that no one was coming to help them, and many perished. Those remaining tried to escape the rising flood waters on their own and then set about obtaining food, water, or other needed supplies in any manner that they could; breaking into abandoned homes, stores, and businesses or stealing from other residents, as well as from tourists and visitors who happened to be nearby (Scholtens, 2008).

Katrina clearly showed that during the acute phase of a catastrophic disaster, it may be impossible to achieve central controlled response coordination, especially when a large portion of the population has been affected by panic and fear.

Maintaining calm and preventing panic among students, staff, parents, and the members of the school community during a crisis may pose a significant challenge for educational leaders as well; since schools often concentrate a large number of people within facilities that have many classrooms and other smaller learning spaces isolated from each other, with restricted, limited access to exit escape routes or emergency shelters.

Based on leadership survey results from a variety of catastrophic events, Goldberg and Blake (2018) state that during a crisis situation, it is important to consider that conditions can change rapidly and that available information may be outdated or inaccurate. Incoming information about crisis events needs to be examined and taken in context, with consideration given to the potential for data inaccuracy and the possibility of misinterpretation issues, psychological interference, and possible breakdowns in technology. Their findings emphasize the importance of communicating concisely, precisely, and decisively during and emergency; avoiding redundancy.
Dolan (2006) interviewed a number of school administrators who had experienced significant crisis events. One such individual (Gonzalez) directed response operations at a large state university during and after several natural disaster events including hurricanes Andrew, Ivan, and Katrina. Gonzalez states that before a crisis situation occurs a leader needs to be proactive and have a response team already in place rather than waiting for a crisis to happen and then trying to organize. Gonzalez claims that people on the crisis response team can’t have an “academic modality” of “looking at the situation from every possible angle” (p.7), and says there must be appropriate action immediately as events unfold. Gonzalez believes decisions must be made in a timely manner, and that each person on the response team should have a clearly-defined role to play.

**Crisis Response - Organization**

Experienced crisis managers from many different fields all seem to agree on the need for timely, accurate communication and a clearly-defined leadership structure with individualized job functions and a well-established chain of command in order to deal effectively with catastrophic emergency situations.

The need for strong, timely leadership during crisis applies equally in other emergency response fields such as medicine. In a study of hospital emergency room trauma cases, Hoff, Reilly, Rotondo, DiGiacomo, and Schwab (1997) found that when medical ER teams had a designated trauma team physician-leader, team members were more likely to adhere to Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) standards of care. It was seen that when a physician-
leader was not present, ER personnel were more likely to deviate from ATLS treatment
protocols. Regardless of leadership style employed by the physician team leader, it was found
that simply having a strong leadership presence can help ensure that standards of emergency
medical care are maintained; by holding team members accountable for their actions.

Holcomb et al. (2002) studied medical trauma emergency response in the military; at
hospitals as well as in the field. Obtaining results similar to Hoff et al., Holcomb et al. found
that medical emergency response teams were more effective and achieved higher incident/injury
survival and recovery rates as well as reduced recovery time when a clearly-defined emergency
team leader was present; with other team members playing supporting roles.

In an observational study of various hospital and clinical medical emergency treatment
settings, Yun (2005) found that emergency medical response leadership effectiveness varied,
depending upon severity of the patient’s injury and the level of medical team members’
experience. Directive (strongly transactional) leadership was seen to be more effective (based
upon survival/recovery rate and recovery time) when the patient’s injury was more severe, or
when members of the emergency response team were less-experienced. Empowered (strongly
transformational) leadership was shown to be more effective in less-severe injury cases, or when
ER team members were more experienced.

Based upon these examples, it seems that when medical emergency response personnel
are less experienced, they may want and need more directive leadership, especially in critical
situations. When ER team members are more experienced, they may be better able to draw upon
their own knowledge. They may also be more confident in their ability to accurately apply this
knowledge and their own professional skills in treating patients.
In the course of this literature review, similar studies were not seen for emergency responders in other fields. Additional research in this area may be helpful; it may be useful and desirable to further explore the relationship between leadership presence, level of experience among response team members, and emergency response outcomes for other types of first responders such as police, fire, EMT, etc. in future research studies.

**Crisis Response – Operations**

Although crisis response plans may outline the steps to be taken in various types of crisis or emergency situations as well as designate who is responsible for carrying out these actions, someone must actually direct the implementation of the plan and direct response operations before, during and after a crisis event.

Small, minor emergencies may be handled by one specific agency or even one particular person, but large-scale, catastrophic crisis situations such as hurricanes or earthquakes require a coordinated response involving a number of different organizations and entities that must work together in concert (Koven, 2007).

In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for handling natural disasters that may impact a significant number of people, and those that require substantial response and resources beyond what state or local governments may have available (FEMA, 2018). During a disaster, the Incident Commander and subordinate officials are responsible for planning the overall incident response and managing all necessary tactical operations. The Incident Commander reports directly to the Director of FEMA (FEMA, 2018.)
According to FEMA, The Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. A basic premise of ICS is that it is widely applicable. It is used to organize both near-term and long-term field-level operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies, from small to complex incidents, both natural and manmade.

ICS is used by all levels of government—Federal, State, local, and tribal—as well as by many private-sector and nongovernmental organizations. ICS is also applicable across disciplines. It is normally structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance and administration. The person who directs this response is the Incident Response Commander (IRC).

All responders, regardless of agency affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the Incident Response Commander, and each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor (FEMA, 2016).

During a crisis situation, the Incident Commander is responsible for overall incident management, including establishment of an Incident Command Post, establishing immediate priorities, establishing the level of organization needed, and continuously monitoring the operation and effectiveness of that organization, approving and implementing the Incident Action Plan, coordinating the activities of the Command and General Staff, approving requests for additional resources or for the release of resources, approving the use of participants,
volunteers, and auxiliary personnel, and authorizing the release of information to the news media (FEMA, 2016).

Analyzing information and insight gained from emergency managers, directors, and senior emergency response leaders involved with the September 11, 2001 New York City terrorist attacks, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Kapucu (2006) found that members of the public want greater state and federal leadership during exceptional catastrophic disasters such as these, and that people expect professional emergency response managers and public leaders to do a consistently excellent job, no matter how long the disaster might last.

From this study, in addition to analysis of previous and subsequent natural disasters and man-made crisis events, Kapucu (2008) found that disaster management during catastrophic situations requires intense collaboration and close cooperation between various emergency response agencies and organizations at the national, state, and local levels.

Stern (2013) indicates that one of the primary responsibilities of crisis response leadership includes planning and making preparations for future possible crisis events. However, it is extremely difficult to anticipate and plan for every possible contingency, and every different type of emergency situation that might occur.

Kapucu (2011) found that emergency response network procedures actually used during the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and the September 2005 landfall of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans were different than those that had been laid out in prior emergency disaster response plans. Due to the highly-unpredictable nature of catastrophic disaster events, management of the emergency response network in these cases has proven to be different from, and more challenging than management of less-extreme disaster response efforts.
This is due, at least in part, to the fact that less-extreme disasters occur more often, thus giving crisis situation leaders and emergency response personnel more experience in dealing with these events. With this experience comes repetition and knowledge, which may be applied again in the future when confronted with similar situations.

However, just being familiar with crisis response plans and practicing crisis response activities may not be adequate preparation for leading effectively during an emergency situation, and especially when faced with a catastrophic crisis event. In a study of public health and safety crisis leadership, Hadley (2011) found that emergency leadership efficacy depended to a lesser extent on simply knowing crisis response procedures, and much more soon the leader’s ability to understand and process information quickly, and then improvise an effective response in a rapidly-changing and unpredictable environment.

Low (2008), in describing the use of crisis response teams to help students and staff after a crisis event, explains that many school administrators may react slowly or ineffectively during a crisis because the educational leader’s fear of being viewed as inadequate was strong. Low cites the work of Johnson (2001): “Administrators are under tremendous stress during a crisis situation, often feeling personally responsible for both the incident and the outcome” (p. 106).

Farazmand (2007) found that anticipation is a key element of both emergency and crisis event management. During hurricane Katrina, lack of effective communication among crisis leaders and responders meant that leaders and followers did not know who was really in charge. The initial response failure this caused led to a new stage of the disaster – a crisis of response systems breakdown, and the ensuing chaos in New Orleans that followed.
Failure to provide not just effective emergency response during and after Katrina, but neglecting to give “chaos” training; giving leaders practice and developing their skills in adapting to a variety of different scenarios they might be confronted with during a crisis situation was cited as a major failure of city, state, and federal disaster response agencies.

Farazmand (2007) advocates for such chaos training, teaching how to handle and adapt to unexpected and chaotic conditions, as a way to build emergency response and crisis management capacity in crisis management leaders and first responders such as police and fire department personnel.

On May 12, 2008, a large area in Sichuan Province, China was shaken by an extremely strong and long-lasting earthquake that registered a Richter Scale magnitude of 8.0. As a result of this event, 69,227 Chinese citizens were killed, 374,643 were injured, and 17,923 were missing. (Lin, Ashkenazi, Dorn, & Savoia, 2014). In response, the Chinese government established an emergency response command, with the Chinese Premier taking the post of Commander-in-Chief.

Premier Wen Jiabao went to the disaster scene 90 minutes after the earthquake began in order to personally direct rescue and recovery efforts. It was reported in the media that his presence there had a positive impact on subsequent crisis response decisions, because he had first-hand knowledge of the situation and a clear understanding of the disaster’s magnitude and effect (Lin et al., 2014).

Premier Jiabao declared the need to engage the People’s Liberation Army, as well as armed national police and fire fighters, who all operated under the unified guidance of China’s
Central Military Commission. However this vertical command system, with its strict chain of authority, led to excessive intervention of these supervising agencies (Lin et al., 2014).

Because of this, local leaders and emergency response personnel were hesitant to act without direct orders or authorization from the central command. This led to delays, which were found to have restricted the ability of local disaster relief and emergency response personnel to carry out their duties in providing needed food, medical care, and other essential services for earthquake victims. It was determined that these delays increased the number of deaths attributed to the disaster (Lin et al., 2014).

The studies previously cited in this review have shown that strong, decisive leadership is a key element in dealing effectively with crisis and emergency situations. However, leaders must also be able to sort and process information quickly and accurately, while communicating effectively with managers and first responder personnel in the field.

During the Sichuan earthquake, China’s central command system may have been a benefit in providing a strong leadership presence and clear directives for workers to follow. But in some ways this strong presence proved to be a hindrance, especially when national leaders were not familiar with local geography, language, and the availability of resources that could have been used to help more earthquake victims faster, and more efficiently.

While strong, competent leadership is needed during a crisis, it is also vital that leaders have the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions, and some degree of experience with situational dynamics. Practicing response techniques to simulated emergencies has shown to be helpful in this regard; developing skills in “improvising” responses to unusual circumstances or uncommon situations has proven to be valuable as well.
Existing literature gives no indication whether this concept has been considered or applied within schools and other educational settings on a consistent basis. However, similar practice and training may prove to be useful for school administrators. Simulated crisis events could give educational leaders experience in implementing their crisis response plan while interacting with local first responder personnel. Incorporating “surprise” elements would test a leader’s ability to process unexpected factors while improvising an appropriate response to changing conditions.

Steinman (2012) conducted a study of hospital emergency room personnel both before and after receiving team training involving a 4-hour disaster response simulation. It was seen that after completing this training, teamwork among ER personnel improved significantly and the time needed to complete routine patient care tasks was reduced.

Similarly, Capella (2010) studied medical emergency room personnel both before and after receiving specialized disaster response team training. Capella found that after receiving training, ER doctors and supervisors demonstrated stronger leadership, and ER personnel showed more cohesive teamwork. This led to faster delivery of medical testing procedures, more effective medical interventions, and more efficient transfer of patients to and from triage, treatment locations, and operating room areas.

In another study of hospital emergency room trauma cases, Lubbert (2009) found that when medical response teams had no clear leader, errors in ER intake and treatment team organization led to more errors in routine treatment tasks and procedures. It was seen that these errors were significantly reduced when a recognized leader was in charge. Lubbert concluded
that people are more accountable and attentive when an acknowledged supervisor is present, particularly when this individual provides competent, decisive leadership.

Sakran (2012) studied trauma resuscitation team members’ performance in clinical settings as well as in the field during response to catastrophic disasters, and measured workers’ perceptions of their supervising physician’s leadership qualities using the modified Campbell Leadership Descriptor Survey. High leadership quality as indicated by a high CLDS score correlated directly with high leader visibility, competence, and strong, directive leadership qualities. These elements were directly associated with less delay in accomplishing ATLS-related medical treatment tasks and procedures.

In Ford’s (2016) study of emergency situation medical resuscitation and treatment in the field, it was found that competent, decisive leadership improves and speeds processes of care in trauma resuscitation. Ford saw that the ability of supervising doctors and physicians to accurately assess patient symptoms and medical information and then choose the most effective treatment options was crucial to obtaining the best patient outcomes.

However, physician-leaders who actively participated in patient care by performing medical procedures themselves were found to have lower overall team performance scores. Other supervising physicians who did not actively participate in administering medical treatment had higher scores. This was attributed to the fact that these physician-leaders were able to focus on overseeing, monitoring, and actively directing the work of other treatment team members (Ford, 2016).
Crisis Situations in Schools

Existing literature does not indicate if a directive leadership style or the more participative “team-oriented” leadership approach is used most often during in schools and educational settings when administrators are faced with actual emergencies. It may be useful to know which approach is more common, and which has been observed to be more effective in responding to school-related crisis events.

Little research has been done specifically in the area of educational leadership during school emergency or crisis situations. Although studies have been conducted involving the recovery of schools and educational systems after crisis events, only a small amount of information is available concerning the actual performance and leadership of public and private school administrators when faced with specific emergency situations.

Literature Review Summary

Throughout this review of the literature, researchers and authors have consistently cited the following as the essential components of effective crisis response:

- A robust, reliable communications network
- Effective communications systems
- Comprehensive crisis response plans
- A formal management structure
- Clearly-defined roles and responsibilities for personnel at each position
For crisis response leaders, this includes:

- Ability to acquire and process information quickly
- Ability to formulate an effective response to crisis situation events
- Clear, honest, and direct communication with subordinates and the public
- The willingness and ability to take decisive action when needed

In implementing an effective crisis event response that is consistent with contingency leadership theory, these components are most frequently utilized within the framework of a highly-structured, transactional leadership approach. Strong, directive leadership is seen almost universally as the most appropriate and effective leadership style when responding to crisis or emergency situation events, particularly during catastrophic emergencies.

Transformational or participative leadership, using a consultative approach that involves delegating authority and decision-making by consensus has been observed in some cases, and has shown to be beneficial under some circumstances. But overall, the transformational approach has been found to be impractical in most crisis and emergency situations where time is of the essence and when decisions and actions must be taken quickly, often on the basis of partial or limited information.

Throughout this review of the literature, we see that strong, directive leadership is the primary style used by crisis response directors, first-responder organization leaders in police and fire departments, emergency medical treatment doctors and supervisors, federal, state, and local emergency response leaders, and officers in every branch of the military.
During a crisis event, followers need to know who is in command. Listening to several different managers and hearing conflicting instructions from them can lead to disorganization, confusion, and chaos. Followers need to understand exactly who is in charge, so they know where to go for information and direction.

Consistent with contingency leadership theory, we see that crisis response leaders employ techniques that yield efficient teamwork, from groups whose members exhibit a high degree of maturity and respect for each other as well as their leader. This is one of the keys to effective crisis situation response and survival, and to helping others survive these situations as well. The examples cited in this review of the literature bear out this principle; as do studies of military personnel and others who must operate under similar circumstances.

In an emergency response environment, the leadership techniques that produce this type of coordinated teamwork correspond closely with a transactional leadership style. But even within a strong transactional framework, the inclusion of transformational elements may prove to be useful. Bass (1985) found that transformational leadership supports and strengthens the effects of transactional leadership, demonstrating through a study of military officers and industrial managers that augmented transformational leadership had a significant incremental effect over and above a heavily transactional leadership style.

We have seen that in emergency and crisis situations, team member cohesion is critical. A leader must have credibility in order to elicit a positive response, and prompt action from followers. When time is of the essence, subordinates must believe in the leader’s competence in order to accept and follow directives from their leader without question. Similarly, leaders need to know that they can depend upon followers to carry out directives precisely, without delay.
Using the leadership methods that most effectively create team cohesion and generate prompt action from followers directly echoes the fundamental principles of contingency leadership theory.

Dirks and Ferrin (2002) identified trust as the foundation upon which organizational cohesion is built. Trust is what bonds people together and allows them to work cooperatively toward shared objectives and goals; promoting group welfare even at the risk of personal cost. This is a critical factor for leadership, particularly in dangerous or hazardous situations when soldiers, law enforcement, health professionals, and other first-responders may be called upon to risk injury or death in order to carry out the group’s mission.

Lapidot, Kark, and Shamir (2007) found leader competence to be the most important factor in establishing trust among followers. However, competence extends far beyond having technical knowledge or situational experience. It also entails analytical and decision-making abilities, as well as stress management skills. Under challenging conditions, group members must depend upon the leader’s expertise and judgment to plan and execute operations successfully.

As described by Heifetz and Linsky (2017), the way that a particular situation develops and unfolds may be influenced just as much by the prior attitudes and actions of subordinates or those without direct decision-making power, as by the regulatory policies and response actions of administrators, supervisors, and managers; those who have direct decision-making power and control.

During emergencies and crisis events, a contingency-based leader will consider prior historical events as well as the attitudes and viewpoints of individuals affected by the current
emergency situation, in addition to evaluating the immediate physical environment. Doing so allows the leader to anticipate further problems and human issues that could arise. This means taking appropriate actions, and making needed adaptations with the least risk possible to followers’ lives. Having the knowledge, judgment, and skills to accomplish this will depend on the leader’s accurate perception of environment and external conditions, as well as a willingness and ability to understand followers; providing the leadership characteristics and actions that subordinates most desire and trust (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017.)

It remains to be seen whether school district superintendents and school presidents generally attempt to establish such competence and trust with subordinates and followers by utilizing contingency-based leadership principles prior to facing actual emergency or crisis situations, and whether there is agreement among superintendents and other educational leaders as to the specific leadership behaviors and practices most important in effectively handling actual school and school community emergencies; both during and after a crisis event.

Most importantly, the researcher desires to know if, and if so to what extent, school superintendents and school presidents apply contingency-based leadership principles and demonstrate contingency leadership practices when dealing with significant school emergency situations or school-related crisis events. Comparing school district superintendents’ and school presidents’ leadership actions and styles during crisis events to those that they normally use during non-emergency periods may also reveal how these administrators’ prior leadership beliefs, orientation, and training both influenced and impacted their overall leadership approach and effectiveness while directing a crisis event response in their own school or school district.
CHAPTER THREE – THE STUDY
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose

A review of existing literature reveals that effective leadership during a crisis can have an immediate and significant impact on the progression and ultimate outcome of a crisis situation.

The way in which school administrators organize and lead their schools or school districts is a direct reflection of their personal leadership philosophy, and their preferred leadership styles. The research study proposed will examine emergency/crisis leadership actions and styles utilized by school district superintendents and school presidents through the lens of contingency leadership theory; comparing their actions and styles to the overall leadership approach that these individuals normally use when leading their schools and directing significant educational initiatives during normal, non-emergency periods.

The researcher has identified a substantial gap and believes that this proposed study has the potential to make significant additions to our current knowledge and understanding of effective contingency-based leadership, as well as how contingency-based leadership may be applied most effectively during school-related emergencies. The researcher believes that acquiring this information directly, from school leaders who have experienced emergency situations firsthand, will contribute significantly to the limited body of knowledge that currently exists related to emergency situation management and crisis response leadership in our schools.
Discovering the leadership methods and styles preferred by school district superintendents and school presidents during normal, non-emergency periods and determining the extent to which these administrators regularly used various types of situational, contingency-based principles or other specific leadership constructs prior to facing actual emergency and crisis situations will allow the researcher to assess and better understand how and why each district superintendent or school president maintained, adapted, or changed his or her usual leadership style and approach when faced with a major school-related emergency.

By gathering information from school district superintendents and school presidents for the purpose of learning about his/her preferred general leadership philosophy and methods used during normal, non-emergency periods, and then comparing this to the leadership actions and style each administrator utilized during times of crisis, we may discern the extent to which normal, non-emergency leadership principles influenced and informed his/her overall leadership approach during emergency situations. The researcher will also seek to determine how each superintendent or school president decided upon the specific leadership strategy that he/she employed when dealing with a specific school-related emergency situation, as well as the challenges that he/she faced in the process of transitioning from non-emergency leadership into his/her chosen crisis leadership mode.

In this study, several key elements of contingency-based leadership will be considered. The task/relationship preferences of school district superintendents and school presidents will be examined. The extent to which these leaders formulate and implement responses to emergency and crisis events by consulting and cooperating with superiors, such as school board members or board of directors members, and their own staff members will be investigated. The degree to
which leaders delegate authority to subordinates for the purpose of carrying out particular emergency situation/crisis response actions will also be explored.

Within the context of these actions, evidence related to the leaders’ views and perceptions of subordinates’ maturity, capacity for accepting responsibility, and levels of trust among staff, emergency/crisis response team members and/or other followers will also be collected and analyzed.

**Research Question**

The primary research question to be answered by the proposed study is as follows:

- Are contingency-based leadership principles evidenced in the actions and leadership styles of school district superintendents, CEOs, and school presidents when formulating and implementing a response to school-related emergency situations and crisis events?

**Research Design**

The research study proposed utilizes a qualitative design. Qualitative research is exploratory in nature, based upon fundamental concepts of the scientific method. While the scientific method may sometimes make use of quantitative data, it is primarily concerned with investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge to expand upon or clarify existing theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).
The researcher first wishes to learn whether school district superintendents and school presidents utilize contingency-based leadership principles when responding to school-related emergency situations or crisis events. If so, the researcher then desires to know and understand the extent to which these principles were used, and in what context(s) they have been applied.

A qualitative-based approach is the most appropriate method for this study because the researcher desires to find out not just how often or to what degree various leadership styles and actions have been employed during crisis events and emergency situations, but also how these styles and techniques have been applied, as well as why school administrators have employed the specific crisis-leadership response methods that they have chosen to use.

With this information, school district superintendents, and school presidents’ beliefs and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of contingency-based transformational and transactional leadership and the specific methods that they have personally used during emergency situations or times of crisis may be revealed. The collective experience of these individuals should provide relevant and instructive examples; illustrating how contingency-based leadership methods and actions have led to various results and outcomes during various school-related emergencies and crisis events.

Case study research is the specific qualitative approach proposed for this particular study. A case is defined as a bounded system (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). For the purpose of this research, each included school or school district community will be thought of as a bounded system - a set of interrelated elements that combine to form an organized whole. As such, Stake (1995) believes that the proper approach is to study each case in depth, with an emphasis on learning them well in order to gain a thorough understanding of what makes each one unique.
For this project, a collective case study is most appropriate because the researcher believes that greater insight may be gained by concurrently studying multiple cases; comparing these for both congruency and divergence. The researcher intends to apply in-depth analysis when examining the selected topic in each case, and therefore proposes to set the number of cases for inclusion in this study at four.

Each case has an internal and an external context (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). To see how each school or school district functions in an emergency or during a time of crisis, each of these entities will be further defined and described holistically in terms of their own unique educational and administrative structure. To gain an understanding of external context, the researcher will look at the geographic area in which each school or school district is located, as well as the political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the communities that they serve.

Because the researcher desires a deep understanding of how different school administrators have experienced and directed response actions during various school and school community emergency situations and crisis events, each case chosen for inclusion will be represented solely by its designated organizational leader – the school president, or school district superintendent.

To achieve this detailed understanding, a fluid narrative inquiry approach will be used. People give meaning to experiences and interactions with others through stories, using story to interpret events and explain (Clandinin, 2007). Narrative inquiry involves the study of experience through story. As stated by Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p.375), “to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience.” As described by Clandinin
(2007), there is now a well-established view of narrative inquiry as a methodology through which researchers inquire into the phenomenon of experience when experience is understood as a narrative phenomenon.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, pp 42-43) further explained that the narrative inquiry conception of experience builds on John Dewey’s philosophy of experience, which has two criteria: Continuity of experience, and interaction between each person and his or her situation. The focus of narrative inquiry then is not just on an individual’s experience, but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted.

Because of this, the researcher will conduct uniquely-tailored one-on-one interviews with study participants. Through this process, participants will be asked to tell about their own school crisis experiences so that they may confidentially express their own personal account of these situations.

Central to this is an understanding that in addition to the social, cultural, and institutional narratives just mentioned, the telling of each participant’s story, or the relating of a narrative of their own experience which includes their individual views, beliefs, and assessments concerning situation events, reactions, and outcomes, necessarily occurs in the relational space between the researcher and participant and is therefore also a product of this relationship (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Remaining mindful of this relationship throughout, the researcher will share of his own experiences with study participants where appropriate; maintaining neutrality and suspending judgment. The process of coming alongside study participants when engaging in narrative
inquiry into participants’ experiences and stories requires the researcher to engage in narrative inquiry into his own experiences and stories. The interaction between participants and researchers as lived and told stories are shared is known as *retelling stories*. (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

As the researcher comes alongside participants and as stories are retold and shared, the social and relational narratives affecting these stories may be changed. Because of this, additional relevant information or deeper insight into the description of events within the stories may be gained. This process may also lead to improved communication that will generate more introspective, thoughtful commentary from study participants.

By securing school district superintendents and school presidents who each have experience with different types of school emergency and crisis events, representing schools and school districts that have different geographic, cultural, and socio-economic makeups, the researcher will obtain a variety of viewpoints regarding the perceived effectiveness of contingency-based transformational and transactional crisis leadership actions and styles across a varied set of emergency situation circumstances.

The researcher will then attempt to find common themes among these varied settings and responses; analyzing and synthesizing information provided by participants along with other evidence and facts; in order to draw reasoned conclusions.

In this study, a sequential qualitative plan is proposed. The researcher will first administer a descriptive survey in order to gain basic qualitative information regarding the general background and work history of school administrators, as well as their level of experience with specific school-based crisis and emergency situations. This part of the survey
will include approximately 5-6 open-ended questions, allowing survey respondents the opportunity to provide as much information on these topics as they wish. In order to achieve standardization, all survey participants will answer the same set of questions.

In this survey, school administrators will also be asked about their perceptions of general leadership elements that they might employed to handle crisis events, or during normal, non-emergency periods. These elements may include things such as their communication with subordinates, or their typical practices when analyzing problems or making decisions. It is expected that survey results obtained in this first step will facilitate the refinement of specific targeted questions to be used during the qualitative interview phase.

During the second phase, interviews will be conducted with participants using a semi-structured interview template. Participants will be asked to tell the story of their own school emergency situation or school/school district crisis event, expanding upon the answers they gave to questions regarding school emergencies and crisis events during the initial quantitative phase, describing in more detail the specific leadership actions and techniques they used to deal with these situations.

During this phase, the researcher will guide the conversations using a pre-established interview protocol, asking each study participant critical questions concerning contingency-based leadership principles that will require participants to assess their own crisis response actions within this context. A number of self-reflective questions will also be asked. These will require participants to consider and compare the leadership actions and styles they prefer during normal, non-emergency periods to the actions and styles they actually used while engaged in the process
of formulating and implementing a coordinated response to the emergency situation/crisis event in their own school or school district.

The purpose of this approach is to elicit more detailed explanations from participants concerning what they believe to be the specific elements necessary for effective general leadership under ordinary conditions compared with effective school emergency/crisis event leadership, as well as their insights regarding the specific leadership principles and practices that they believe are most effective under each of these circumstances.

While the researcher desires consistency in obtaining qualitative information from survey participants on the same leadership and crisis event topics, maintaining flexibility during the one-on-one interview sessions may provide an opportunity to gain greater insight by allowing the researcher to probe more deeply into areas of interest that come up during the qualitative survey phase, thereby providing a richer source of information for analysis.

As described by Weiss (1994), interviewing can provide the researcher a valuable description of actions and events that have occurred in the past. Because some survey questions in the proposed study will be based on prior crisis events, interviewing should provide data regarding the experiences of subjects during past emergency situations, for which no observational access is possible.

In the course of this proposed study, the researcher will conduct an in-depth inquiry by recording detailed interviews that capture direct quotations; accurately reflecting the experiences and perspectives of study participants in their own words. The researcher will adopt an empathetic yet neutral interviewing stance, by sharing of his own experience and insights while listening to the thoughts and ideas of participants without judgment. The researcher will
maintain openness, respect, and sensitivity, while being fully present at all times during the interview process; mindful that recalling and talking about the specifics of particular school emergency situations may generate an emotional response for some.

If it appears that a participant is experiencing difficulty or discomfort as a result of this interview conversation, the researcher will talk with the participant and ask if they wish to pause or terminate the session. The researcher will also remind participants that their inclusion in the study is completely voluntary; they may decline to answer particular questions and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

As interviews proceed, the researcher will keep in mind that although general elements in each individual case may be similar, each case situation is also somewhat unique. Qualitative research principles (Patton, 2002) tell us that context is important in understanding each particular case.

Fiedler (1967) advanced the idea central to the concept of contingency theory that effective leadership takes into account available contingencies and selects an appropriate balance of practices according to the situational context that exists in a particular place, at a particular period in time. In order to understand and assess human reactions and decisions during emergencies and times of crisis, we need to understand the environment and situational context in which these decisions are made.

Leadership decisions made during each school-related emergency situation or crisis event included in this study will be analyzed within the social and historical context unique to that particular school, school district, and school community. For the purpose of describing environment and defining context, basic demographic information outlining the population,
economic level, and ethnic/cultural makeup the schools, school districts, and communities served by these schools and school districts may be considered. This information is intended to clarify and provide a better understanding of actions taken during emergencies within these communities, as well as statements made and viewpoints held by study participants.

The researcher will also attempt to identify and recognize his own biases related to the study topic and work to minimize these, in order to bring as much objectivity and balance as possible to his interaction with study participants, and also in the analysis of study information obtained. All of the actions that the researcher will take, and the principles that he will adhere to while conducting this research align with the twelve major characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Patton (2002):

1. **Naturalistic Inquiry** – The researcher studies real-world situations as they unfold naturally
2. **Emergent Design Flexibility** – The researcher is open to adapting the inquiry, pursuing new paths of discovery as these emerge.
3. **Purposeful Sampling** – Cases are chosen for study that are “information rich” and offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest.
4. **Inquiry in Depth** – Consisting of qualitative observations that yield detailed, “thick” description.
5. **Personal Experience and Engagement** – The researcher directly contacts and gets close to the people, situation, and phenomenon being studied.
6. **Empathetic Neutrality and Mindfulness** – The researcher adopts an empathetic interviewing stance, seeking vicarious understanding without judgment.

7. **Dynamic Systems** – The researcher pays attention to process, assuming change is always ongoing.

8. **Unique Case Orientation** – The researcher looks at each case as being special and unique.

9. **Inductive Analysis and Creative Synthesis** – The researcher seeks immersion in the details and specifics of the information to discover important patterns, themes, and inter-relationships.

10. **Holistic Perspective** – The phenomenon being studied is understood as a complex system which is more than the sum of its parts.

11. **Context Sensitivity** – The researcher places findings in a social, historical, and temporal context and is careful about the possibility of meaningfulness of generalizations across time and place.

12. **Voice, Perspective, and Reflexivity** – The researcher owns and is reflective about his or her own voice and perspective, conveying authenticity and trustworthiness.

As evidence is collected throughout the initial and secondary phases, these pieces will be compared through a process of triangulation. This process, as outlined by Fielding & Fielding (1986), is designed to see whether convergence, correspondence, and corroboration can be shown between the results obtained from the various research techniques employed. If so, then the accuracy and credibility of conclusions drawn from these results may be enhanced.
The process of data triangulation compares information obtained from different sources, or by using different methods. In this proposed study, the researcher will gain information about the perceived effectiveness of various leadership actions and techniques employed by different school administrators; school district superintendents and school presidents who have actually experienced crisis and emergency situations at their schools or in their school districts and communities. The information and descriptions obtained will then be “triangulated”, or examined to see where significant continuities and discontinuities exist.

Because the researcher intends to include four school district superintendents or school presidents in the study who have each experienced a different type of crisis event, it is very possible and perhaps almost a certainty that significant variations will exist in the interview narratives collected from these different individuals describing their own unique situations. Due to this probability, the researcher’s triangulation focus will be on internal consistency.

Throughout each one-on-one interview, each participant will be asked several questions; posed in different forms but designed to elicit the same descriptive information concerning the participant’s crisis response leadership actions and style, as well as their general leadership philosophy and practice. For example, the researcher may ask participants to explain their general approach to leadership. Later in the interview, participants may be asked how they believe school staff members would describe them as a leader. The participants might then be asked to describe how they would lead the process of implementing a significant new initiative in their school or school district. Afterward, as the researcher goes through the interview transcripts and recordings, each participant’s answers to these questions will be examined and
compared through a process of triangulation; to see if their responses remain consistent throughout. If so, then the responses given by participants are more likely to be valid.

However, triangulation is more than a process designed to simply confirm the validity of data obtained through various methods. Patton (2002) states that finding differences in the information obtained through use of multiple techniques is not unusual. In fact, this occurrence should be expected; because each research approach will have its own unique strengths. According to Patton, finding such inconsistencies should not diminish the importance of the evidence. Rather, it provides an opportunity to question further and discover deeper relationships and additional meaning contained within these descriptions.

In each case, considering and assessing the descriptive responses given by participants during the early portion of each interview session should provide additional insight that will guide the researcher’s approach as he formulates and poses further questions to study participants, encouraging participants to express their feelings, insights, and views openly while exploring the unique experiences and perspectives that participants may be expected to provide. After personal interviews with participants have been completed and as the researcher considers the information obtained, other questions may arise. In this case, the researcher may contact participants again via phone or email, seeking additional insight or clarification.

**Study Participants**

Purposive sampling, as described by Johnson & Christensen (2014), consists of identifying individuals who fit specific characteristics as part of a population that the researcher
wishes to study. A non-random “snowball” method will be used to select participants for the proposed research. This group will consist of approximately four public school district superintendents or school presidents who have leadership experience in leading public or private unit, elementary, high schools, or school districts; or a college/university during significant school-related emergency situations or crisis events.

The researcher will ask colleagues to recommend candidates who may be qualified and willing to participate in the study. Individuals who are willing to do so will then be asked to recommend other school administrators they know who may also be qualified. In this way, word of the proposed study will be passed along to a greater and greater number of people. Similarly, members of professional organizations such as the Illinois Principals Association and the Illinois Association of School Administrators will also be asked to participate in the search, and to recommend colleagues for inclusion in the study.

For the purpose of recruiting participants, a description of the study will be written that outlines its purpose along with a statement that each prospective participant must be a current or retired school district superintendent or school president who held this position during a significant qualifying school district- or school-related crisis or emergency situation, as defined by the following characteristics: A situation that posed an imminent, serious hazard including a grave threat to life and property; further defined to include: Fire, earthquake, tornado, hurricane, tropical storm, flood, blizzard, armed intruder, bomb threat, bombing, terrorist attack, shooting, kidnapping, hostage-taking, chemical/biological attack, bus or automobile accident, or unexpected death of a student or staff member.
All school district superintendents and school presidents who have experienced one or more of the identified naturally-occurring or man-made crisis situations will be considered for inclusion. However, so that a wider range of situations and response actions may be studied and compared, the researcher will secure participation from school district superintendents and school presidents who have all experienced different types of school emergency or crisis events.

LeCompte & Priessle (1993) used the term criterion-based selection to describe the process of choosing participants who can provide specific information that the researcher needs. Patton (1987, 1990) called this purposeful sampling, or purposive sampling. By using a purposive sampling strategy to identify participants who fit the criteria outlined, the researcher will be able to obtain survey and interview responses and personal accounts from school district superintendents and school presidents who have each formulated and implemented crisis and emergency action plans in response to specific identified types of major crisis events. The goal of this process is to obtain information concerning leadership actions and methods utilized over a wide range of school-related emergency and crisis situations.

After this information is obtained and initially coded, the researcher will examine participants’ survey responses and interview accounts for evidence of contingency-based leadership actions and principles. If evidence of these actions and principles is found, the researcher will look to see how much variability exists in the degree to which contingency-based leadership was used by participants, and the level of consistency concerning the way(s) in which contingency-based leadership principles were applied by participants while responding to emergency situations and crisis events in their schools.
If the initial information and evidence is unclear, incomplete, or raises issues that the researcher believes merit a different focus and/or further refinement, then additional sampling techniques such as extreme-case, critical-case (Patton, 1990), or mixed-purposeful sampling (Patton, 1987) may be employed if particularly unique or significant findings are revealed.

If individuals are identified who have experienced a significant success or epic failure when dealing with a school crisis event, then it may be useful to examine these extreme cases in more detail to discover precisely which factors and leadership decisions led to these highly successful or disastrous outcomes.

If participants are identified who have experienced a landmark crisis event or emergency situation such as Hurricane Katrina or the 9/11 New York City terrorist attacks, then it may be useful to examine these experiences of these individuals in more detail in order to gain perspective and insight concerning major crisis events that have had a major impact upon our educational systems as well as on American society as a whole.

These various types of sampling may legitimately be combined as part of a mixed purposeful sampling approach. As described by Patton (1987), this technique refers to mixing different sampling strategies, which may be utilized when the researcher discovers a general pattern of finding in the initial survey information and then uses various sampling methods to determine the limits and generality of the pattern.

Mixed purposeful sampling may also be incorporated as part of the data triangulation process in this proposed study; in order to compare information obtained from multiple sources, corresponding to the various sampling techniques employed. Doing so will enhance validity,
particularly if consistency can be demonstrated when information obtained from different sources and by different sampling methods is compared (Fielding & Fielding, 1986.)

**Descriptive and Interpretive Validity**

As described by Johnson & Christensen (2014), descriptive validity refers to the factual accuracy of accounts reported by the researcher. This includes information obtained from research study participants, and observations made by the researcher. Interpretive validity describes the degree to which the researcher understands study participants’ viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences related to the research study topic, and the accuracy with which the researcher portrays these elements in the research report.

A variety of strategies will be used to verify and improve the factual accuracy of accounts given by study participants, and to accurately portray study participants’ perspectives and viewpoints, as well as the meaning attached by participants to interview questions asked by the researcher.

Johnson & Christensen (2014, p. 302) state that feedback given by study participants, also known as member-checking, is one of the most important methods for obtaining accurate, useful information. By sharing his interpretation of participants’ viewpoints with study participants and then discussing his conclusions with them, participants have the opportunity to verify the data the researcher has obtained, while clarifying or correcting any areas of misunderstanding or misinterpretation on the researcher’s part.
Maxwell (1996) defined interpretive validity as the ability of the researcher to understand and accurately portray the perspectives of research participants. In addition to participant feedback, low-inference descriptors will be used to record and report information obtained from research study participants. By using participants’ actual spoken language, dialect, and personal meanings, verified through member-checking, the researcher will strive to accurately convey participants’ true thoughts and feelings about crisis-related study issues and emergency situation experiences being explored.

An additional technique, peer review, will also be utilized. As data is collected from study participants and subsequently analyzed, the researcher’s interpretations of this data and any conclusions drawn from these interpretations will be discussed with a number of professional peers and colleagues, as well as with the chair and other members of the researcher’s dissertation committee. Any problems identified through these discussions will then be resolved by collecting additional data, or by re-assessing data already obtained before proceeding further with the study.

Analysis of Data

When study data has been obtained, each case will first be considered and analyzed individually. Each case will be considered in total, with consideration given to the school district superintendent’s or school president’s stated leadership philosophy; comparing this with his or her leadership actions and interactions with particular embedded units such as central office staff,
building administrative teams, individual departments or certain groups of staff members during an identified time of crisis.

After this, the leadership actions taken by each school district superintendent or school president will be compared in a cross-case analysis for similarities as well as differences. In assembling the final report, the researcher will provide relevant study findings; presenting a rich, holistic description of each case and its context. This will be achieved by reconstructing the crisis event from the realities of study participants, while portraying the multiple viewpoints in each case that participants and stakeholders may have.

The information and viewpoints offered by study participants will be examined and evaluated within a grounded theory methodology. Glaser & Strauss (1967) believed that qualitative research should not focus on testing hypotheses derived from previous theory. Rather, they advocated that theory should emerge inductively from empirical data. Strauss & Corbin (1994, p. 273) further stated that “Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed.”

In order to accomplish this, the researcher must first collect relevant data, then take time to analyze and consider the data, and finally develop an understanding of the phenomenon based on the data obtained (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Strauss & Corbin (1990) described this as a continuous, non-linear process whereby earlier steps may be revisited several times as the researcher first collects and analyzes initial data, looks to see what concepts or theory start to emerge, and then goes back, collects additional data, and conducts further analysis in clarifying, developing, and validating the theory.
The researcher in this study has no interest in testing, confirming, or rejecting any specific hypothesis. Rather, the researcher will objectively and systematically assess study data obtained; looking for concepts that may emerge directly from this information. After analyzing and considering this information, the researcher will then attempt to develop an understanding of the leadership actions and principles that have been described by study participants, as well as an appreciation for why these particular actions and methods were employed during the various emergency situations that occurred. Only after this will the researcher attempt to draw tentative, evidence-based conclusions about the individual and comparative case results obtained.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) identified three stages of data analysis: Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the first stage of analyzing data obtained in this study, the researcher will use open coding - beginning to examine the information by reading participants’ interview transcripts, naming and categorizing discrete elements in the data by labeling important words and phrases used, and major ideas/concepts that were expressed by participants. The number of times that these key words, phrases, and concepts appear will be recorded.

As data analysis moves to the second, axial coding stage, the researcher will place emerging concepts into categories and then organize the categories according to the type of concepts they contain. The research will take particular note of words, ideas, and concepts that participants mentioned many times during the interviews, looking across the categories already established to see possible relationships among them, and for themes that appeared across the interviews study participants. The researcher will begin to compare these emergent themes to the fundamental principles of contingency-based leadership, looking to see if elements of contingency-based leadership principles are present within these themes.
In the third stage of data analysis, selective coding, the researcher will reflect further upon the data, and results that were produced during open-coding and axial-coding stages. The researcher will then distill these results along with the other prior evidence and themes obtained; combining these to generate a grounded theory that will encompass the primary conclusion(s) of this research. Data analysis and refinement of the primary conclusion(s) will continue even after this phase, as the researcher continues to search for additional ideas that will further develop and validate the grounded theory.
CHAPTER FOUR – STUDY DATA AND INFORMATION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of information gathered from each study participant, as well as the findings and general themes derived from each individual emergency situation or crisis event case selected for inclusion. After it was determined that their individual case met the criteria for inclusion in the study, each study participant submitted written answers to questions on an initial survey instrument. After this, a private verbal interview was conducted with each participant; according to the research structure previously outlined, and the interview protocol described in Chapter Three.

I will provide general background, a description of events, and demographic characteristics concerning each case; along with information obtained from answers given to basic initial written survey questions by each participant. This will be followed by a descriptive summary of leadership actions and methods used by study participants in responding to a major emergency situation or crisis event in their school(s) or school district; taken from narratives provided by study participants. In writing about these cases I have used the pronoun he/she in some instances; in order to preserve the confidentiality of study participants.

Case One - Overview

The first case in my study involves a mass shooting at a large public university. During this tragic event, several students were killed and a number of others were injured by gunfire in a
university lecture hall. The act was committed by a lone individual, and the crisis situation developed suddenly and unexpectedly. University officials had no prior warning or indication that such an event was about to occur on their campus.

Case One - Leadership Philosophy

Through written answers to initial survey instrument questions, the university president (Administrator “A”) describes himself as a consensus-builder who prefers to delegate authority; and a team-builder who believes in strong, clear decision-making. The president recognizes the need to follow and respect contractual agreements and established policies, yet sees himself as a pragmatic leader who remains flexible; always prepared to pursue opportunities as they arise. He often creates a team to brainstorm new ideas, and makes extensive use of data from various sources to inform and drive his decisions.

In response to verbal interview questions, the university president stated that he feels it is important to consider the cultural and financial impact of various actions he might take, as well as the possible legal, cultural, and political ramifications that may result from these actions; for the university and its people. The president believes in appreciating and utilizing the diverse abilities and unique talents of individual staff members. He delegates authority extensively, giving subordinates the freedom to work independently and execute their assignments without undue interference.

However, the university president also understands the need to hold those in positions of authority accountable for their actions and performance, and the importance of being able to
recognize indicators of impropriety or malfeasance. The president constantly monitors things that are happening around him and makes sure that internal controls - a system of procedural and financial checks and balances - are in place; to assist in regulating these functions.

The university president believes subordinates and others who work with him would say he is good at bringing people together, that he seeks and accepts input from many people, and that he tolerates a wide variety of personality “quirks” and behaviors if people are productive and beneficial for the organization. He also believes that colleagues view him as very experienced, competent, and stable; and that they feel he makes decisions thoughtfully and carefully.

At all times, the university president remains flexible in his leadership approach and methods, according to the specific conditions of each situation, the nature of the task to be performed, and the personnel involved. This outlook is consistent with the basic philosophy of contingency-based leadership, as described by Fiedler (1967).

Case One – Leadership Actions

The university president learned of the crisis event just moments after it occurred; informed through a telephone call placed by the chair of the university crisis response committee that a shooting had taken place in a campus classroom facility. This notification was consistent with emergency communications protocol that had previously been established by the crisis response committee. The university president immediately invoked the university crisis management plan.
The crisis response committee chairperson was in charge of the university police, and had been designated in the crisis management plan as the administrator who, in an emergency situation, would communicate directly with the chief of the university police force. In this role, the committee chair was responsible for working directly with the chief of university police while interfacing with first responders, as well as with local municipal police, fire department, and EMT personnel.

Functioning in this capacity immediately after the shooting, the committee chairperson relayed information and directives from the university police chief and first responders to the university president. During this period the chief and his officers searched and secured the building where the event occurred, assisted those who had been injured, and secured areas adjacent to the shooting scene; as well as other nearby buildings and the larger campus itself.

The university president quickly received more detailed information concerning the extent and specifics of the crisis event by speaking directly with the committee chairperson. In response, the president then instructed the crisis committee chair to contact selected local government officials to let them know what had happened. The president directed other university administrators to send messages concerning the event over campus classroom intercom systems as well as campus radio and TV, telling students and staff members about the incident while advising them to remain cautious and alert.

After this initial response, the university president called members of the crisis response committee together and held a meeting. The university president had formed this committee shortly after coming to the university, selecting its members from various administrative positions and university departments. During this session committee members continued to
receive information about the shooting from various sources including the internet. They discussed and processed what they knew about the crisis, establishing the course of action they intended to follow over the next several hours. At this time, reports containing information on the number of injuries and deaths were received from first responder agencies and a local hospital.

On a number of previous occasions, the crisis response committee had discussed various types of emergency scenarios that might occur at their school. Because they had considered the possibility of a crisis event such as this and planned in advance for it, committee members had already been given specific assignments with responsibility for various emergency response functions by the university president. He now confirmed that committee members would be expected to carry out these assignments, and explicitly gave them authority to do so.

The university president did not provide detailed instructions to committee members. Rather, he relied upon members’ collective experience and each individual’s specific area of expertise, leaving it up to their professional judgment in determining what should be done in terms of canceling or re-scheduling university academics, athletics, and extra-curricular events, as well as how best to deal with the immediate and subsequent emotional impact of the crisis on students, staff, and community members.

That very same day as word of the lecture hall shooting began to circulate, a large number of regional, national and international news reporters, journalists, and broadcast personnel descended upon the university campus. The university president then brought in a public relations firm; to assist in handling the flow of crisis-related information as well as to
screen interview requests and schedule interviews with individuals from a myriad of print and electronic news entities.

The university president also began to receive and respond to many calls from other local, state, and national leaders. Later in the afternoon, he went to the area hospital that had received injured victims from the shooting. At the hospital, he spent time talking with the family members of victims as they awaited updates on the status of their loved ones, and well as with the relatives of those who had been killed. The university president felt it was important to be there at the hospital with victims and their families, in order to offer support while being visible and accessible during this time.

At 7:00pm that evening, the university president gave a press conference at the hospital, during which he described the situation that had unfolded earlier in the day and answered questions from electronic and print media reporters. After the press conference, the university president remained at the hospital in order to receive periodic updates on the status of those who had been wounded. As the evening progressed, the president and others from his leadership team continued to talk with the family members of victims, offering reassurance and support.

By the next morning, crews from local, regional, national, and international new agencies were reporting from the university campus. The university president had received hundreds of requests for interviews and information concerning the shooting. It was not possible for him to respond to such a large number of requests, so a public relations spokesperson assisted in disseminating information and issuing statements regarding the emergency.

To assist in answering questions from students, parents, community members, and others who called the university wanting to know more about what had happened, the office of student
affairs set up phone lines and organized their staff who spoke with callers utilizing a standard set of information and scripted answers.

During this time, the university president also conferred with other university administrators, as well as with local officials. Although the university crisis management plan had been implemented, many near-term decisions about how the university would respond still needed to be made. The university president left these decisions in the hands of those who had been delegated responsibility for making them.

Academic classes and other on-campus extra-curricular/athletic events were canceled for the next several days. The local weather was a significant factor in this decision, because temperatures had become extremely cold and were expected to remain this way over the next week. University officials wanted to protect the health and safety of students and staff, as well as provide time for them to grieve and process what had just occurred. However, the university president and other members of his administrative cabinet also felt it was important to restore a sense of normalcy, and therefore attempted to return the university to its regular operating schedule as soon as they reasonably could.

In the days immediately following the resumption of classes, the university president visited a number of classrooms to talk with students. He shared his own feelings about what had happened, and listened to how students were reacting to the tragedy. The president also wanted to make students aware of the university support system and resources such as grief counselors that were being made available to help them during this time. University liaisons from the department of student affairs contacted the families of students to let them know of these resources as well.
During this time, the office of student affairs organized and held vigils in remembrance of the victims, and the office of student communications planned and held a campus-wide memorial service to honor their memory. The university president made phone calls to every student who had been injured during the crisis, and spoke with the parents of each student who had been killed. The state governor wanted to meet with students on campus, and this was arranged. The university president felt it was important to listen to those who were directly affected by the shooting, and authorized his staff to provide any help or assistance that families of the victims needed, regardless of financial cost. The president and members of his administrative staff attended the funeral held for each shooting victim.

Because of the extreme, violent nature of the event, healing did not come quickly or easily. This shooting deeply affected the university and surrounding community. Recognizing a need, the office of student affairs organized an on-going support group that continued to meet for many months following this crisis event.

The lecture hall area where the shooting had occurred was immediately closed off, and class meetings previously held in this facility were relocated to other adjacent buildings. Although some people expressed a desire to tear down the structure where the shootings had occurred, a majority of current students and alumni wanted to preserve it. Because of this prevailing sentiment, the building interior was later renovated. The area where the lecture hall had previously existed was permanently closed off, and memorials to the shooting victims were constructed both inside and outside of the building itself.
Case One - Leadership Summary

Throughout the crisis event, the university president maintained a high degree of visibility. However, he did not “take over” during the emergency, issuing orders or attempting to dictate the crisis response as a more transactional leader might. Instead, the president delegated authority extensively; giving a great deal of autonomy to the administrators of various departments and allowing them to freely direct the crisis response within their own specific areas of expertise.

During the verbal interview, the university president expressed a high level of confidence in the abilities of his various department leaders. This type of demonstrated trust in subordinates and followers is also key component of contingency-based leadership.

Throughout the crisis response period the university president maintained frequent contact with subordinates, communicating with his closest advisors and cabinet members by phone, email, and in person. The university president also maintained constant communication with local law enforcement, first responders, and the public; through a sequence of press conferences and press releases. He maintained a very visible presence at the hospital over the next 72 hours following the shooting, in order to communicate with and comfort the surviving victims and their families, as well as the family members, relatives, and loved ones of those who had been killed.

Throughout the crisis response, the university president wanted to be “present” as much as possible, and he wanted to be involved with helping the victims as well. The university president felt it was his role to be the “face” of the crisis, and believed it was his responsibility to
be open and transparent about what had happened when speaking with the public through the media.

However, the president also realized there were other staff members who were more experienced in handling various aspects of the crisis response. And so, the university president willingly stepped aside and deferred to others when particular situations came up during which he felt that the leadership of others could be more effective.

In this way, the university president was flexible in his leadership methods; sometimes embracing a more participative approach as various members of his crisis response team were called upon to provide actual leadership contributions at different times and places over the course of the crisis. This flexibility, as well as the willingness and ability to adapt to changing or unexpected conditions, is a hallmark of contingency-based leadership.

According to Administrator “A”, there were those who tried to exploit the crisis situation both during and immediately after this tragic event, in an attempt to enhance their own personal image or for the purpose of political gain. The university president firmly rejected each of these attempts, and did not allow these individuals to profit from the physical and emotional pain and suffering that had been inflicted on so many innocent students and members of the university community. By doing so, the university president shielded and protected his followers; engendering trust and earning their gratitude which likely further strengthened his leadership credibility among that group.
Case Two - Overview

Case Two involves the bombing of a large government structure in an urban area. The bombing incident occurred suddenly and without warning, taking government officials and school district officials by complete surprise. Fortunately, only one district school and one other district facility sustained physical damage from this event, and no students or staff members were injured or killed.

However, some students and staff were significantly traumatized by the concussive sound of the blast; as well as by the extreme physical force that the bomb unleashed and the violent, destructive nature of the event. Many were subsequently affected emotionally and psychologically because of injuries suffered by or the deaths of family members, relatives, and friends who had been inside or near the building that was targeted.

Case Two – Leadership Philosophy

The person who was superintendent of the municipal school district at the time of this crisis event (Administrator “B”) is a highly-experienced educator and instructional leader. She served previously for many years in public schools; first as a classroom teacher, and later as an assistant principal and then principal. She eventually assumed the responsibilities of a district-level administrator as assistant superintendent, and had been working as her district’s superintendent for three years when the crisis event occurred there.
This superintendent believes in leadership by example, taking an active role in formulating and implementing educational initiatives. She involves people at every level in the decision-making process. She takes time to develop relationships with people, striving to make them feel valued and comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. The superintendent wants district staff, parents, and community members to know that their ideas are appreciated and valued.

The superintendent believes it is important to accept and embrace the culture and traditions of others, making people feel comfortable. By learning about others, she begins to develop an understanding of their core beliefs and values. This improves the communication process, as the superintendent identifies areas of common interest and learns about the educational priorities and goals that people have for their children.

The superintendent feels strongly that it is important to go beyond simply talking about change; she considers how change can be made, as well as the resources that will be needed to achieve it. The superintendent builds support for major initiatives by working closely with individual school board members, visiting individual neighborhoods to talk with parents and community residents. She believes that subordinates and others would describe her as both focused and determined; a fair person and a fair leader who strives to always make decisions that are in the best interest of students and the entire district community.
Case Two – Leadership Actions

On the day of the bombing incident, the superintendent recalls that there was a meeting at the district office attended by the principals of every district school. She remembers hearing a very loud noise and almost simultaneously feeling a strong vibration. People then went quickly to nearby windows and looking out, saw a large black cloud rising ominously into the mid-morning sky, creating a dark haze that threatened to block out the sun. Stunned by this stark image, someone exclaimed that a bomb must have gone off.

Little did anyone know just how accurate this spontaneous remark would soon turn out to be. A few moments later, the superintendent received a phone call from a federal government official, informing her that an extremely powerful bomb had indeed exploded; at a nearby government structure.

The principals who had gathered at district office were then instructed to return immediately to their home schools. The safety of students at schools located closest to the bombing site was an immediate concern. Prior crisis event planning sessions led by the superintendent had anticipated potential emergency scenarios such as this. Because the district’s written crisis response plans provided for delegation of authority in these scenarios, assistant superintendents, directors, and other administrators responsible for various departments had already been authorized to take action in case of an emergency.

District security personnel began to call schools, and quickly arranged transportation for students at schools most directly affected by the bombing. Administrators at these schools were instructed to move their students to designated safe locations at other district facilities while
school staff members notified parents by telephone about what had happened, and what was being done to safeguard their children. Parents were then asked to come and pick up their children.

Operations and maintenance personnel began to assess and contain physical damage to schools and district buildings that were located in close proximity to where the bombing had occurred. At the school closest to the bombing site, windows had been blown out and the heating/cooling system was damaged, creating clouds of dust inside. Assistant superintendents at the district office contacted the principal at each school to find out the extent of physical damage, if any, at each school site.

School board members were now calling the superintendent, because they could see what was happening on the local television news. They were reassured when the superintendent told them of the steps that were being taken to protect students and staff, and by the fact that the superintendent’s leadership team had the situation under control.

The district public relations director remained in contact with local and national news media throughout that day and during the days immediately following the emergency, providing information concerning the impact of the bombing on school operations and educational events within the district and the school communities, as well as actions taken by district personnel in response to the crisis.

In order to assist students and staff members who had been emotionally impacted by the bombing, teams of crisis counselors were brought in the very next day and sent to each school where they were made available to assist those in need. The United States Department of
Education even sent a crisis intervention team of counselors to assist school district personnel, and to serve as grief counselors for the school district counselors themselves.

Although no student or staff members’ lives were lost directly because of the bombing, the terroristic nature of this event significantly impacted those who had a friend or family member seriously injured or killed. And so, these crisis counselors remained in district schools for an extended period of time.

This bombing was a very serious and very disruptive event, however schools were not closed and district activities were not cancelled. The superintendent and her staff felt that students and their families needed to maintain a sense of stability during a period of relative chaos, and that keeping the schools open while operating on a regular schedule would help sustain the people and provide support to help them get through a very difficult time in their lives.

**Case Two – Leadership Summary**

Throughout the crisis event period, the school superintendent maintained a high degree of visibility. However, similar to the manner in which the university president handled the crisis event on his campus, the district superintendent gave a great deal of autonomy to the administrators of various departments; trusting in their professional capabilities and allowing them to direct the crisis response in their specific area of expertise.
During this crisis period, the district superintendent maintained frequent contact with subordinates and superiors; communicating with her assistants, department heads, and school board members by phone, email, and in person.

The school superintendent also maintained constant communication with local law enforcement, first responders, and the public; through a sequence of public appearances and press conferences, as well as through news releases. She remained highly visible at schools and school events throughout the district for the remainder of her tenure there; in order to communicate with and comfort the surviving students, as well as the families of those whose loved ones had been seriously injured or killed. These demonstrations of care and concern were appreciated, and increased levels of trust between parents, community members, school staff, and district administration.

While the superintendent remained highly visible during the relatively brief crisis and then the much longer recovery period, much of the decision-making during and immediately after the bombing had been done by assistant superintendents and school principals. This demonstrated the trust that the superintendent had in the competence of crisis response team members, key elements of contingency-based leadership.

The superintendent had great confidence in the ability of her administrative team members to plan and organize an effective response to the crisis. This trust was justified; borne out by the resumption of normal district operations within a very short time, as well as the high degree of cooperation that existed between various individuals and groups within the district in the weeks and months following the bombing event. This demonstrated confidence in the
capabilities of leaders and other group members is another indicator of contingency-based leadership.

Case Three – Overview

Case three involves a significant weather-related crisis event - a hurricane. In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina had a major impact on communities and school districts throughout the gulf coast region of the United States. At that time, it was considered one of the most destructive hurricanes ever to make landfall in the continental United States. Recent hurricanes in 2017 such as Maria and Harvey each caused more flooding and physical damage, resulting in higher repair and cleanup costs. However, Katrina still ranks as one of the deadliest North American hurricanes of all time, with over 1400 people killed or missing after the storm.

Case Three – Leadership Philosophy

The gentleman in charge of one particular school district directly impacted by Katrina is a highly-experienced educator and instructional leader. This superintendent (Administrator “C”) believes strongly in servant leadership. His leadership process is very inclusive; his goal is to get as many people involved in the planning and decision-making process as possible. He sets high expectations for himself, as well as for the performance of others with whom he serves. He practices leadership by example; this means he is willing to do whatever he might ask of
subordinates, and that he does whatever is necessary to help his district reach the goals that have been established.

To set district goals and decide upon methods for attaining them, a district strategic planning committee is utilized. Staff and community members, parents, students, and all district stakeholders are represented on this committee. Proposals for district initiatives are given by committee members, or may be brought to the committee by others. These proposals are then discussed and evaluated in an open forum, with participation from members of the public especially welcomed. The superintendent tries to build consensus and broad support for all major district plans and initiatives.

The superintendent feels it is vitally important to connect and communicate with people through the district, and throughout the community. The superintendent has a leadership team composed of five other district administrators and the principals of each district school. This team meets at least once each month and the superintendent relies upon these people for input and advice. When considering ideas for change or improvement, the superintendent gets parents and the community involved in every major decision. When faced with a serious issue or problem at the district level, he also goes directly to the individual(s) or group(s) involved, seeking their input.

The superintendent frequently delegates authority, telling people what needs to be achieved while providing them the power and the means to accomplish their mission. The district has long maintained a comprehensive crisis response plan, which is reviewed and updated at regular intervals. Within the crisis response plan, specific emergency response procedures have
been developed that cover a wide variety of possible scenarios, and the responsibilities of each building- and district-level administrator are clearly outlined for each.

The district superintendent believes that relatively new staff members would describe him as a “grizzly bear”, while veteran staff would refer to him as a “teddy bear.” He attributes this to the fact that new staff members consistently see him emphasizing accountability and high expectations for their job performance in what they may perceive as a very stern or serious manner. The superintendent believes that veteran staff, having worked with him for a longer period of time, know that he is very flexible and fair. The superintendent feels they understand that he cares deeply about his students and staff, as well as his district and the community.

**Case Three – Leadership Actions**

On August 23, and August 24, 2005, warnings were issued for the Atlantic Ocean tropical storm that soon developed into hurricane Katrina. Katrina became a category 3 hurricane but weakened as it passed over southern Florida, leaving behind some minor damage from wind and rain. When Katrina reached the Gulf of Mexico, the hurricane stalled. At first, it seemed that most areas along the southern gulf coast would only get moderate or brief heavy rainfall. But surprisingly, Katrina started to strengthen. The track of the storm then changed dramatically over the next 72 hours (NOAA, 2005).

On Friday, August 26, the district superintendent and a colleague ventured less than a mile down to the gulf coast, and drove along the beach to see what was happening. The weather was still mild at this time, and everything appeared normal. But the superintendent and his
associate noticed something unusual; the beach itself and areas adjacent to the beach seemed strangely quiet. Then they understood why - all of the cranes, gulls, sandpipers, and other sea birds typically found along the coastal waters had disappeared. According to the superintendent, this was the point when they started to realize that “something big” was coming.

That Friday evening, a district high school played their home football game under calm, clear skies. People were able to sit outside comfortably that night; there was no indication of imminent rainfall or threatening weather in the area. However, the superintendent and his staff began monitoring the regional forecasts very closely. On Saturday, August 27th, National Weather Service hurricane warnings for Florida were discontinued. Additionally, a tropical storm warning was issued at 9:00am for an area just west of the Florida Keys (NOAA, 2006).

Things soon began to change. Katrina, which had been languishing offshore as a weakened category 3 storm near Key West and the Dry Tortuga islands, suddenly gathered massive amounts of energy from the warm Gulf of Mexico waters and started to move on a track that a few days before had been considered only a remote possibility – toward heavily populated areas of Louisiana and Texas.

Sometime during Saturday afternoon, forecasters realized that Katrina had strengthened significantly and was now heading almost directly north. Katrina’s final path was still uncertain, so at 3:00pm a hurricane watch was given for areas adjacent to New Orleans. By 9:00pm, this watch had been expanded to include the entire gulf coast; from the Florida panhandle to New Orleans, Galveston, and Corpus Christi (NOAA, 2006).

Throughout that day, the local county emergency response agency continued to issue more severe bulletins than the ones being given by the national weather bureaus, warning about
the potential impact of the impending hurricane. Many area residents had taken these warnings seriously, and wasted no time evacuating. The urgent nature of these warnings confirmed the superintendent’s belief that a catastrophic storm was approaching; he and his administrative team members began to make preparations for just such an event.

School had already started there, on August 1st. Fortunately, because it was a Saturday afternoon, schools and most district buildings were closed. The superintendent and his staff sprang into action, working quickly to secure district property and resources. One of the first things they did was relocate the district’s buses and other vehicles, moving these to the highest ground possible while parking them closely together.

It was understood that if a worst-case hurricane scenario came to pass, people would need full access to their financial resources in the aftermath of such a storm. District paychecks had already been prepared and were ready to be issued the following week, so the superintendent authorized immediate distribution of electronic payments that same day.

It was also anticipated that when Katrina hit their community, some area residents would lose their homes and find themselves in need of a place to go. Two district school sites were prepared to receive people displaced by the storm, and designated as emergency public shelters. Announcements to this effect were made by local radio and television stations; this information was also placed on the city and district websites.

The superintendent realized the school district had perishable resources that were likely to be lost or damaged; either by flooding or lack of electrical power. He made the decision to immediately have the district’s frozen foods delivered to area church groups, as well as the county jail. The superintendent also donated the district’s supply of diesel fuel to an area
hospital, because he anticipated the district would not be running its school buses for some time and knew that the hospital could use this fuel to run their emergency generators for electrical power. Finally, word was put out through local television and radio that school would be cancelled until further notice.

Katrina arrived early in the morning on Monday, August 29th. Strong winds and rain were accompanied by a storm surge from the gulf; a massive wall of water that moved rapidly inland, destroying homes, buildings, and property while inundating everything in its path. Regardless of what might happen, the superintendent was committed to remaining there in his community and his district for the duration.

According to the superintendent’s eyewitness account, roaring currents from the surge continued moving inland for approximately 45 minutes; rapidly covering thousands of acres for several miles in all directions. Then, after reaching a brief stage of temporary equilibrium, the waters suddenly began to recede. After another 45 minutes, much of the surge had retreated back to the sea.

But the devastation that Katrina left behind could be seen everywhere. A railroad embankment that runs parallel to the coastline blocked some of the waves. However, many low-lying areas remained underwater for days and weeks afterward. Many houses that had not been immediately toppled by the gale force of Katrina’s winds were eventually torn down anyway.

This was due either to extensive structural damage caused by the storm, or because of saturation by floodwaters which, when combined with high temperatures and extreme humidity, caused mold and rotting; creating a health hazard and compromising the integrity of interior walls, flooring, and other structural components.
That same day (August 29th), the superintendent held an emergency meeting with his five department directors. They talked about how to proceed, and began to assess the extent of damage in the school district. Surprisingly, local cellular phone service was restored within 24 hours, so the superintendent and other district officials were able to remain in contact with each other as they moved from place to place, conducting their inspections. Limited electrical and natural gas service within the immediate area came back online relatively quickly too; 48 hours after being knocked out by the storm.

By 7:00pm on Tuesday, August 30th, a damage report had been prepared for every district facility. Katrina destroyed two district schools, and a district athletic field. Six vans used for student transportation were also lost, due to flooding. Other school buildings had sustained damage to roofs, windows, and other components; a few needed relatively minor cleanup from the effects of wind and water. On Wednesday, August 31st, the school board met and authorized emergency repairs and reconstruction.

The district leadership team and staff members at each school moved quickly and efficiently to identify, contain, and repair damage caused by Katrina. Central to this process was constant communication between the superintendent and his administrators. However, the superintendent believed it was also important to have frequent communication with parents and community members during this period.

An automatic recorded call was sent out after the storm to the parents of every student; to let them know what was happening. Although physical damage throughout the district had not been extreme, much work needed to be done and the schools would not be able to reopen again for some time. However, the superintendent felt it was important to instill a sense of “normalcy”
as soon as possible. He knew that people depended on the schools and their associated resources such as libraries and playgrounds, and wanted people to be aware of progress that was being made in their effort to quickly resume regular operations.

Because school had been in session for over three weeks before Katrina, school officials already had all of their students’ records and current contact information. This allowed them to maintain constant communication with parents through electronic calls. The superintendent utilized the local press and electronic news media; making himself available at 9:00am each day for interviews and announcements to keep people informed of progress concerning the district’s recovery. The superintendent also made extensive use of telephone calls and the news media as the district’s recovery was nearing completion; to let people know when schools were getting ready to open again.

Electricity had been almost completely restored to area residents 11 days after the hurricane. The municipal water supply was also back online, but the water was not yet safe to drink. This posed a problem for school officials, because children and adults would need to have clean water for consumption, and to use in preparing meals for students during the day. Fortunately, a solution was suggested by a national soft-drink company and also a large local brewing company; both offered to provide bottled water to the schools at no cost.

The vast majority of students and their families returned to the area after Katrina, as did teachers and other staff members. But many people had lost their homes. To assist them, teachers and others were allowed to live in temporary housing – trailers, campers, and RVs placed in school parking lots. The superintendent understood that even though staff members were able to come to work every day, many people still needed to take care of home repairs and
other personal issues caused by Katrina. For the next several months, district employees were allowed as much time as they needed away from work to attend to these matters.

District schools re-opened twenty-six days after hurricane Katrina struck the region. At this time, almost all district school buildings and facilities were fully functional. The fresh bottled water previously offered to the district was not needed; municipal water could be used for cooking and drinking at this point. The superintendent reports that over 90 percent of their students were present initially, and that over 98 percent returned by the end of the first semester. With only a few exceptions, all district teachers returned as well. The superintendent attributes this fact to the resiliency and dedication of students and staff members alike. However, it seems that effective district and local community leadership may have also played a significant role.

**Case Three – Leadership Summary**

In his written responses to pre-interview leadership questions and throughout the in-person interview, the district superintendent emphasized the fact that he delegates authority extensively, while insisting upon accountability and performance. Before, during, and after Katrina, he was in frequent communication with his team of key district leaders. Each person had been given specific areas of responsibility prior to the hurricane, and the superintendent had confidence that each person would perform at a high level when called upon to do so. This confidence and trust in members of his team is an important component of contingency-based leadership.
The superintendent believed that he had very capable district team. He felt site administrators at each school knew what needed to be done in the hurricane’s aftermath, and that they would proceed to handle matters. These individuals exceeded his expectations, showing extreme dedication by going to their schools even before Katrina subsided, jumping immediately into the task of directing recovery from the storm. Principals, assistant principals, and other staff members remained at their schools long beyond normal working hours in the days and weeks immediately following Katrina, until everything had been restored back to normal. This high level of dedication to achieving team goals exhibited by district and building leadership team members is yet another critical element of effective contingency-based leadership.

The superintendent stated that immediately before and during the storm, he utilized more of a transactional, top-down management style than he typically employs. This was primarily because the superintendent knew little time remained before Katrina would arrive, and much needed to be done. Many decisions needed to be made quickly, in order to protect and secure resources that were vulnerable to the potential impact of Katrina. However, even during this period, the superintendent was in frequent contact with other key administrators and school board members, and they still had an opportunity to provide input.

After speaking directly with a number of administrators within the district office and at district schools, I perceived that team members had high levels of confidence in the superintendent, in their own abilities, and in each other. The superintendent believes that the local community has first-responder groups that are highly coordinated, and highly effective in working with each other. He feels this is an important reason why the local community was able to recover so quickly after Katrina in comparison with other cities and municipalities, where
recovery efforts became bogged down and civic leadership was later judged to be relatively ineffective.

The superintendent credits high levels of cooperation between local civic leaders, directors of first-responder agencies such as police and fire protection departments, and the school district as a primary reason why very little recovery assistance was needed from outside federal agencies such as FEMA. The superintendent believes that an ethos of trust and cooperation had been established between these entities long before Katrina, and that this spirit of trust, responsibility, and cooperation had been the driving force behind recovery efforts within the school district, as well as throughout the entire local community.

**Case Four - Overview**

Case four involves a hostage situation that developed when the parent of an elementary student in a west-coast school district held a teacher for several hours against her will at the child’s school. The parent refused repeated requests from police negotiators to release the teacher, and even refused to acknowledge or speak with members of his own family who came to the school and pleaded with him directly to let the teacher go.

No progress was made after several hours spent attempting to talk and negotiate with the parent. And so, police commanders ultimately decided to storm the room in which the parent had barricaded himself; along with his hostage. When the police response team broke through and entered the classroom, they were attacked by the parent and subsequently used lethal force to subdue him while freeing his hostage.
The superintendent of this school district (Administrator “D”) is an instructional leader with over twenty-five years of experience as a building- and district-level administrator. He describes his leadership style as situational, and believes that in order to lead effectively one must be highly skilled at developing relationships with others. For this superintendent, it means being able to communicate clearly and relate closely with students, parents, teachers, staff, building- and district-level administrators, and other subordinates; while also being able to communicate effectively and work closely with those in superior positions such as school board members, civic officials, political leaders, and others.

The superintendent also believes that inter-personal skills must be balanced with the requisite knowledge and ability to manage the everyday functions that need to be completed within a district and its schools, while remaining focused on the attainment of larger district goals. He feels that the ability to develop cohesive teams is important, so that people may work together effectively toward a common purpose. The superintendent strives to always maintain a balance between increasing his own functional knowledge while continuing to refine his inter-personal skills.

The superintendent believes it is important to have and show empathy and concern for others. He also feels that it is his responsibility to help school staff, district administrators, school board members, and others improve upon their professional knowledge and skills; developing the professional capacity of other instructional leaders in his district in order to
strengthen the entire organization. To do so effectively, he believes that relationships and trust are essential.

The superintendent strives to build these relationships with colleagues and build trust by being honest and transparent at all times. His core values are “learning” and “well-being.” The superintendent feels a responsibility to balance the need for technical knowledge and skills with the desire to create a positive climate and harmonious work environment; one in which people feel valued and supported.

The superintendent said that how he communicates with his staff, and how his staff members communicate with others is also very important. He believes that respect and civility should always be present when talking with others, both in public and in private. He strives to create an environment in which people feel safe talking and expressing their honest feelings and opinions. The superintendent believes that this honest dialogue creates a “bond” among team members, and helps engender trust.

The superintendent believes in delegating authority, and does so extensively. He understands that school districts are large, complex organizations, and knows that running a district effectively requires the coordinated effort of many people. He has given authority for the district’s departments to eight assistant superintendents, each of whom has subordinate staff members reporting directly to him or her. The superintendent monitors operations of the district overall, but has placed decision-making power in the hands of these assistant superintendents, as well as with principals and other building-level administrators.

When considering methods for implementing regular district initiatives or finding solutions for non-emergency problems, the superintendent prefers to discuss these matters first
with his group of assistant superintendents, and a few close advisors. This group is then expanded to include other subordinate district- and building-level administrators, where issues and their possible solutions or methods for obtaining desired results are proposed and considered in more detail.

The superintendent also says that some staff members might describe him as “hard to work for”, or “uptight”. He believes that these descriptions may stem from the fact that he is very particular in terms of how he wants certain things done, and that he is unwavering in his expectation that staff will always meet the high standard that he sets for their conduct and performance.

**Case Four – Leadership Actions**

The hostage situation in this instance developed early in the morning, on a Tuesday. A parent who was well-known to staff members brought his child to school that morning. But instead of dropping the child off and then leaving, as he usually did, the parent on this day insisted upon seeing the child’s teacher. Before anyone could stop him the parent went immediately to the teacher’s classroom, then entered and locked the door; keeping other staff and students outside.

The superintendent was in his usual Tuesday morning meeting with district- and building-level administrators when the director of pupil services received a text notification that 911 had been called at one of their schools. The director stepped out of the cabinet meeting and called the principal at the school, who explained what was happening there.
The director of pupil services then spoke with the superintendent, telling him that the school campus was being evacuated because someone with a backpack had come into the school without authorization; an upset parent who went to see a teacher and barricaded himself in the classroom with that person. Within 15 minutes, the director received another call from the school saying they needed help; because students were being taken to a park adjacent to the school and staff members were trying to notify parents to come and pick up their children.

District administrators then turned on a television and began to watch a local station that was reporting live from outside the school; to see for themselves exactly what happening. After doing so for a moment and gauging the situation, the superintendent and his director of pupil services decided they should go down to the school. When they arrived, the only district personnel present were the superintendent, the director of pupil personnel, the building principal, and the principal’s administrative assistant.

At this point the local police were already on the scene; their emergency response team handled all interaction with the intruder. The captain of this team told the superintendent what had happened, and what they were doing to communicate with the intruder while trying to persuade him to release the teacher he was holding hostage. After receiving this information, the superintendent then sent out a group text to school board members so they would be aware of the situation as well.

Throughout the day the superintendent remained at the school, constantly monitoring the situation while receiving periodic communication/negotiation updates from the emergency response team captain. In the afternoon, members of the intruder’s family were brought into the school; they attempted to talk him into letting his hostage go and surrendering. However, this
proved unsuccessful. After this effort failed, a joint text/email statement issued in conjunction with the local police department was sent to all district staff in the afternoon; before pupils at other district schools were dismissed.

Late in the afternoon, police emergency response team members still had not been able to communicate with the teacher who was taken hostage. At that time, response team negotiators had still made no progress in getting the intruder to respond, or to release the hostage. Not knowing what was happening in the barricaded room and concerned for the teacher’s safety, police decided to storm the room where they overpowered and shot the intruder, while freeing the teacher. The intruder was transported to a local hospital, where he later died. The teacher, who had been held captive for several hours, suffered only minor physical injuries.

The superintendent and pupil services director then went to the hospital, where they spoke with and comforted the teacher. They also spoke with members of the intruder’s family, who were shocked by the day’s events and traumatized by how the situation had ended with the violent death of their relative. Another text and email message was sent in the evening to school district personnel, informing them that the crisis had been resolved while providing further information concerning the events that had taken place.

After this, the superintendent and pupil services director went back to the school. They had the classroom where the crisis occurred cleaned. Then they secured and locked the building. This work was finally finished at 3:00am.

It was now the next day. The superintendent made the decision to close the school for two days. He also decided to close the classroom where the incident had occurred for the rest of the school year. Parents were allowed to bring their children back to school on Saturday, to
retrieve belongings left behind during the evacuation, and to learn about new classrooms where they would be located for the rest of the year.

The superintendent was concerned that very young children may have been adversely affected or traumatized by the sudden presence of police officers forcefully rushing into their school to confront the intruder. So when students returned to school on the following Monday, the superintendent had arranged for police officers to be there; greeting everyone in a cordial, friendly way while handing out teddy bears to children in order to comfort and reassure them.

Grief counselors were also made available to students, parents, and staff members; to further assist them in returning to the school environment where this crisis event had just taken place.

**Case Four – Leadership Summary**

Both during and after this crisis event, the district superintendent was in frequent communication with his team of key district leaders. Each person in the superintendent’s cabinet of advisors had been delegated specific areas of responsibility with authority assigned for a specific area or department, and the superintendent had confidence that each person would perform at a high level when called upon to do so.

The superintendent believed that he had very capable district team. He also felt that the school principal and other building administrators knew what needed to be done during the crisis, and that they would proceed to do it. These individuals met or exceeded his expectations, evacuating students and relocating them to a nearby park even before news of the situation
reached district office. The school principal and key staff moved quickly and efficiently to contact parents while getting children out of harm’s way. After the crisis was resolved, these administrators worked diligently to help children, parents, and staff members adjust and recover from this tragedy.

Both during and after the crisis, the superintendent was largely able to utilize and maintain the type of participative, team-oriented leadership approach that he typically prefers to employ. This was possible primarily because assistant superintendents and building administrators proved to be very capable of handling the crisis situation as it occurred, quickly and correctly making important decisions that were needed to protect the safety and welfare of students and staff members.

However, even during this critical period, the superintendent was still in frequent contact with other key administrators, school board members, and local officials; these individuals still had an opportunity to ask questions and provide input.

The superintendent had complete confidence in the ability and competency of his administrative team members, and in the local police emergency response team. The superintendent reports that administrative team members and school building administrators also had high levels of confidence in the superintendent, in their own abilities, and in each other. He credits these individuals with getting the school up and running again very quickly, and believes this is an important reason why the school and school community was able to recover from the crisis with minimal long-term impact to students and staff.
The confidence, competency, and trust demonstrated by the superintendent and evidenced by district leadership team members throughout their handling of the crisis are key elements of contingency-based leadership.

The superintendent credits high levels of cooperation between local civic leaders, directors of first-responder agencies such as police and fire protection departments, and the school district as a primary reason why very little recovery assistance was needed from outside. The superintendent believes that an ethos of trust and cooperation had been established between these entities long before this particular event, and that this spirit of trust, responsibility, and cooperation has been cultivated through specific targeted actions within the school district, as well as throughout the entire local community.

**Organization and Classification of Data**

I first copied and recorded the written responses given by participants to initial written survey instrument questions, compiling information concerning participants’ beliefs and perceptions related to various leadership elements as well as descriptions of their own preferred leadership styles, and leadership techniques they typically utilize during normal, non-emergency periods.

I then listened to an audio recording of the one-on-one verbal interview conducted with each participant, supplementing this source with written notes that I took while speaking with each administrator to produce a complete written transcript of each interview session.
After this was done, I sent each participant a copy of the transcript, and asked him/her to check it for accuracy. After receiving their feedback, corrections and adjustments were made where necessary.

I then began to read the written transcripts; looking for words, ideas, and phrases that represented the leadership concepts and principles most important to those who participated in my study. After classifying this information obtained from participants I began to examine the data; comparing it at several key points according to standard, accepted procedures for the analysis of qualitative data that were outlined and described earlier in chapter three.

This process of member-checking continued throughout the study. After organizing the data and information obtained in this way and upon assembling a written narrative of each interview and a description of each participant’s leadership actions during a crisis response, I again submitted this to each of them and asked for their help in identifying any factual mistakes, misunderstandings, or omissions.

In this way, emails were exchanged and phone conversations were held with participants. This helped greatly throughout the process of assembling, interpreting, and writing about the information they had shared with me; allowing me to better understand what they felt and experienced before, during, and after handling a major crisis event.
Data Summary – Written Survey

As described in chapter three, the first stage of qualitative data analysis is open coding. I began my analysis by going through answers that study participants gave to questions on the initial written survey instrument.

Study participants were asked to provide their educational background and work history. Three of the participants hold Doctorate Degrees, and one of these three completed extensive post-doctoral research in his major field. One of the participants holds a Master’s Degree. All of them have worked exclusively in the field of Education, and each participant held several different administrative jobs in various types of schools prior to becoming a school president or school district superintendent.

The total amount of administrative experience that these participants have acquired ranges from eighteen to over thirty-five years; each participant’s total experience as a school president or school district superintendent is between eight and twenty-five years.

When asked to describe the leadership philosophy and style they typically employ during normal non-emergency periods, each study participant said that he or she considered himself/herself a situational leader who interacts with people and strategizes the formulation and implementation of initiatives or event planning according to the specific characteristics of each individual or group of people, and each unique situation.

On the initial written survey instrument, study participants were also asked to rank the general leadership elements of authority, communication, competence, credibility, decision-making, and psychology in their relative order of importance. These essential elements were
derived from my literature review of non-school and non-school district emergency situation and crisis-response leadership; representing the leadership aspects and components most employed most often in devising and implementing a coordinated institutional/organizational response to a major emergency or crisis event.

No definition or description was given for these leadership elements and none was requested by study participants, so the rankings obtained for each element are subject to the interpretation and meanings assigned to them by each administrator. One study participant did include a very brief written comment/rationale for each ranking assigned. However, the other three participants declined to do so.

Table 1 - Initial Written Survey Instrument – Ranking of 6 Leadership Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator “A”</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Credibility</th>
<th>Decision-Making</th>
<th>Psychology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator “B”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator “C”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator “D”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above lists the rankings given by study participants. A visual inspection shows that the rankings given by study participants for each leadership element are fairly similar. In general, study participants considered leader credibility, competence, and communication more important than decision-making, authority, and psychology.

Study participants were not asked to provide any reason or justification for the rating that they assigned to each leadership element; no explanation or rationale for each administrator’s
ratings was given. A more detailed analysis of participants’ survey responses and possible rationale for the rankings that they assigned to each element is provided in chapter five.

**Data Summary – Personal Interviews**

Continuing the first step of analyzing my data, I then went back and read through written transcripts of each participant’s verbal interview. This part of the analysis process involved naming and categorizing discrete elements in the data by labeling important words and phrases used, and major ideas/concepts that were expressed by participants. The number of times that these key words, phrases, and concepts appeared was recorded. The amount of time spent interviewing each participant was noted as well.
Table 2 – Leadership-related Words and Phrases used by “Administrator A”
Interview time: 3.5 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “A”</th>
<th>Number of times used by participant</th>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “A”</th>
<th>Number of times used by all participant</th>
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<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Learning from others</td>
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<td>Assigning responsibility</td>
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<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checks and balances</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Processing information</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recognize</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-driven decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegating</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Respect agreements/policies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reviewing and assessing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse abilities/talents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seeking input</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Servant leadership</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding common ground</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shared principles</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on priorities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give people authority</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Similar core values</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Take advantage of opportunities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations and standards</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Team-builder</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tested</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving others</td>
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<td>Trust</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership by Example</td>
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Table 3 – Leadership-related Words and Phrases used by “Administrator B”
Interview time: 2.5 hours

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<tr>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “B”</th>
<th>Number of times used by participant</th>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “B”</th>
<th>Number of times used by all participant</th>
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<td>Checks and balances</td>
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<td>Competence</td>
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<td>Processing information</td>
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<td>Diverse abilities/talents</td>
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<td>Seeking input</td>
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<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Servant leadership</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding common ground</td>
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<td>Shared principles</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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## Table 4 – Leadership-related Words and Phrases used by “Administrator C”

**Interview time: 4.0 hours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “C”</th>
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<tr>
<td>Checks and balances</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding common ground</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shared principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on priorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Situational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give people authority</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Similar core values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Take advantage of opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations and standards</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Team-builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership by Example</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 – Leadership-related Words and Phrases used by “Administrator D”
Interview time: 1.0 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “D”</th>
<th>Number of times used by participant</th>
<th>Word, phrase, or concept used by Administrator “D”</th>
<th>Number of times used by all participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning from others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigning responsibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checks and balances</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Processing information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recognize</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-driven decisions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegating</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Respect agreements/policies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reviewing and assessing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse abilities/talents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Seeking input</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Servant leadership</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding common ground</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shared principles</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on priorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give people authority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Similar core values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Take advantage of opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations and standards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Team-builder</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tested</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership by Example</td>
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</table>
The length of each interview was different, because each participant took the opportunity to expand upon their answers to my questions; providing information and insights that they felt were important to understanding their actions and decisions within the context of the particular emergency situation or crisis event that they had dealt with.

Another element that contributed to differences in the duration of each interview was the fact that I asked different follow-up questions in response to the information provided by each participant, because each of these crisis events and emergency situations was somewhat unique.

Data Summary - Axial Coding

As noted in chapter three, Johnson & Cristensen (2014) describe axial coding as the process of placing concepts identified through examination of the data in to categories, and then looking for broad relationships and themes. During axial coding, the second stage of my data summary, I placed emerging concepts into categories; and then organized the categories according to the type of concepts they contain. Throughout the process of axial coding, I took particular note of words, ideas, and concepts that participants mentioned many times during the one-on-one verbal interviews, looking across the categories already established to see possible relationships among them; and for themes that appeared across the interviews of study participants.

As I proceeded to analyze and classify the words, phrases, and major ideas expressed by study participants, five distinct groups began to emerge; with five different themes. I have
organized these groups of major ideas and concepts, and their corresponding overall themes as follows:

1. Credibility  
   4. Decision-Making  
2. Communication  
   5. Planning  
3. Competence

**Theme 1 – Credibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts related to Credibility:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Awareness</td>
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<td>Leadership by example</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect for agreements/policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Servant leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team-builder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Evidence Statements related to Credibility:**

“I understand the need to follow and respect contractual agreements and established policies – people will be watching to see if I’m doing this.” – Administrator “A”

“As a leader, I have to hold people accountable and be able to recognize when things don’t look quite right” – Administrator “B”

“I have to get out there and set an example for my people, and jump into the work myself.” - Administrator “C”

“People are more willing to do the hard jobs if they see that I’m willing to do those kinds of things, too.” – Administrator “D”
“I need to always be alert – prepared to pursue and take advantage of opportunities that become available for my organization.” – Administrator “A”

“I have complete confidence in the abilities of my staff, and my staff members all have complete confidence in each other.” – Administrator “B”

“Servant leadership is at the heart of everything we do. We are here to serve students, parents, and the entire community.” – Administrator “C”

“The decisions that we make, are made together. And the actions that we take, are taken as a cohesive team” – Administrator “D”

**Theme 2 – Communication**

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<tr>
<th>Concepts related to Communication:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Finding common ground</td>
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<td>Inclusive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
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<td>Similar core values</td>
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**Evidence Statements related to Communication:**

“Members of my leadership team don’t always have to agree with me. But it’s important that we all have the same goals, and similar core values.” – Administrator “A”

“I believe in being very inclusive. I take my ideas to the people, because I want input and help from everyone in the community.” – Administrator “B”

“Relationships are so important. People need to know that we really care about their kids, and about the community.” – Administrator “C”
“I want to make connections and build relationships with people; this happens when we find common ground” - Administrator “D”

“Educational organizations can be very political. I need to be aware of how my decisions will be received by various constituencies.” – Administrator “A”

“Relationships are the key to everything we do.” – Administrator “B”

“Making connections with political leaders and others who are in a position to help the district is very important.” – Administrator “C”

“We make a real effort to be inclusive by reaching out to parents” – Administrator “D”

**Theme 3 – Competence**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concepts related to Competence:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Data-driven decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>High expectations &amp; standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review &amp; assess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize diverse skills/talents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Evidence Statements related to Competence:**

“I’m good at recognizing and using the diverse skills and talents of my staff members. This is an important ability for a leader to have.” – Administrator “A”

“Everything we do is based on data. A good administrator must be able to look at many different kinds of data, and figure out what this data means.” – Administrator “B”
“I’m definitely a situational leader. Everything that we did during the crisis was determined by our situation and conditions at that time.” – Administrator “C”

“I consistently emphasize personal and professional growth, for myself as well as members of my staff” – Administrator “D”

“I give my people a lot of freedom. But I have high expectations, and set high standards that they have to meet.” – Administrator “A”

“The culture of an organization is very important. We’ve established a culture in our district where excellence is expected, even during critical situations.” – Administrator “B”

“We review and re-assess our emergency preparedness at regular intervals, and learn from the example of others.” - Administrator “C”

“During the crisis we processed information quickly, but carefully - Administrator “D”

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**Theme 4 – Decision-Making**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concepts related to Decision-Making:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assigning responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving others</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Evidence Statements related to Decision-Making:**

“I delegate authority extensively. Both during and after our crisis response, major decisions were made by those who had responsibility for various departments and functions.” - Administrator “A”
“I monitored our crisis response continuously by staying in touch with members of my administrative cabinet, as well as members of our school board.” – Administrator “B”

“I try to involve as many people in the decision-making process as possible” – Administrator “C”

“I seek input from all members of my administrative cabinet, the district leadership team, and others before making major decisions.” – Administrator “D”

“I assign responsibility for various functions to specific departments, and the leaders of those departments.” – Administrator “A”

“I give our district and building administrators the authority to do what is necessary, to achieve our goals and accomplish our mission.” – Administrator “B”

“I let people know what needs to be done, and then provide them with the authority and resources with which to do it.” – Administrator “C”

“School districts are large organizations. I delegate authority extensively, and give my district administrators full authority to run their departments without interference.” – Administrator “D”

**Theme 5 – Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts related to Planning:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checks &amp; balances</td>
<td>Correction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on priorities</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence Statements related to Planning:

“We had already researched and written an extensive organizational crisis plan. When the crisis event occurred, people knew what to do because we had discussed and reviewed our plan extensively” – Administrator “A”

“We’re always evaluating our response to different situations, trying to make corrections and find ways we can improve.” – Administrator “B”

“We conducted simulations that allowed us to test our knowledge of the district’s written crisis management plan, and our response to different types of crisis events.” – Administrator “C”

“After the crisis had passed, we evaluated our decision-making and our planning, to see if there were areas where we could improve our crisis response.” – Administrator “D”

“During the emergency and immediately afterward, we were inundated by people wanting information, interviews, and access…I had to focus on priorities and decide what was best for the institution, the victims, and their families.” – Administrator “A”

“During the crisis we relied on our written crisis plan. That allowed us to focus on priority areas and concentrate our resources where they were most needed.” – Administrator “B”

“Our district’s written crisis management plan isn’t a static document – it’s always changing as we learn of new and different types of crisis events, and make corrections or changes based on how others have responded to these events.” – Administrator “C”

“We want to stay on top of current research, and evaluate best-practice to see how we can improve our own preparation and performance.” – Administrator “D”.
Five themes have emerged from information and data obtained in this study; identified first through the processes of open coding, and then refined by axial coding. These are: Credibility, Communication, Competence, Decision-Making, and Planning. The implications of these themes and their application toward forming new theory grounded in accepted concepts along with the evidence produced in this study will be discussed in chapter five.
CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Overview

At the outset of my study, I wanted to know if contingency-based leadership methods had been used to successfully implement and manage an effective response to a school- or school district-related crisis event. To answer this question, I examined the leadership styles and actions of school district superintendents and school presidents in places where major crisis events and had taken place in schools or school-related settings.

In the process of conducting this research, I spoke directly with school district superintendents and school presidents to learn about the specific leadership styles and methods they had utilized in the course of responding to a major emergency situation or crisis event. I also wanted to know whether these leaders, while directing their organization’s crisis response, had significantly altered or deviated from the leadership approach they typically employ during normal, non-emergency periods.

The central question that I originally posed has been answered: The results of this study reveal that participants made extensive use of contingency-based leadership principles and methods in formulating and directing an effective emergency situation response in their school(s) or school district. But as a result of this finding, other issues have emerged.

In the cases examined during my review of the literature, it is evident that contingency-based leadership methods and techniques have been used on many occasions in responding
successfully to a wide variety of non-school emergency situations and crisis events. So, it was not surprising to find that the participants in my study also used contingency-based principles when leading their school(s) or school district during times of crisis.

However, what I also discovered is that each participant made extensive use of contingency-based, situational leadership principles and techniques during normal, non-emergency periods as well. In fact, the approach and methods used by these participants while leading their school or school district during and after a significant crisis event was a direct reflection of their earlier leadership philosophy and style under normal conditions.

It turns out that the leadership of study participants actually remained remarkably consistent; regardless of circumstance or external conditions. The key factor that made this possible is delegation of authority.

Throughout my review of the literature, I read many cases and learned about the way in which various chief executives, mayor, governors, and others used contingency-based principles when leading their organization during a time of crisis. Many businesses, as well as municipal, state, and national governments, are large organizations that require many people to staff them. We know that leaders of these organizations must delegate authority, at least to some extent, in order for these entities to function.

Schools and school districts are also large, complex organizations. Many people, having varied skill sets and talents, are needed for educational institutions to operate effectively. School presidents and school district superintendents therefore hire people with experience and expertise in various areas, then delegate authority and responsibility for school or school district academic and managerial functions to specific departments, and certain individuals.
Data and information from my study reveals that each school president or school district superintendent delegated authority quite extensively, as part of their standard contingency-based, situational leadership approach. They trusted subordinates during normal, non-emergency periods; granting them autonomy to run their individual offices and departments while giving them the power to make important decisions.

During emergencies and times of crisis, this arrangement did not change. Participants did not “pull back” the authority they had previously extended, nor did they attempt to dictate the actions of subordinates in whose hands authority had been placed. On the contrary, each school or school district leader displayed complete confidence that those to whom authority had been given would make the right decisions, and demonstrate effective leadership themselves - before, during, and after a significant emergency situation or crisis event.

The level of success produced by each school or school district’s crisis event response depended therefore, to a great degree, on precisely how much authority these leaders had given; and with whom this authority had been placed. Each crisis response outcome was also highly dependent upon the way in which subordinates utilized the powers with which they had been entrusted, and the way in which subordinates came together to create and implement a coordinated plan during each school-related crisis or emergency situation. This finding reflects the real value and significance of my study.

Throughout my review of the literature, as I read accounts and descriptions of crisis response actions taken by corporate CEOs, military commanders, mayors, governors, and presidents, it was evident that most, if not all of these institutional leaders had delegated at least a portion of their authority to vice presidents, officers of lower rank, trusted assistants, and general
staff members. Not one of these leaders operated in isolation; they each relied on the knowledge and skill of subordinates and others, both inside and outside of their organization, to help organize and carry out a coordinated response when confronted with a significant emergency situation or crisis event.

But the way in which these leaders had delegated authority, how their authority had been distributed and how subordinates used the powers they had been given was rarely touched upon; never explained or outlined in any detail. I believe that this is the real gap in the literature related to crisis event and emergency situation leadership.

I have found that emergency situation and crisis event leadership occurs not only while the emergency or crisis is happening. It begins with preparation for such an event, which usually occurs months or even years before. This is when effective crisis response plans are made, and provisions for delegation of authority are specifically outlined. Crisis leadership also extends beyond the event itself, into the time afterward when healing and closure are required.

After each crisis event described in my study, many things still needed to be done. Physically restoring a normal educational environment, calming people’s fears, and helping them cope in the aftermath of tragedy were also important functions that took place under the guidance and direction of each participant. More than simply repairing buildings or replacing material goods, each of their stories was about strengthening and sustaining relationships: Supporting their communities, staff members, parents, and children; while helping all of them move forward with their lives.

What does it mean to delegate authority effectively – before, during, and after a crisis? How is this accomplished? Can subordinates effectively use the authority they have been given
when an actual crisis event happens? What conditions, preparation, and training are necessary for this to occur? The answers to each of these questions can be found in the methods and actions of the participants in this study. I believe that the lessons they can teach us have tremendous practical application for instructional leaders and school administrators. The crisis leadership methods and actions of study participants will now be further examined and compared.

**Cross-Case Analysis of Crisis Response Leadership**

The four cases selected for inclusion in this study - a mass shooting that took place in a crowded lecture hall, the bombing of a large building that contained many people, a massive hurricane that struck heavily populated areas, and an armed intruder who took an employee hostage - are all very different. Yet, the individuals responsible for implementing and managing a crisis response in each of the schools or school districts associated with these events did so using leadership styles, methods, and techniques that were very similar.

**Delegation of Authority**

Rather than trying to “dictate” what should be done in these emergencies by issuing direct orders to subordinates, or tightly “controlling” these situations by giving staff members detailed instructions as to how they should proceed at every step, each school district superintendent or school president relied upon the expertise of his/her leadership team members -
people who had specialized knowledge and training in certain defined aspects of crisis and emergency situation response.

In these cases, school district superintendents and school presidents placed their trust in key members of a leadership team. They delegated authority extensively, confident that these team members would perform effectively when called upon to do so. The chief administrator believed not only that subordinates would apply their specialized knowledge and skills, but that they would also work together effectively with superiors, subordinates, colleagues, and others in a highly cooperative way.

As previously cited, trust is one of the basic components of contingency-based leadership. This includes mutual trust between leader and followers, and trust among followers in each other. Zand (1997) found that quality of communications between leader and followers, followers’ desire for openness within the professional relationship, and the willingness of followers to exercise personal initiative are all indicators of how much trust followers have in their leader.

In each study case, information was exchanged back and forth between the leader and followers in a very informal way, quickly and without hesitation; particularly during and after the crisis event. Followers willingly took on greater responsibility, working extended hours during each crisis response while performing additional tasks that went far beyond the basic requirements of their jobs.

The way in which each school president or school district superintendent communicated frequently and openly with followers is a clear indication of high levels of mutual trust that existed between participants and members of their leadership teams. Furthermore, the
willingness of followers to exercise personal initiative in helping students, parents, and colleagues recover during and after each school or school district’s respective crisis event shows the high degree of trust that leadership team members had for each other.

This same type of confidence and trust also extended to students, parents, and members of each school or school district community. Throughout each emergency or crisis event, school and school district staff reached out to help co-workers, students, and community members; thereby continuing to respond and perform in ways that justified the trust each leader had placed in them; as well as the trust extended to them by their colleagues.

Although school district superintendents and school presidents delegated authority extensively in every case, allowing subordinate team members to formulate and direct various aspects of the crisis response, a laissez faire style of leadership was never in evidence. During and immediately after each crisis event, the school district superintendent or school president in charge did not distance himself/herself, or disengage from actively participating in the leadership process.

In fact, each school president or school district superintendent monitored events closely; maintaining standards and accountability by periodically issuing crisis-related goals that staff members were expected to meet, establishing recovery expectations and timelines, and requiring staff to submit periodic verbal and written reports on their progress toward meeting specific crisis response goals issued by superiors and the general emergency response goals contained within each institution’s written crisis response plan.

While subordinates were given great responsibility and latitude in choosing and coordinating crisis response actions, the participants recognized that at certain times and in
particular circumstances a more directive, transactional leadership approach was required. Consequently, the school district superintendent or school president did not hesitate to step it and take prompt, decisive action when he/she felt it was appropriate and essential to the response effort.

This took the form of larger actions, such as when Administrator “C” designated and prepared district facilities to serve as emergency shelters in advance of hurricane Katrina, then donated his district’s fuel supply to a local hospital. There were also as a number of less-visible things; such as Administrator “A”’s decision to have his institution pay the funeral expenses for mass shooting victims.

However, this should not be seen as a contradiction. Bass (1985) recognized that even leaders who are primarily transformational sometimes employ transactional leadership methods. This is a basic principle of contingency-based leadership – the leader adjusts his/her style and methods to suit the immediate situation, and the personnel under his or her authority. In each of these cases, followers continued to perform at high levels even when leaders employed a more authoritative leadership style.

Sweeney (2011) noted that besides competence, leaders’ concern for the welfare of followers is a prime factor in the leader-subordinate relationship, and the establishment of trust. In each case contained in this research study, followers readily complied with and actively supported the directives of their school district superintendent or school president, even when these directives were framed in a more transactional leadership style. Their willingness to do this may indicate that followers had high levels of confidence and trust in their leaders.
These superintendents and presidents understood that it was incumbent upon them to assume ultimate responsibility for the crisis response, and that they would be called upon to make critical decisions when time was of the essence and immediate action was required to preserve school or school district resources, as well as to protect the safety and the lives of those under their command. However, directive or transactional methods were not the preferred leadership styles of study participants. District superintendents and school presidents participating in this study stated that they employed these methods only for as long, and only to the degree that they felt it was absolutely necessary to do so.

**Crisis Management Planning**

During the course of conducting interviews with study participants and throughout the process of reflecting upon the information they shared, the same quotation came to mind time and time again - *amat victoria curam*. The most accurate translation of this phrase from Latin into English seems to be *victory loves carefulness*. However, I believe the spirit of the original quote corresponds more closely to the idea that *victory loves preparation*.

Although each school district superintendent or school president gave a significant proportion of credit for the success of his organization’s crisis response to assistant superintendents, department directors, other individuals on their leadership team, and highly-competent staff members who were able to think quickly and adapt to changing conditions, they also cited the existence of an effective pre-existing crisis management plan as a key element that served to orient and guide their leadership team members during and after the crisis event.
These pre-existing written crisis management plans were universally praised by study participants as invaluable resources - providing detailed action plans that included specific steps to be taken by particular individuals; when faced with certain conditions during defined types of crisis events. Along with delegation of authority, this extensive planning and preparation beforehand was another important element. Each school or school district’s crisis management plan provided a framework that allowed leadership team members to carry out a highly effective crisis event or emergency situation response. This was achieved because subordinate staff members effectively utilized the authority they had been given; applying this authority according to their normal managerial/supervisory responsibilities, as well as the specific emergency/crisis response functions that had been outlined for them in the written crisis management document.

Summary

In each case selected for inclusion in this study, the following characteristics were observed:

(1) High levels of trust between followers

(2) Confidence of followers in the abilities of their leader

(3) Leader confidence in the capability of followers

(4) High levels of professional skill and competence associated with the leader as well as with followers

(5) Consistent, open, and honest communication between the leader and followers

(6) Leader/follower flexibility in the process and methods used to handle problems.
Trust, credibility, competence, and communication - these are the key elements of contingency-based leadership. These core elements were valued highly by each district superintendent or school president during normal, non-emergency periods.

These same core elements remained in place and became especially important for each leader during emergencies or times of crisis. High levels of trust, competence, and credibility are all clearly visible and abundantly present in the leadership philosophy and actions of each chief administrator when faced with a significant emergency or crisis event in their school or school district. Their crisis response leadership was very much grounded in contingency-based principles.

Two major elements present in each participant’s emergency/crisis response are extensive delegation of authority, and reliance upon on a detailed, comprehensive crisis response plan that was adhered to closely by subordinates and staff. Additional commentary concerning key components and effective application of these two factors will be given during my discussion of recommendations for professional practice.

**Narrative Inquiry**

During the course of my interviews with participants, I also shared of my own experiences during school-related emergencies and crisis situations. As described in Chapter Three, the process of coming alongside study participants when engaging in narrative inquiry into participants’ experiences and stories requires the researcher to engage in narrative inquiry
into his own experiences and stories. Johnson & Christensen (2014) use the term *retelling stories* to describe this interaction between participants and the researcher.

As I sat and spoke with study participants, asking questions, listening to their stories and talking about how they had dealt with a variety of challenging emergency and crisis event situations; I thought about my own non-school- and school-related emergency and crisis event leadership experiences. When the conversation touched upon an issue that I had confronted, whether in a similar situation or when faced with a somewhat different type of emergency or crisis event, I selectively shared these with participants while explaining the logic and motivation behind my thoughts and actions. By doing so, I hoped to draw additional information from them, while allowing them to consider their own leadership philosophy and methods from a different viewpoint.

Hearing of my experiences usually caused participants to reflect upon their crisis response actions; sometimes causing them to re-assess their methods and approach to these events while spurring them to offer additional thoughts, insights, and details concerning their own leadership philosophy and practice. This increased the accuracy and depth of the data and information that I was able to obtain from them.

**Descriptive and Interpretive Validity**

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I used triangulation as a method to increase validity as I obtained, examined, and classified the information gained from study participants. In this triangulation, my focus was on internal consistency. To assess this, I asked
each participant a number of questions that were designed to elicit the same type of information. However, each of these questions was worded or posed to participants differently. Although the content and nature of these questions appeared to be somewhat different each time, I wanted to ascertain the degree to which the answers and information provided by participants would remain consistent.

As I recorded the responses given by participants to initial written survey questions, and as I organized information from narratives collected from these different individuals describing their own unique situations, I compared the data at several key points.

Because each participant self-identified as a situational leader, I looked at their answers to leadership style questions and the actions they took in response to an emergency situation or crisis event to see if these views and actions were consistent with accepted situational leadership philosophy and methods. As cited and described earlier in my discussion of leadership theory, Hersey and Blanchard (1977) identified four primary situational leadership actions: Delegating, Supporting, Coaching, and Directing.

In their narratives of crisis event response, every study participant gave examples describing how they utilized these four actions: Delegating authority and responsibility among leadership team members, supporting staff through extensive training and practice in crisis event response, coaching and teaching staff through professional development that provided a balance of theory and practice, and by actively instructing and directing subordinate personnel themselves; before, during, and after the crisis event.

In each case, there was a high degree of internal consistency in the answers provided by the participant to both written and verbal leadership style questions. In the written survey
responses that participants gave, they each defined their personal leadership style as situational. In their descriptions of personal leadership philosophy, they also used words and phrases closely associated with situational leadership principles. And through the quotations listed in Chapter Four that came directly from the spoken words of their interview narratives, we see a great deal of evidence that each school district superintendent or school president acted very much as a situational, contingency-based leader when faced with a significant crisis event or emergency situation in their school district or school. Overall, this information and data strongly supports their claims as situational leaders.

Leadership Philosophy and Style

While each participant in the study identifies strongly as a situational leader during normal, non-emergency periods, the information and data obtained in my study also indicates that these participants are primarily transformational leaders and remained so; before, throughout, and after the crisis event or emergency situation that occurred in their school(s) or school districts.

These district superintendents or school presidents adopted a more authoritative leadership style only on rare occasions, and only when they believed it was absolutely necessary to do so. On the whole, participants consistently utilized a transformational, situational, contingency-based leadership approach; both during and in the period immediately following a significant crisis event.
In each case, the district superintendent or school president delegated authority extensively, relying upon networks of highly-organized teams that were composed of members who had specialized professional skills and expertise in particular areas. However, in addition to being given authority, study participants had also provided extensive training and professional development for these team members, thereby building the leadership capacity in subordinates. In particular, these individuals had been given focused training to prepare them for initiating and carrying out various response actions over a range of possible crisis or emergency situations.

While outlining how these teams operated both during and after the crisis event, participants described the characteristics and abilities of the people who comprised these response teams, as well as the way in which these individuals communicated with each other and their leader in carrying out crisis response functions.

Participants each described how they supported members of their leadership teams and other staff members before and during the emergency of crisis response; by providing verbal encouragement and other affirmations of confidence in their judgment and abilities. This indicates that participants had a good understanding of followers’ levels of maturity and task readiness, further affirming participants’ self-identification as situational leaders.

As cited previously in chapters two and three, one of the central elements of contingency-based leadership is a team composed of highly-competent members who possess a high degree of respect and trust for each other; and for their leader. Throughout each case included in this study and during the period that followed, the district superintendent or school president maintained supervisory authority while allowing subordinates the freedom to operate; empowering them to
make crisis response decisions within previously defined parameters. This demonstration of trust and confidence in followers is yet another hallmark of transformational leadership.

**Data Analysis – Part One**

**Initial Written Survey Instrument – Ranking of 6 Leadership Elements**

Table One lists the rankings given by study participants for six leadership elements. These six elements were identified, through my review of emergency/crisis-related literature as major leadership components utilized by those who had devised, implemented, and managed a coordinated response to a significant emergency situation or major crisis event, as previously qualified and defined in Chapter Three. These elements comprise the leadership function categories that appear most often in the methods and actions of those who have directed a major emergency/crisis response.

A visual inspection shows that in general, the rankings given by study participants are fairly similar and consistent across each leadership element. Overall, study participants indicated that they consider leader credibility, competence, and communication more important than decision-making, authority, and psychology.

The rankings given by Administrators “A”, “B”, and “C” are in very close agreement. The lone exception is the fact that Administrator “A” diverges from Administrators “B” and “C” in assigning a rank of “2” to authority, whereas Administrators “B” and “C” give this element ranks of “5” and “6” respectively.
Administrator “D” generally agrees with the others, but differs significantly from his colleagues on two elements. Administrator “D” rates leader decision-making as the most important leadership element, while assigning a rank of “4” to leader credibility. Every other participant believed that leader credibility was most important, unanimously assigning this element a ranking of “1”, while giving ranks of “4” or “5” to decision-making.

As previously described, each superintendent or president handled the crisis event in his school district or school using a very similar leadership approach and during verbal interviews, they all outlined personal leadership philosophies that were very much the same. But since no definitions or examples for these six elements were provided, it was left to each of them to determine what these leadership elements meant for themselves. Therefore, it is not surprising to see at least a small amount of variation in the rankings, or even a significant difference in the rankings assigned to by one or more study participants.

During a crisis event or emergency situation, we might expect that school district superintendents or school presidents would value decision-making and authority. But in this survey, these particular elements were not highly-ranked.

This seems to be a direct reflection of the leadership philosophy and style demonstrated by study participants during times of crisis. When faced with an actual emergency in their schools or school district, these leaders felt it was their duty to be visible while projecting competence and credibility. However, as these chief administrators managed the crisis response, they did not utilize authoritative or highly directive leadership methods.

In each case, school district superintendents and school presidents communicated extensively with subordinates, staff, and the media; yet did they not attempt to “take over” in an
effort to exercise power, or in an attempt to demonstrate control. Instead, they relied upon the skills and abilities of subordinates; giving these members of their leadership teams the freedom to choose and implement crisis response actions independently, and without undue interference.

**Data Analysis – Part Two**

As described by Johnson & Christensen (2014) and outlined in Chapter Three, axial coding occurs during qualitative data analysis when the researcher places emerging concepts into categories, and then organizes these categories according to the type of concepts they contain. As I examined written transcripts of interviews with study participants, I took note of words, ideas, and concepts that participants mentioned many times.

I then looked across the categories already established during my summary of initial data to see possible relationships among them, and for themes that appeared consistently across the interviews with study participants. I then began to compare these emergent themes to the fundamental principles of contingency-based leadership, looking to see if elements of contingency-based leadership principles are present within these identified themes.

During the process of axial coding, five distinct themes emerged from the data. These are: Credibility, Communication, Competence, Decision-Making, and Planning. These five emergent themes, along with their related supporting concepts, will now be examined and discussed in greater detail.
Theme 1 – Credibility

Concepts related to Credibility:

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<tr>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Leadership by example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Respect for agreements/policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Servant leadership</td>
<td>Team-builder</td>
<td>Trust</td>
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Kouzes and Posner (2011) state that credibility is the foundation of leadership; it is based on one’s words and actions. They identified honesty/trustworthiness, professional expertise, foresight/vision, and optimism/inspiration as primary qualities that are closely associated with leader credibility. In assessing the credibility of leaders, people look to see if they keep their word and follow through; and if they show respect to subordinates as well as superiors.

Kouzes and Posner (2011) found that people also evaluate whether leaders have high levels of professional knowledge and skills, and assess the leader’s ability to adapt to changing conditions while anticipating possible future consequences. They determine whether leaders are willing to listen, and if they are open to policy and procedural change that creates greater organizational balance or increases fairness.

Each of these elements figures prominently in my study data. I have organized them, along with others closely related, under the theme of Credibility.

For over 200 years, the United States Marine Corp has dealt with innumerable crisis events and emergency situations, in every corner of the globe. The Marine Corps prepares leaders to handle some of the most challenging situations in the world during wartime, as well as spontaneous conflicts that arise during times of relative peace.
The United States Marine Corps Non-Commissioned Officer Training Manual (1999, p2.) states that “accountability is the cornerstone of leadership.” The manual goes on to say that “accountability establishes reasons, motives and importance for actions in the eyes of superiors and subordinates alike; it is the single most important element in establishing one’s credibility.”

During verbal interviews, each school district superintendent or school president identified accountability as one of his/her key leadership principles. Each leader cited several examples that show how they demonstrate accountability; in normal, non-emergency periods as well as during crisis events or emergency situations.

Study participants said that they regularly hold meetings and forums; during which organizational progress, issues, and problems are shared openly and discussed honestly with students, parents, community members, and other stakeholders. As shown by the evidence contained in the quotations listed under this heading in Chapter Four, these leaders also remain highly accessible to their constituents; communicating regularly with their staff, parents, and the public in order to provide information and updates on the progress of various projects and school or school district initiatives.

Each district superintendent or school president practiced servant leadership - showing genuine humility and concern for people, and spending time with them while providing encouragement and tangible support; facing the crisis or emergency together. Each leader demonstrated leadership by example - willingly stepping in to take his/her share of the “hard” jobs or “dirty work.” This meant doing things that were distasteful, difficult, and occasionally dangerous; while maintaining the ethics, values, and performance standards that they asked of others.
The narratives shared by study participants told of high levels of cooperation, a sense of genuine camaraderie, and a willingness on the part of leadership team members and other school/district staff to go above and beyond what was required of them in contributing toward the crisis event or emergency situation response that took place in each participant’s respective school or school district. This indicates that each district superintendent or school president enjoyed a high level of credibility among staff members and subordinates.

Each participant emphasized the importance of accountability; they value servant leadership principles and methods at all times, not only during crisis events of emergency situations. These administrators universally share a belief in taking an active role within their schools, school districts, and communities; and a commitment to practicing leadership by example.

In the examples of successful crisis response contained throughout my review of the literature, leader credibility is a key factor. In places such as New York City and Washington D.C., response and recovery efforts were able to proceed quickly and effectively after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 because people there had trust and faith in the competence of their civic leaders, and the leaders of other government and first-responder organizations (Mullin, 2010).

The high levels of credibility enjoyed by participants in this study allowed them to quickly mobilize staff, community members, and other constituents; getting recovery efforts underway promptly in their own schools, school districts, and communities immediately following the particular crisis event or emergency situation that occurred.
## Theme 2 – Communication

Almost without exception, outstanding leaders throughout history such as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Martin Luther King have been outstanding communicators. Former United States President Ronald Reagan was known as “The Great Communicator.” This was not due simply to Reagan’s public speaking proficiency; developed through training as an actor - but because he was able to get large numbers of people to understand, believe in, and support the ideas and initiatives that he wanted to pursue.

Reagan, King, and others were certainly great orators. But communication is more than simply telling people something; disseminating information and facts. There is a saying that is often used in education: “Children don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” This applies to adults as well. People want to know that a leader cares about them and their well-being, before giving that person their attention, their loyalty, and their trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). True communication, therefore, means creating and sustaining a relationship with others, a relationship built upon common interests, shared principles, and similar core values.

Throughout the literature review, we have seen several examples of an effective crisis response implemented by individuals perceived as highly effective communicators. During the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City, Mayor Rudy Giuliani maintained a constant presence at “ground zero” and appeared frequently on TV and in the print media. In the days

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<th>Concepts related to Communication:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Finding common ground</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
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and weeks following this event, Giuliani continued to provide information and updates on the recovery process, while expressing his personal feelings of sadness and loss. The candid and open way in which Giuliani communicated these emotions made a genuine connection with New Yorkers, and this helped to comfort and reassure the people there (Griffin-Padgett, 2010).

When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin used a different communication strategy. After the storm had wreaked havoc and killed over 1000 people in the city, Mayor Nagin took to the media with a relentless barrage of criticism of local, state, and federal government leaders for their delayed and insufficient response to the disaster. Nagin verbally blasted both Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco and President George Bush, calling them out for poor performance time and time again.

Even though Mayor Nagin’s own crisis response leadership during Katrina was universally seen as poor, his words resonated strongly with constituents; especially those in the city of New Orleans who had suffered greatly because of the storm. Nagin’s fiery “restorative rhetoric” was praised by many, because this type of communication had given voice to the frustration that people were feeling while providing a measure of reassurance that someone understood and cared about their plight (Allison & Griffin, 2007).

Similarly, the participants in this research study are outstanding communicators as well; willing to stand up and speak out on behalf of their students. Administrator “B” related that at one point during her tenure, local businessmen opposed a tax increase to fund improvements for district schools, including air conditioning for school buildings. The weather is often hot in Administrator “B”’s school district, and she said that it was difficult for students and staff to work under such conditions in non-air conditioned facilities.
Administrator “B” could not understand or accept the lack of compassion shown by business leaders, and organized a campaign to generate support for a referendum to fund these improvements. Administrator “B” spoke on the topic frequently in public forums, and gave interviews to television, radio, and newspaper reporters during which she stated that “even inmates in our prisons get air-conditioning” while asking “Don’t our children deserve at least this much?” Although a tax increase for schools had not been approved in her district for many years, this referendum subsequently passed by a wide margin.

In their written responses to initial survey questions and during verbal interviews, each school district superintendent or school president described in detail how he/she maintained contact with stakeholders throughout the crisis event, providing not only information and updates on the progress of crisis response efforts, but expressions of caring and concern, and reassurance that everything was going to be alright. These things, along with other demonstrations of support, are what gave people hope and the belief that their situation would soon improve.

But the groundwork and foundation for these successful crisis response outcomes was actually laid much earlier. Each of these leaders had previously invested a great deal of time and energy into building these relationships with their people and their community; starting years before they had to confront a significant crisis event or emergency situation in their school districts or schools. The participants in this study gave substantial evidence on this point, telling and describing how they had been highly active, visible, and accessible in their schools and within their school communities.

This was achieved by working closely with students, parents, staff, and community members on a variety of educational projects in the areas of curriculum, instruction, facilities,
finance, and social/emotional growth. These school district superintendents and school presidents each developed relationships with subordinates, staff, parents, community members, alumni, and others in a deliberate, purposeful way.

Interacting cooperatively with these stakeholders to solve problems and implement initiatives provided opportunities to identify common interests, set priorities, and define shared core values. Because of this practice, frequent and open communication developed into genuine cooperation and trust.

Each participant in this study identified these particular elements, along with the strong sense of “community” created as a result, as primary reasons why the people in their schools, school districts, and communities had responded so quickly and effectively when faced with an actual emergency situation or crisis event.

**Theme 3 – Competence**

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<th>Concepts related to Competence:</th>
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<td>Culture</td>
<td>Data-driven decisions</td>
<td>Determination</td>
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<td>Growth</td>
<td>High expectations &amp; standards</td>
<td>Learning from others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing information</td>
<td>Recognizing opportunities</td>
<td>Review &amp; assess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>Utilize diverse skills/talents</td>
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Competence has been previously recognized as a key element in establishing trust. Taraki, Greer, & Groenen (2016) identified leader competence as a critical factor in high-performing groups. In their study, groups attempting to perform complex tasks were much more
successful when they had a leader who possessed a high level of task-specific knowledge and experience. Conversely, groups that did not have leaders who possessed high situational and task-specific competence fared poorly.

After Hurricane Katrina struck the gulf coast region in 2005, local, state, and federal response was judged to be wholly inadequate. Because of this combined failure, the competence of leaders such as New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco, FEMA Director Michael Brown, and President George Bush was strongly questioned.

Every participant in this study identifies as a situational leader, and the evidence cited previously in the description of their leadership actions (Chapter Four) shows they each adapted their methods and strategies to changing conditions as events and situations unfolded. But to do so effectively, leaders must be knowledgeable in all facets of school/school district operations and crisis response techniques, while understanding how to apply such specialized knowledge.

Each school district superintendent and school president stated that they have high expectations and standards for performance, starting with themselves. They hold themselves accountable for continuous growth and improvement, and have established a culture of learning and growth among leadership team members and staff. They remain aware of developing issues and potential problems in their field, constantly seeking relevant information and data.

In addition, they strive to make sure that other members of their leadership teams, school board members, staff, parents, and community leaders have this information. This is achieved through regular training and professional development provided for all district or school administrators, school and school district staff, and school board/governing board members.
Each participant stated that in addition to having a comprehensive crisis management plan for their school or school district, school or school district leaders also met regularly to update and revise this plan. During these meetings, members of each participant’s leadership team discussed emergency situations and crisis events that had occurred in other schools and school districts, discussing how they might prepare and respond if a similar scenario occurred at their institution. In doing so, they assimilated and processed data from these sources. These leaders learned from the experiences and ideas of others, raising the level of their own professional competence.

The evidence in this study shows that each participant also strengthened and improved the capabilities and competence of their leadership team members. They provided regular opportunities for assistant superintendents, department directors, and principals to practice various types of emergency situation or crisis response methods; holding trainings and exercises during which various types of emergencies and crisis events were simulated.

“Surprise” trainings were also conducted, during which leadership team members were confronted with unusual or unexpected issues within the context of an emergency situation or crisis event. Because of this, leadership team and other staff members learned to adapt and successfully handle problems for which they had not received specific targeted training. These “surprise” exercises were credited with helping school and school district administrators and staff members respond more effectively when they were confronted with an actual emergency or crisis event.
**Theme 4 – Decision-Making**

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<th>Concepts related to Decision-Making:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assigning responsibilities</td>
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<td>Delegating</td>
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<td>Giving people authority</td>
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<td>Involving others</td>
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<td>Monitoring</td>
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<td>Seeking input</td>
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Municipal governments and large private sector organizations are complex entities that require the coordinated effort of many individuals in order to function effectively. Throughout my review of the literature, we have seen that when these entities were faced with a significant crisis event, a coordinated effort involving many people was required to implement a successful crisis response.

Farazmand (2007) found that anticipation is a key element of both emergency situation and crisis event management, and Olaniran (2007) states that the concept of control is important in anticipating and managing a crisis situation. The anticipatory model fosters vigilance and preventive decision-making in the pre-crisis stage when warning signs of impending problems first appear, as well as during and after a crisis event.

Boin (2013) reports that followers and the general public will assess the effectiveness of crisis management according to whether they see response personnel “getting things done”, and workers who are “making things happen.” Witnessing this type of activity, and seeing these images fulfills a symbolic psychological need, and makes people feel secure by instilling the belief that things are being taken care of.

While competence is an important leadership component, the evidence shows that participants in this study did not make most of the managerial decisions that were taken during
the crisis event and emergency situation occurring on their watch. Each school district superintendent or school president followed a written crisis response plan, delegating decision-making authority to subordinates who had been selected previously for these roles.

Although each study participant’s written crisis plan assigned specific crisis-related duties and responsibilities to particular individuals, these participants had already delegated authority extensively during normal non-emergency periods, allowing department directors, leadership team members, and other administrators to run their own divisions, departments, or school buildings with a great degree of independence. And so, to a great extent, the decisions made and actions taken during each crisis event response were largely an extension of similar types of decisions that these individuals would normally make, and types of actions normally taken while performing their regular job functions under non-emergency conditions.

Each study participant cited delegation of authority as an important factor that contributed to the overall success of their school or school district’s crisis response. Within such large, complex organizations, many people with different types of training and expertise in various administrative areas such as human resources, finance, curriculum & instruction, and student services had been given the authority to supervise and direct their corresponding administrative departments and offices. These were the people charged with carrying out many of the crisis response operations necessary in each case.

However, while each study participant utilized this practice extensively, it did not diminish their leadership role before, during, or after the emergency or crisis event. Although subordinates made many of the logistical/operational decisions during times of crisis, each school district superintendent or school president maintained a close presence throughout.
Participants still made major decisions when necessary; they were also diligent in monitoring the actions and performance of their leadership team members. Through regular electronic, written, and personal communication, they sought the ideas and input of these subordinate administrators; while assessing performance and assuring accountability for their decisions and actions. In this way, the accountability and competence of subordinates was assured as well.

**Theme 5 – Planning**

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<th>Concepts related to Planning:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Checks &amp; balances</td>
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<td>Focus on priorities</td>
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In terms of their general leadership structure and planning, participants mentioned the importance of having a system of checks and balances; in order to ensure academic, financial, and procedural integrity as well as organizational fairness. When explaining and describing the actions they took themselves during the crisis event, participants felt it was important to focus their attention on priorities or crucial elements that had previously been identified as most important.

As described in chapter two, the FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. A basic premise of ICS is that it is widely applicable. It is used to organize both near-term and long-term field-level operations for a broad
spectrum of emergencies - from small to complex incidents; both natural and manmade (FEMA.org, 2009).

It has been stated previously in Chapter Two that ICS is used by all levels of government: Federal, State, local, and tribal; as well as by many private-sector and nongovernmental organizations. ICS is also applicable across disciplines. It is normally structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: Command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance & administration. The person who directs this response is the Incident Response Commander (IRC) (FEMA.org, 2009).

According to FEMA, essential components of effective crisis response include:

- A robust, reliable communications network
- Effective communications systems
- Comprehensive crisis response plans
- A formal management structure
- Clearly-defined roles and responsibilities for personnel at each position

The evidence obtained in this study shows that participating school presidents and school district superintendents placed a high value on each of these components, with particular emphasis on the last three: A comprehensive crisis response plan, a formal organizational management structure with unambiguous chain-of-command, and clearly-defined roles and responsibilities for personnel at each position within this management structure.

Every participant in this study referred to the existence of a highly-detailed crisis and emergency response plan for their school or school district, and participants unanimously gave
credit for successful crisis management to the existence of this plan. In each case, this crisis response plan was prepared by a school or school district committee made up of a large number of employees, representing all organizational areas, job functions, and departments.

Participants reported that when writing the original document and while periodically revising this plan, other significant state, national, and international crisis and emergency events that had recently occurred were researched and studied. The leadership methods and techniques used to respond to these situations were discussed and evaluated as well. Some of these were then incorporated into the school or school district’s plan, where appropriate.

Each school district superintendent or school president mentioned the importance of conducting “live” simulations; thereby giving people a chance to practice the actions they would be expected to take, and decisions they might have to make during a real crisis event. This type of “live drill”, along with subsequent group analysis and critique, provided information the leaders used to strengthen and improve their written crisis response plans. These drills also provided opportunities for participants and subordinates to practice and refine situational leadership techniques; by requiring them to adapt their leadership approach and methods in response to unexpected and/or changing conditions.

During normal, non-emergency periods school district superintendents and school presidents felt it was important to focus on organizational priorities. They each talked about being inclusive; making sure that all people were given a voice in determining these priorities as well as the overall direction of the organization. Participants felt that this created a greater sense of “ownership”; while generating a stronger commitment from school and school district personnel toward achieving the organization’s goals.
Participants similarly believed that including many people from a wide range of job functions and departments in the process of writing and revising the organization’s crisis response plan would lead to better understanding of procedures for handling various crisis situations, and a stronger commitment from school and school district personnel when implementing the specific provisions of this plan.

However, they also spoke of having to deal with issues that had not been anticipated, both during and after the crisis. The crisis event or emergency situation was very traumatic for staff members and students. In many cases, these individuals needed the leader’s help and support, and the support of their friends and colleagues, long after the crisis event itself had passed.

Provision had been made in each participant’s crisis response plan to provide emotional and psychological support for school and school district staff and students in the aftermath of an emergency or crisis. However, each emergency or crisis event is unique; unfolding and affecting various individuals in different ways. Therefore, it was not possible for each crisis management plan to contain specific, detailed instructions for helping every person who needed this support. This is where participants’ and subordinates’ ability to skillfully apply situational, contingency-based leadership principles became especially important.

Selective Coding

During my review of crisis-event based literature, I identified five broad functional categories used by leaders when implementing a crisis event response: Authority/Credibility,
Communication, Psychology, Decision-Making/Competence, and Understanding/Sense-Making. These correspond closely with the five themes that have emerged from this study; identified through the processes of open coding and then axial coding of the study information and data obtained. These are: Credibility, Communication, Competence, Decision-Making, and Planning.

One common thread that runs through all five of these emergent themes is trust. Trust, along with competence and communication, has already been cited as one of the most basic elements of contingency-based leadership.

Each participant in my research study identifies as a situational leader. The emergent leadership themes and the demonstrated leadership styles of study participants correspond closely with the identified traits, characteristics, and behaviors of situational, contingency-based leaders.

When discussing the crisis event response in their school or school district, terms closely associated with situational and contingency-based leadership were used most frequently. These include Assessing, Communication, Delegating, Planning, Relationships, Supporting, and Trust.

As stated in my introduction to this chapter, I surmise that the research question posed at the beginning of this study has been answered: Contingency-based leadership principles and methods have been used to successfully manage crisis events and emergency situations by the school district superintendents and school presidents who participated in this study.

The evidence also indicates that thorough advance planning, documented in detailed organizational crisis management plans, and competent delegation of authority, as shown by the highly-effective response actions carried out by subordinate administrators and staff members,
also contributed significantly to successful crisis event outcomes in the schools, school districts, and the communities where these crisis events and emergency situations took place.

**Grounded Theory**

In my review of emergency and crisis event literature, it can be seen that contingency-based, situational leadership methods have been used in formulating and implementing successful responses to a variety of non-school emergencies and crisis events such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City (Martinko, 2009), a fireworks factory explosion in Enschede, the Netherlands (Noordegraaf, 2011) or natural disasters such as catastrophic floods in Queensland, Australia (Debussy, 2012) and wildfires in California (Fairhurst, 2009). Contingency-based leadership theory is widely accepted, and the effectiveness of contingency-based, situational leadership in non-school situations is grounded in the evidence gathered from many different case studies.

Through data and information obtained from my study participants, we see that contingency-based, situational leadership methods have also been used to formulate a successful crisis event response to school- and school district-related emergencies and crisis events. Each participant in this study devised and managed a successful crisis or emergency situation response, using the same contingency-based principles and leadership techniques employed by leaders mentioned in my literature review.

I have shown that two elements - delegation of authority, and a comprehensive written crisis management plan each played an essential role in the emergency/crisis responses of
participants in this study. Building upon the evidence demonstrated and grounded in the cases contained within my review of the literature, I propose to expand upon this grounded theory; by stating that contingency-based situational leadership has been shown to be an effective methodology for responding to school- and school district-related crisis events and emergency situations.

According to Yin (1994), case study results are not statistically generalizable, and may not in and of themselves establish the study’s external validity. However, outcomes and information derived from these cases may be analytically generalizable to a broader theory. This is accomplished through the replication of findings.

The crisis event responses devised and employed in each case contained within this study generated a positive outcome. I believe that the consistently successful resolutions produced by each organization’s response to a major crisis or significant emergency situation demonstrates that contingency-based, situational leadership can be highly effective when utilized by school district superintendents and school presidents during school- and school district-related crisis events or emergencies.

In combination with evidence grounded in my review of non-school crisis response literature and based upon additional evidence found in the course of my study, as well as previous theory supported by demonstrations regarding the effectiveness of contingency-based leadership in crisis situations, I therefore propose to extend this grounded theory by stating that contingency-based, situational leadership methods can be considered a preferred method by which school and school district administrators and leaders may devise and implement a successful response to school- and school district-related emergency situations or crisis events.
While study participants utilized both transactional and transformational methods during emergency situations and times of crisis, it was their transformational approach to situational leadership during normal, non-emergency periods that increased the leadership capacity of subordinates; allowing participants to maintain their standard contingency-based leadership approach when faced with unusual and highly atypical conditions. Based upon the evidence found in the course of my study, contingency-based leadership methods may be considered as an effective and preferred strategy when preparing for and responding to school or school district-related emergency situations and crisis events.

**Implications for Professional Practice**

**Delegation of Authority**

At the beginning of this chapter, delegation of authority was cited as a key factor that allowed participants to devise and implement a successful emergency situation or crisis event response. It was noted earlier that each participant had already delegated authority extensively; well before their school or school district was faced with a major emergency situation or crisis event.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, there are a number of benefits that may be gained when school or school district leaders delegate at least some portion of their authority. Through my review of the literature, it can be seen that many leaders actually do distribute decision-making powers to subordinates, particularly during emergencies and times of crisis. But the real
challenge, I believe, lies in understanding precisely how to delegate authority. We need to understand when, where, and to whom this authority should be given.

I recommend that school administrators delegate general administrative authority during normal periods as well as times of crisis; to the extent that it is possible and practical to do so. However, I believe it is important to know what supporting factors, resources, and systems must be present; so that subordinates are empowered and able to effectively use the authority they have been given. This is especially true when they and their organization are confronted by a major emergency situation or crisis event. This knowledge be acquired by looking at the data and information obtained in my study; contained in the methods and actions of study participants. School district superintendents, school presidents, and other educational administrators may profit from the experience of study participants by applying the following principles when delegating authority to subordinates in their own schools and school districts:

1. **Know your organization:** Understand how various departments and systems work, and how these offices and departments operate in relation to each other. Know the protocols that exist for performing various functions, as well as the human and capital resources required.

   What this really means is: Know your people. What are their technical/personal strengths and weaknesses? Most importantly; what are their ideals, goals, and value systems? These will determine the ethos of the organization.

   To establish and define these ideals, goals, and values, study participants said that they regularly hold meetings and forums; during which organizational progress, issues, and problems
are shared openly and discussed honestly with other administrators, staff, students, parents, community members, and other stakeholders.

By remaining highly accessible to their subordinates and other constituents, participants are able to listen and learn about their concerns. This also gives each school district superintendent or school president an opportunity to receive valuable ideas and information; input that helps shape school and school district goals and policy, as well as the overall character of the organization’s educational community.

This type of communication also deepens the leader’s understanding of how things get done - how work “flows” through one’s organization, while providing opportunities to learn about the abilities and personal qualities of the people who “make things happen.” This is essential, because it allows the chief administrator to determine just how much authority can be delegated, as well as where and by whom this delegated authority can be used most effectively.

2. **Know your community**: Each participant in this study had previously invested a great deal of time and energy into building these relationships with their community and its people; beginning to do this years before they had to confront a significant crisis event or emergency situation in their school districts or schools. Each of the participants in this study gave substantial evidence on this point; describing how they had been highly active, visible, and accessible in their schools and within their school communities.

This was achieved by working closely with students, parents, staff, and community members on a variety of educational projects in the areas of curriculum, instruction, facilities, finance, and social/emotional growth. These school district superintendents and school
presidents each developed relationships with political and business leaders, service agencies and groups, community members, alumni, and others in a deliberate, purposeful way.

Interacting cooperatively with these stakeholders to solve problems and implement initiatives provided opportunities to identify common interests, set priorities, and define shared core values. Because of this practice, frequent and open communication developed into genuine cooperation and trust. This cooperation and trust, in turn, facilitated the development of relationships between subordinates with whom authority had been delegated and others in the community such as first responder and medical personnel who would later prove to be instrumental in supporting and sustaining the institution’s crisis event response.

3. **Right people, Right positions, Right Way**: These school district superintendents and school presidents hired, assigned, and promoted highly qualified people, but not necessarily those who were the most technically proficient. Traits such as honesty, integrity, dedication to organizational goals and principles, and a willingness to help and support others were vitally important.

When delegating authority, participants each looked for people of high character; those who were committed to doing what is morally and ethically right under all circumstances. They understood that strength of character becomes even more critical during times of crisis, when the potential ramifications and impact of decisions made by subordinates are often magnified.

4. **Provide effective training**: The evidence in this study shows that each participant also
improved and strengthened the disaster response capabilities and competence of their leadership team members and individual department leaders, to whom a significant amount of authority had been delegated.

They provided regular opportunities for assistant superintendents, department directors, and principals to practice various types of emergency situation or crisis response methods; holding trainings and exercises during which various types of emergencies and crisis events were simulated.

“Surprise” trainings were also conducted, during which leadership team members were confronted with unusual or unexpected issues within the context of an emergency situation or crisis event. Because of this, leadership team and other staff members learned to apply prior knowledge and successfully handle problems for which they had not received specific targeted training. These “surprise” exercises were credited with helping school and school district administrators and staff members respond more effectively when they were confronted with an actual emergency or crisis event.

5. **Recognize people who have unique talents and abilities**: Participants understood they had certain leadership team or staff members who possessed unique or special talents and abilities. Participants stressed the importance of recognizing these people, and of giving them the authority and freedom to use their talents in a way that would maximize their benefit to the school or school district, as well as to the people most in need of their help.

In professional sports, coaches and general managers are assessed according to how effectively they are able to identify, develop, and then utilize the talents and abilities of their
players. It is incumbent upon these leaders to utilize the skills of subordinates in a way that produces the greatest overall benefit and success for their organization. Having worked during the early 1990’s as an assistant coach in the NBA’s developmental Continental Basketball Association (CBA), I had a chance to observe and learn from outstanding coaches of other CBA teams such as George Karl, Flip Saunders, and Terry Stotts; all of whom went on to achieve success as head coaches in the NBA.

The gold standard for NBA coaches is Gregg Popovich of the San Antonio Spurs. San Antonio has reached the playoffs twenty-one consecutive seasons, winning five NBA championships during this time; a level of performance unrivaled in any professional sport. Over the years, Coach Popovich had Tim Duncan and David Robinson; both of whom came into the league as heralded players. But unlike other coaches, who won primarily because they had several big “stars”, “Pop” and his staff achieved most of their success with athletes who at first were largely unknown, such as Tony Parker from France and Manu Ginobili from Argentina. Parker and Ginobili had no prior experience with American basketball, at any level. However, Popovich and the Spurs recognized that these players possessed certain unique traits and skills.

Their specialized abilities were developed to a very high level, and utilized by Popovich within a framework that maximized performance of the entire team. Parker became an expert at penetrating opposing defenses with his dribble, then quickly pulling up and scoring at close range. Ginobili grew adept at launching his body toward the basket – fearlessly weaving through defenders, making shots from impossible angles or delivering pinpoint passes to teammates for open looks. Both were eventually named all-stars, winning four NBA championships together.
So too, must school administrators recognize and apply the diverse abilities and unique talents of individual staff members to benefit the students and parents whom they serve, and their communities. The school district superintendents and school presidents in this study each spoke of how they identified people who had “interesting” backgrounds and unusual talents, then delegated significant authority to such individuals - allowing them to conduct and direct a variety of non-crisis and crisis response-related activities independently; without undue interference. Examples of such people and their actions ranged from a university finance director who was also an ordained minister, experienced in consoling those who had lost close friends and relatives taking the initiative to counsel the grieving families of shooting victims at a nearby hospital, to a school administrator who came across an abandoned municipal government dump truck and bravely drove it through a rising hurricane storm surge - rescuing people who were desperately clinging to bushes and trees, about to be swept away by raging water and winds.

6. **Develop your people:** Participants in this study provided extensive training and professional development for their leadership team members, thereby building the leadership capacity in subordinates. This capacity-building went beyond the specialized, focused training these individuals had been given to prepare them for initiating and carrying out various response actions over a range of possible crisis or emergency situations.

Each school district superintendent and school president stated that they have established a culture of continuous learning and growth among their leadership team and other staff members. Participants remain abreast of developing issues and potential problems in their field, constantly seeking relevant information and data.
In addition, they strive to make sure that other members of their leadership teams, school board members, staff, parents, and community leaders have this information. This is achieved through regular training and professional development provided for all district or school administrators, school and school district staff, and school board/governing board members.

7. **Foster trust throughout the organization**: Participants in this study engendered organizational trust and enhanced its development in the time before a major emergency/crisis event by granting a great deal of autonomy to the administrators and staff members of various departments; demonstrating a strong belief in their professional capabilities. They continued to do so during and afterward, by shielding followers from external criticism and attacks on their competence; protecting them from self-serving individuals who sought to take advantage of conditions for their own personal or political gain.

Trust is created when people see that leaders are concerned for their well-being; placing the needs and welfare of followers above their own. Trust is enhanced when followers know that the leader believes in them, and supports them. Before, during, and after emergency situations and crisis events, the statements and actions of study participants affirmed their approval and support of decisions and actions taken by staff members. This strengthened the bonds between leaders and subordinates; by demonstrating that these leaders had a high degree of faith in followers and their abilities.

This same type of confidence and trust also extended to students, parents, and members of each school or school district community. Throughout each emergency or crisis event response, school and school district staff reached out to help co-workers, students, and
community members; thereby continuing to build and amplify the trust each leader had placed in them; as well as the trust extended to them by their colleagues.

The way in which each school president or school district superintendent communicated frequently and openly with followers was another important factor in developing the high levels of mutual trust that existed between participants and members of their leadership teams. This increased trust, cooperation, and efficiency throughout the levels of each organization. High levels of organizational trust were a primary factor that facilitated the effective delegation of authority; which led to greater organizational crisis response effectiveness in every case.

8. **Set high standards**: Participants in this study each established high standards of performance for subordinates, as well as for themselves. However, these were not created arbitrarily or in isolation. The benchmarks utilized by each school district superintendent or school president were based on a shared vision formed in cooperation with all stakeholders.

9. **Hold people accountable**: These participants ensured accountability in each case by measuring their own performance, as well as the performance of leadership team members and other subordinates, against the high standards they had previously established. These leaders continuously improved upon their professional knowledge and skills while developing the professional capacity of subordinates and other staff; in order to strengthen the entire organization. Each school district superintendent or school president practiced leadership by example: They set the standard through their own actions and performance that they expected others to meet.
Each participant in this study identified these nine practices as primary influences that contributed toward the way in which their institutions and surrounding communities had responded so quickly and effectively when faced with an actual emergency situation or crisis event.

**Crisis Management Plan**

The second key point identified as a major factor in their school or school district’s successful response to a particular emergency situation or crisis event is the existence of a comprehensive written crisis management plan.

Each study participant talked about the importance of having a diverse group of people involved in creating and writing the crisis management plan. They felt that having different people from various fields and disciplines brought a diverse array of experiences and viewpoints to this project, which proved to be beneficial when brainstorming ideas.

The group that created each plan attempted to anticipate a wide range of scenarios that could possibly occur at their school(s) or school district, then considered how a response to each scenario might be formulated and carried out. Once this crisis management plan was in place, personnel from each school or school district met regularly to update and revise the plan.

During these meetings, members of each participant’s leadership team discussed emergency situations and crisis events that had recently occurred in other schools and school districts, discussing how they might prepare and respond if a similar scenario occurred at their institution. In doing so, they assimilated and processed data from these sources. These leaders
learned from the experiences and ideas of others, thereby improving their own crisis management preparedness, and raising the level of their own professional competence.

Without exception, study participants cited the existence of a pre-existing institutional crisis response plan as a prime factor in guiding their organization throughout the crisis response process, both during and after the actual crisis event itself. During verbal one-on-one interviews, each participant explained the importance of well-defined roles for members of their leadership teams and other staff members; with certain functions and responsibilities outlined for these offices, and specific crisis-response actions assigned to individual staff members.

The evidence given by study participants and subsequent analysis of school and school district crisis event response shows the importance of a written organizational crisis response plan. Based upon the successful crisis response outcomes obtained by participants in this study, it is recommended that all schools and school districts should develop and implement a comprehensive written crisis response plan. This plan should cover a wide range of possible emergency situation or crisis event scenarios, with a variety of possible response actions for each and contingencies for different variations of the problems that might arise during the implementation of such actions.

Additionally, this study shows that judicious delegation of authority can enhance the effectiveness of crisis response plans and actions; when authority for making decisions is placed in the hands of knowledgeable, competent individuals who understand what needs to be done in various situations. In addition to having a comprehensive, detailed written crisis response plan, it is recommended that school presidents and school district superintendents delegate authority for making certain decisions during emergency situations or times of crisis to specific offices and
individuals, and that this delegation of authority should be contained within the written crisis plan document.

Study participants also credited their successful crisis event response to periodic review of crisis management procedures, and “live” crisis response drills that covered various types of possible crisis event situations. It is recommended that schools and school districts should periodically review and update their crisis management plans to reflect current best practice, and that they should regularly provide staff and students with the opportunity to rehearse various crisis response actions through both pre-scripted and “surprise” mock emergencies and crisis events.

Because most emergency situations and crisis events occur unexpectedly and unfold in a manner that can be highly unpredictable, situational, contingency-based leadership methods have been shown to be an effective method of response. It is therefore recommended that school superintendents, school presidents, and other administrators should model, develop, and encourage the use of situational, contingency-based leadership techniques by members of their institution’s leadership team. Providing the type of “live” practice and rehearsal just described should assist in further developing the situational, contingency-based leadership abilities of subordinates – the people who will have primary responsibility for developing and implementing an effective, coordinated response during an actual school/school-related emergency or crisis event.
First Responders and External Agencies

Along with the leadership actions of educational administrators and staff, it is important to consider the fact that school-related crisis response is usually not dependent simply upon school or school district leaders and staff members themselves. During such an event, school district superintendents, school presidents, and their subordinates must often interact and cooperate with first responder personnel and leaders from a number of outside agencies. Recent cases reported in the national media have shown that the effectiveness of a particular crisis event response may also depend to a large extent upon the perception and training of school security personnel, as well as local law enforcement and/or other emergency services providers.

We know that first responder agencies operate under an Incident Command System, and that an Incident Response Commander will direct their operations. It is important therefore, that school district superintendents, school presidents, and those who will assist in coordinating the institution’s crisis response know this Incident Command System, and understand how their school or school district will implement the crisis management plan in cooperation with first responders and outside emergency service agencies.

School district superintendents, school presidents, and other subordinate administrators and staff members should become familiar with the Incident Command System; acquiring an understanding of how this system functions during various emergency and crisis scenarios and a working knowledge of the roles that school and school district personnel may be expected to play in these different circumstances. District superintendents and school presidents should understand how they and other district personnel such as their Chief of Security will interface
with the Incident Response Commander; how they will work together to implement a coordinated crisis event response.

To achieve this, school and school district administrators may wish to meet with local, state, and federal law enforcement and first responder agencies; to learn about their training and emergency response methods. In this way, educational leaders may become familiar with the response protocols these departments use for various types of emergencies. District superintendents, school presidents, and other educational personnel should know what first responders can be expected to do when they arrive on the scene of a crisis event.

To further enhance the crisis response knowledge and abilities of administrators and their subordinates, joint training exercises may be conducted with law enforcement agencies and first responders so that school and school district personnel may gain hands-on experience with the emergency response protocols they may be expected to utilize and implement during an actual school-related emergency or crisis event. This type of “live practice”, combined with subsequent analysis of leadership performance during “mock” emergencies, may also expand and improve upon the situational, contingency-based leadership skills of school and school district administrators and staff members. This may lead to improved institutional leadership performance during both emergency and non-emergency periods.

**Suggestions for Further Study**

The two key factors identified through this study that participants utilized extensively in the process of achieving a successful crisis event/emergency situation response are
(1.) Delegation of leadership authority among subordinate administrators and staff members

(2.) Implementation of a comprehensive written organizational crisis response plan.

The results of my study indicate that these two factors have contributed to a number of successful crisis resolution outcomes when employed in combination with situational, contingency-based leadership methods used in responding to school- and school district-related emergencies and crisis events.

Because these two factors figured so prominently in each case study crisis event response, I propose that additional study should be undertaken; to determine if delegation of authority and comprehensive written crisis response plans are factors that consistently enhance the effectiveness of contingency-based, situational leadership methods used in dealing with other types of crisis event and emergency situations, particularly when handling cases that occur in schools and school-related settings.

The individuals who participated in this study were each able to describe the emergency situation or crisis event they experienced in great detail. However, as I engaged them in conversation by telling them of my own school-related emergency and crisis event experiences, they were able to reflect upon what they had said. At times, this spurred them to recall and provide additional information. At other times, it caused them to modify or correct something they had told me.

Although each emergency or crisis contained in this study was a major, significant event, three of them took place a number of years ago. Only one of these occurred within the past year. And so, I sometimes wondered if participants’ memory and recollection of these events had been influenced or changed by the passage of time, or shaded by their own opinions and values.
To borrow a line from William Shakespeare, “All’s well that ends well.” Because of this natural human tendency to minimize or overlook minor setbacks and problems (or even major ones) when the outcome of a situation is favorable, I believe it might be of value to conduct follow-up studies; interviewing other central office administrators, district school board members, school principals, assistant principals, and maintenance supervisors, as well as transportation, food service, custodial, and security personnel from each participant’s district.

Doing so would provide different perspectives on the organization’s crisis response leadership, and might reveal information not discovered by speaking only with the school or school district’s chief executive.

It might also be useful to have additional input concerning subordinates’ perception of how effective each participant’s delegation of authority had been during the crisis period, and suggestions as to how organizational structure or communication could be enhanced and improved during a future emergency or crisis event response.

By speaking with a greater number of individuals from each school or school district, it might also be possible to gain a more accurate measure of other situational, contingency-leadership factors such as the degree to which successful crisis response leaders had the trust of subordinate staff members, and the extent to which subordinates actually trusted and supported each other, as well as school and school district central office administration.

I also believe there would be value in studying each participant’s philosophy and method for delegating authority to subordinates; in order to learn the key elements that allowed successful crisis response leaders to delegate effectively. This may also help us to understand
why delegation of leadership powers may have been ineffective or possibly even counter-productive in certain instances; during either emergency or non-emergency periods.

Because of the importance assigned to the written crisis management plan by each participant, it might be useful to conduct a more detailed study of these plans; examining them to see how documents are structured and exactly what they contain. This would allow us to learn precisely how authority for various crisis response actions had been delegated, and to which departments and individuals. It would also reveal how resources needed for each emergency situation or crisis response effort were allocated and managed by various offices and officials at every institution.

Additionally, because each emergency/crisis response effort continued on well past the time when each emergency/crisis event was over, I believe it would be useful to explore the psychological aspect of each school or school district community’s disaster recovery in greater depth. This would allow us to take a more detailed look at what crisis response leaders did and said to give people encouragement and support, after the crisis itself had passed. There might also be value in obtaining the thoughts and perceptions of emergency/crisis event victims; to gain their impressions and assessment of how effective they believed school and school district administrators had been in responding to the needs of constituents.

In the cases of the mass shooting, the bombing, and the hostage-taking, there had been no advance notice or warning that such a thing was about to occur, and the organizational leader could do nothing to stop each incident or change the outcome. And so, the actions that each school president or school district superintendent took afterward in each case were largely symbolic. By interviewing and speaking with victims of these incidents, as well as with family
members, relatives, friends, and members of each affected community, we would learn whether
the symbolic actions taken participants really made a significant difference for people in the time
after the emergency or crisis event, and how it impacted their personal and collective recovery.

Limitations of the Study

The positive outcomes seen in each of my study cases gives a strong indication that
situational, contingency-based leadership methods can be very effective when utilized in
response to a major school- or school district-related emergency/crisis event. However, because
I was able to examine only four cases, I believe that further research is warranted to determine if
evidence from additional cases supports and confirms this determination and other conclusions
derived from study information and data.

And while delegation of authority and the application of a comprehensive organizational
crisis management plan were cited as essential emergency/crisis response practices, there were a
number of other factors that may have impacted and influenced the situational, contingency-
based leadership actions and decisions of study participants; the extent and effects of which are
largely unknown.

As described in my Implications for Professional Practice, we should consider that
school-related crisis response is usually not dependent simply upon school or school district
leaders themselves. They often interact with, and depend upon the efforts and cooperation of
first responder personnel, as well as others such as teachers, support staff, students, and parents.
Most schools and school districts have a security force. This was an unknown element in my study; because no attention was given to the staffing, qualifications, or training of school and school district security personnel; or the effect that these may have had on each emergency/crisis event outcome. Additionally, no research was conducted to find out if schools and school districts had utilized various forms of security-related apparatus or technology such as barriers, barricades, locking mechanisms, video cameras, motion sensors, or other devices that may have helped or hindered the crisis response effort.

A potential weakness of this study is the fact that it only contains participants who experienced a high degree of success in handling a crisis event or emergency situation. While much can be learned from success, we understand that negative outcomes or failure can also provide powerful learning opportunities.

Many people who had served as leaders of schools or school districts during a major crisis event or emergency were asked to be a part of this research study; however I could not compel them to participate. Only four individuals ultimately accepted my invitation. Some people who were not successful in directing their organization’s response to a crisis may have been reluctant to participate for fear that they would be identified, and that their reputation might be damaged. Perhaps others did not want to recall details of crisis events or emergency situations that were traumatic for them. Whatever their reasons, I feel that valuable information may have been lost because these individuals did not share their stories and experiences.
Additional Factors

The cases chosen for this study all involve significant, high-profile crisis events that have been reported extensively in print, broadcast, and electronic media. Because I was already familiar with many details of each event prior to selecting this research topic, it was important for me, as a researcher, to continually be aware of this and guard against making assumptions based upon what I already knew or believed about each situation and the individuals involved.

To achieve this, I had to consciously remember that although I had been exposed to a significant amount of information concerning the specifics of each crisis, I hadn’t been present when these events actually happened. I needed to continually acknowledge and remind myself of the fact that I didn’t possess the firsthand experience and knowledge that my participants did.

I went into each participant’s interview with an open mind, ready to hear what participants had to say without preconceptions. I also employed techniques of active listening: reflecting back on what they said as well as the ideas and thoughts they expressed, re-stating these to confirm accuracy while letting them know that I was listening. I consistently checked to make sure that I understood not only their words, but also the meanings and implications of what they were saying. I took particular note of their non-verbal cues - tone of voice, facial expressions, hand gestures, and body language – assessing these for additional meaning and confirmation that I had interpreted their thoughts and ideas correctly.

External factors may have also effected study participants; impacting upon their leadership decisions and actions during a particular school-related emergency situation or crisis event. The actions of school and school district security officers, law enforcement, first
responders, and personnel from other outside agencies on the leadership methods of school and school district administrators was not considered in depth during this study.

Recent cases reported in the national media have shown that the effectiveness of a particular school-related emergency or crisis event response may depend to a large extent upon the perception, reaction, and training of school security personnel, as well as local law enforcement and/or other first responders.

On May 16, 2018, when a former district student appeared on school grounds with a gun in Dixon, IL a law enforcement officer employed by the district correctly assessed the situation, then immediately moved to neutralize the threat and apprehend the intruder. In doing so, countless people were likely saved from serious injury or death (CBS, 2018).

However, according to an NBC television news report, on February 14, 2018 in Parkland, FL an officer responsible for campus security did not respond to the sounds of gunfire inside a district high school; making no effort to enter the building while remaining in a stationary position outside the entrance doors. The inability of school security personnel to stop a former district student or recognize the potential threat that he posed may have ultimately contributed to the loss of seventeen lives; as the shooter was then able to move freely throughout the building (NBC, 2018).

**Final Thoughts**

As I conducted the one-on-one verbal interview with each participant, our conversation sometimes ventured into different areas; such as the challenges inherent in dealing with people in
positions of authority outside of the school or school district, or community outreach initiatives that went beyond the specific purpose of security or crisis response. In those moments our relationship shifted from researcher/participant to educational colleagues, or simply people concerned with similar issues or problems. We learned from and taught each other; my comments spurring them to make additional remarks and their statements giving me pause to consider my own beliefs and understandings.

During the process of sharing, telling, and re-telling of stories, I exchanged ideas and experiences with study participants, thinking about the steps they had taken, and how each superintendent or president’s leadership methods had led to a highly successful crisis response. This caused me to examine my own leadership principles and beliefs, and in doing so changed my views regarding crisis response leadership, as well as leadership in general.

Before, during, and immediately after each emergency situation or crisis event, many things needed to be done during a relatively brief window of time. And so, preparation became critically important. Each school’s or school district’s emergency/crisis response would most likely not have been nearly as effective without the significant amount of effort and time invested by each organization in planning for the possibility of such an event; weeks, months, and years before the emergency or crisis actually happened.

I now understand that crisis and emergency situation leadership occurs not only while the crisis or emergency is happening. It begins during normal, non-emergency periods, perhaps months or even years before such a crisis or emergency occurs when school district superintendents and school presidents consider how they will respond and lead; and how they will organize their people and their institution in preparation for such an event. This is the time
when organizational trust, the foundation for effective emergency and crisis response leadership, must be established and nurtured.

Each school district superintendent or school president understood that responsibility to manage the crisis did not end immediately upon cessation of the emergency or crisis event itself. Every study participant recognized that there would be not only present, but also future implications because of what had happened, and that there would be a long-term impact not only for the institution and their people, but for their community as well. Effective emergency and crisis event leadership extends beyond the event itself, into the time afterward when healing and closure are required.

Each school district superintendent and school president maintained an on-going focus long after the immediate crisis had passed, placing an emphasis on helping people heal not only physically and financially; but emotionally and psychologically as well. In each case, this required a deeper personal involvement from participants; along with a significant commitment of institutional resources that continued for an extended period during and after the initial recovery phase.

After the crisis event, many things still needed to be done. Physically restoring a normal educational environment, calming people’s fears, and helping them cope in the aftermath of tragedy were also important functions that took place under the guidance and direction of each participant. More than simply repairing buildings or replacing material goods, each of their stories was about strengthening and sustaining relationships: Supporting their communities, staff members, parents, and children; while helping all of them move forward with their lives. Each participant did so willingly; with humility and grace.
Perhaps most significant, and certainly most impressive to me, is the fact that the leadership style of study participants was remarkably stable; before, during, and after each emergency situation or crisis event. The situational, contingency-based leadership philosophy and methods that served these school district superintendents and school presidents so well during normal, non-emergency periods remained consistent throughout every phase of their organization’s emergency or crisis response. These same elements emerged afterward rock-solid, strong and intact - just like the leaders themselves.
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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH WRITTEN SURVEY QUESTIONS
James Drake - Research Study Survey Questions

1. How many years have you worked as a school district superintendent, school CEO, or school president?

2. Please list the school(s) or school district(s) where you have worked as a school district superintendent, school CEO, or school president, as well as starting and ending dates for each term of employment.

3. Without providing the name(s) of any individual(s) involved, please list the major school-related emergency situation or situations that you encountered in each school or school district where you served as superintendent, school CEO, or school president.

4. Briefly describe the leadership philosophy and style you typically employ during normal, non-emergency periods.

5. Please rank the following leadership elements in order of their importance (1 = most important, 6 = least important):

   Authority  __________
   Communication  __________
   Competence  __________
   Credibility  __________
   Decision-making  __________
   Psychology  __________
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT VERBAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
James Drake - Research Interview Question Protocol

The conceptual framework for my research is contingency leadership theory. This theory requires leaders to consider their own interaction preferences when working with others (task v. relationship orientation), the nature (structure) of the work to be accomplished, along with the levels of trust and maturity that exist among followers.

Therefore, the questions that I will ask during one-on-one interviews with study participants are designed to elicit information and evidence that can be used to evaluate the contingency-based leadership actions and methods displayed by participants during times of emergency or crisis in their schools or school districts.

1. In general, what kind of a leader are you?
2. How would you categorize your leadership approach?
3. Could you tell me what that looks like?
4. How do you think your staff members would describe you as a person?
5. How would staff members describe your leadership style?
6. When you are at the first stage of trying to solve a problem, do you prefer to strategize alone or with others present?
7. What is your preference for strategizing/implementing at later stages?
8. Do you believe in delegating authority?
9. If so, under what circumstances, and to what extent?
10. Can you give an example of how you do this?
11. Please tell me about the emergency/crisis that occurred in your school/school district.
12. To what extent did you formulate/implement the response to this emergency/crisis yourself?
13. To what extent did you seek input from others in doing this?
14. Can you describe what this was like?
15. To what extent, if any, did you delegate formulating/implementing the emergency/crisis response?

16. What was your reasoning/purpose for delegating/not delegating during the emergency/crisis?

17. During the emergency described, do you believe your staff had the competence and/or knowledge necessary to handle the situation effectively?

18. What evidence is your response based on?

19. In general, what do you believe to be the level of confidence that staff members have in each other?

20. What is the evidence that you base this response on?
APPENDIX C

RELATIONSHIP HIERARCHY - DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY, SUPPORTING THEMES, AND CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS
Hierarchical Relationships between Delegation of Authority, Supporting Themes, and Contributing Elements

Central Concept
- Delegation of Authority

Supporting Themes
- Communication
- Competence
- Credibility
- Decision-Making
- Planning

Contributing Elements
- Accountability
- Community Knowledge
- Effective Training
- High Performance Standards
- Leadership Development
- Organizational Knowledge
- Organizational Trust
- Recognize Unique Talents
- Right People, Right Way