

LESSONS LEFT TO LEARN: A SCHOOL SHOOTING CASE STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Nicole Hadley (1983-1997), Jessica James (1979-1997), and Kayce Steger (1982-1997). All were victims of the 1997 Heath High School shooting. More than that, they were young, bright teenagers with lives yet to be lived. If there are lessons to be learned from this study, may they add wisdom to our collective understanding of how to protect the children we serve in our schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bill Bond experienced every school administrator's salient nightmare, a school shooting. The event, which lasted only eight minutes, left three dead and five injured. While it may only have been a brief moment in time, the effects have reached far beyond anything we could have predicted all those years ago. For the past twenty years, Mr. Bond has committed his time and energy to helping policy makers and school leaders create safe schools for our children, and yet in early 2018 an eerily similar incident occurred at a school barely 33 miles away in Marshall County, KY. Mr. Bond (or Billy Jack as he would tell you) was able, one last time, to get past his deep and abiding sadness that this might happen again. He was able to dig into the recesses of everything he has set aside in retirement to peel back the layers of what happened at Heath High School in the hope of helping other school leaders. I have heard him say many times, "I don't know if it will do any good, but it won't do any harm". I believe two things of his contribution to this study: one that it will unequivocally bring new learning to our understanding of school leaders and their role in school safety, and two, that we must always remember never to judge a person's entire career by the chapter we walked in on.

This study may not have been undertaken, and most certainly not completed, were it not for the encouragement of my committee members, especially my chair Dr. Martinez. In the years since I began, I never imagined a series of equally devastating school shootings would take place and cause me to pause and wonder if my work would still be relevant. With each new horror story, the landscape of school safety would shift,

escalate, and stall. Dr. Martinez empowered me to sift through the rhetoric and focus on that which I believed then and still believe – we know the world of school better by each story we are told about it.

Last, but decidedly not least, I owe a debt of gratitude to my entire family. My husband, children, grandchildren and even my 92 year old father sent me back to my computer a thousand times. “If there are lessons left to learn” he would say, “then you had best sit down and learn them”. So I did.

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ABSTRACT

Safety is widely assumed to be a high priority for both policy and practice in American schools, and yet school shootings continue to occur. It is every principal's salient nightmare. There are no universally accepted definitions of school shootings and little unified scholarship in the current research to guide change. The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon using first order data from a principal who has experienced a school shooting. Using a critical realist perspective this study used an in-depth single case to explore leadership and organizational factors which impact both the prevention and response in a shooting. A series of semi-structured interviews form the cornerstone of the data with supporting evidence from artifacts, documents, additional stakeholder interviews, and external sources. Results show a myriad of attributes converges to make school shootings to be highly complex events wherein many contributing factors are external to the institutions and the leaders who serve them. The data indicate strong systems of prevention and preparedness are clearly requisite to a safe school. Moreover, certain leadership skills are essential for building a culture of trust in which students feel safe enough to share potential threats. While there is no single solution, the study offers a range of proactive and responsive strategies to mitigate the risk, as well as recommendations for further study.

Key terms: School shooting, cognitive resource theory, organizational theory, leakage, contagion, risk factors, threat assessment, crisis prevention, preparedness, and response.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

We are tied to what we hate or fear. That is why, in our lives, the same problem, the same danger or difficulty, will present itself over and over again in various prospects, as long as we continue to resist or run away from it instead of examining it and solving it.

-Patanjali, c.563-283 BCE

On May 18, 2018, a shooting rampage at Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe Texas left ten dead and ten injured. A week later on May 25, 2018, a student shot and injured a teacher and a student in Noblesville, IN. Three months earlier, on February 14, 2018, seventeen people were killed and seventeen injured in a similar incident at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland FL. Less than a month prior, on January 23, 2018, fourteen students were injured and two killed at Marshall County High School in Benton, KY. The incidence of school shootings has increased exponentially in the past twenty years and yet our understanding and ability to mitigate the problem has seemingly stalled. This study is therefore an intentional analysis of questions we failed to ask and lessons we have yet to learn. It is an in-depth case containing many, if not all, of the same elements of these three most recent incidents, as well as the near massacre at Dennis Intermediate School in Richmond, IN on December 14, 2018 which speaks to one of the most significant findings of this study: The need to break the code of silence among students who are aware of potential threats to safety.

Background: Begin with “Why?”

In the early days of my education career, leadership beyond the classroom walls had no appeal to me. My greatest worries revolved around creative lessons, early literacy, student engagement, and academic success. The notion of safety never occurred to me.

My passion was in teaching and not in what I perceived as management issues. Even though schools and colleges in which I had worked (both in England and Europe) had restricted electronic access as early as 1980, I never questioned the rationale behind the practice – it was simply what schools did. As an English teacher in France, I was buzzed through the gate with everyone else, including the students. I had no schema for understanding school safety issues in general, and definitely no knowledge of the phenomenon of a school shooting on campus.

In March of 1996, all that changed. In Dunblane, Scotland, a gunman killed 16 children and a teacher. It remains the worst and only multiple school shooting in British history (Maxwell & Munro, 1996). My sense of what it meant to be an educator broadened in that moment. I had moved to Texas a few years earlier and made a gradual shift from the classroom into educational administration. As I began to study what great leaders do, I also began to look at what derails them.

Schön (1987) identified two types of problems school leaders deal with. He describes the true leadership problems as “high, hard ground” issues and the minutia, which often derail us, as “the swamp” (p. 3). Kowalski (1993) contends that school leaders spend their time on the latter type of problem “because they are solvable and this provides a sense of safety, comfort, and the satisfaction of seeing what has been accomplished” (p. 201). This study is anything but that. It examines every administrator’s salient nightmare of a shooting on campus. It is intentionally focused on knowledge that can only emerge from one source – the experience of a school leader who has lived the phenomenon.

Dunblane was not an isolated incident. Even though there had been five school shootings across the USA that same year (Washington DC, Moses Lake WA, St. Louis

MO, Decatur GA, and Sherwood AK), there was little to guide me on my journey into the messy and “high, hard ground” of safe schools. As the years passed, I became reasonably confident in my ability to navigate ‘the swamp’ and much to my surprise, was invited to teach others. I still believe that in order to spend time on the things we value in school leadership, we must have systems in place to manage the things that might derail us. School crisis however, brings challenges for which there is no universally accepted best practice. There is a plethora of research on school crisis prevention, preparedness, and response, but none of it comes directly from an in-depth study of a firsthand experience.

Statement of the Problem

Every school leader is tied to some extent, to the fear of a school shooting. This study follows the advice of Patanjali to examine it, rather than resist or run away from it. Safety is widely assumed to be a high priority for both policy and practice in American schools, and yet challenges abound as school shootings continue to occur. Since beginning my examination of school safety issues in 2013, there have been more than 200 school shootings in the U.S. (Everytown Research, 2015), though as we will see, many of those fall outside the scope of this study. Until the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting which left 26 people dead, Columbine High School remained the most widely known tragedy of its kind. The year 2018 ushered in a completely renewed urgency for understanding. CNN (Ahmed & Walker, 2018) referenced a total of 23 shootings in the first twenty weeks of 2018 which equated to more than one per week. While not all 23 contain the same elements of the shooting in this study, it is evident that communities can no longer say *it would never happen here*. School shootings bridge geographic, societal, and psychological boundaries (Addington, 2003). They touch our collective consciousness and draw on our worst fears - that we cannot protect children.

While the phenomenon has been extensively studied in a range of disciplines, the data have been largely derived from media reports and school climate surveys which focus on root cause analysis (Keehn & Boyles, 2015; Metzl & MacLeish, 2015). Negligible theories emerge directly from the personal experiences of those who have been through a shooting on their campus. Spicer (1976) maintains the researcher has a responsibility to gather data “directly from the people engaged in the making of a given policy and those on whom the policy impinges” (p. 341). This concept is not new. The notion that we learn from reflecting on an experience in education was attributed to John Dewey almost a century earlier (Dewey, 1933). This study is consequently a qualitative case study of the Paducah High School shooting that occurred on December 1, 1997, as experienced primarily by the principal. Additional stakeholder reflections and interviews were conducted in order to gain insight of others’ perceptions of the leader in a crisis situation. Secondary sources were used as needed. Corrine Glesne (2016) reminds us that unforeseen events are a natural component of qualitative research “and if you are open to what you can learn from occurrences that deviate from your plans, you may use them to acquire better data and a better understanding of the people and the setting under study” (p. 57). Indeed, this study drew me to deviate from my plans. I took leave from my job so I could rent a cabin and immerse myself into the community. The obvious question when researching contemporary issues is - why would a single case study of a twenty year old school shooting bring value to our search for resolution? It is precisely because we have learned relatively little since that time and because this particular event reflects many of the same facets of more recent shootings which are identified in Table 1-1. Furthermore, the distance in time between the shooting and the case study allowed the participants to reflect with an element of objectivity that cannot be attained in the thick of a traumatic

event. As a co-researcher, the principal, Bill Bond was able to reflect on not just his own shooting, but those he was sent to in his role as a national school safety consultant. Table 1-1 provides a chronological list of the most prominent K-12 school shootings for the past twenty years. It includes the number of deaths, injuries, location, date, and type of event. The table identifies whether the shooting was the result of a dispute between individuals (D), or a more generalized form of rampage (R).

Table 1-1

Seventy of the Most Prominent School Shootings Since 1996

Year	Location	School	Death	Injury	Type
1996	Moses Lake, WA	Frontier Middle School	3	1	R
1997	Bethel, AK	Bethel Regional High School	2	2	R
1997	Pearl, MS	Pearl High School	3	7	R
1997	Palmetto FL	Lincoln Middle School	0	1	D
1997	Paducah, KY	Heath High School	3	5	R
1997	Stamps, AR	Stamps High School	0	2	R
1997	W Palm Beach, FL	Conniston Middle School	1	0	D
1998	Jonesboro, AR	Westside Middle School	5	10	R
1998	Edinboro, PA	Parker Middle School	1	3	R
1998	Springfield, OR	Thurston High School	4	25	R
1998	Fayetteville, TN	Lincoln County High School	1	0	D
1999	Littleton, CO	Columbine High School	13	21	R
1999	Conyers, GA	Heritage High School	0	6	R
1999	Fort Gibson, OK	Fort Gibson Middle School	0	6	R
2000	Lake Worth, FL	Lake Worth Middle School	1	0	D
2000	New Orleans, LA	C G Woodson Middle School	0	2	D
2001	Santee, CA	Santana High School	2	13	R
2001	Williamsport, PA	Bishop Neuman High School	0	1	D
2001	El Cajon, CA	Granite High School	0	5	R
2002	New York, NY	M.L. King Jr. High School	0	2	R
2002	Milwaukee, WI	Washington High School	1	0	G
2002	Jersey City, NJ	Lincoln High School	0	1	D
2003	Red Lion, PA	Red Lion JR High School	1	0	R

Table 1-1. Continued.

Year	Location	School	Death	Injury	Type
2003	Cold Springs, MN	Rocori High School	2	0	R
2004	Randallstown, MD	Randallstown High School	0	4	D
2005	Red Lake, MN	Red Lake Senior High School	9	7	R
2005	Jacksboro, TN	Campbell County High School	1	2	R
2006	Roseburg, OR	Roseburg High School	0	1	D
2006	Hillsborough NC	Orange High School	1	2	R
2006	Bailey, CO	Platte Canyon High School	1	0	R
2006	Cazenovia, WI	Weston High School	1	0	D
2006	Nickel Mines, PA	West Nickel Mines School	5	5	R
2007	Tacoma, WA	Henry Foss High School	1	0	D
2007	Cleveland, OH	Success Tech Academy	0	4	R
2008	Oxnard, CA	Green Junior High School	1	0	D
2008	Memphis, TN	Mitchell High School	0	1	D
2008	Knoxville, TN	Central High School	1	0	D
2008	Fort Lauderdale, FL	Dillard High School	1	0	D
2010	Madison, AL	Discovery Middle School	1	0	D
2010	Carlsbad, CA	Kelly Elementary School	0	2	R
2011	Omaha, NE	Millard High School	1	2	R
2011	Martinsville, IN	Martinsville West Middle School	0	1	D
2011	Pearl City, HI	Highlands Intermediate School	0	1	D
2011	Fayetteville, NC	Cape Fear High School	0	1	D
2012	Newtown, CT	Sandy Hook Elementary	27	2	R
2012	Chardon, OH	Chardon High School	3	3	R
2013	Atlanta, GA	Price Middle School	0	2	D
2013	Fresno, CA	Edison High School	0	1	D
2013	Sparks, NE	Sparks Middle School	1	2	R
2013	Winston Salem, NC	Carver High School	0	1	D
2013	Centennial, CO	Arapahoe High School	1	0	R
2014	Philadelphia, PA	Delaware Valley Charter School	0	2	D
2014	Roswell, NM	Berrendo Middle School	0	3	R
2014	Troutdale, OR	Reynolds High School	1	1	R
2014	Louisville, KY	Fern Creek High School	0	1	D

Table 1-1. Continued.

Year	Location	School	Death	Injury	Type
2014	Jackson, TN	Liberty Tech Magnet High School	0	1	D
2014	Marysville, WA	Marysville High School	4	1	D
2014	Albermarle, NC	Albermarle High School	0	1	D
2016	Middletown, OH	Madison High School	0	4	R
2016	Antigo, WI	Antigo High School	0	2	R
2016	Townville, SC	Townville Elementary School	2	4	R
2017	West Liberty, OH	Liberty-Salem High School	0	1	D
2017	San Bernadino, CA	North Park Elementary School	2	1	R
2017	Rockford, WA	Freeman High School	1	3	R
2017	Mattoon, IL	Mattoon High School	0	1	R
2017	Aztec, NM	Aztec High School	2	0	R
2018	Benton, KY	Marshall County High School	2	12	R
2018	Parkland, FL	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High	17	17	R
2018	Santa Fe, TX	Santa Fe High School	10	13	R
2018	Noblesville, IN	Noblesville West Middle School	0	2	R
<i>Data for injuries and deaths do not include the perpetrator(s). R=Rampage. D=Dispute.</i>					

Table 1-2 extracts only those shootings with commonalities germane to our study. These include incidents occurring at rural or suburban locations, while school was in session, and which resulted in multiples injuries and deaths. The perpetrator had access to weapons and usually carried more than one to the incident. The shooters were all males with average educational records from non-remarkable family circumstances. In each instance, the shooter had a plan which often included intent to commit suicide following the rampage, whether or not that occurred. It is significant to note that all four of the school shootings which occurred in 2018 bear the same markers.

Table 1-2***Thirty-six School Shootings Extracted from Table 1-1 by Commonalities***

School	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	j
Arapahoe HS, Centennial, CO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aztec HS, Aztec, NM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Berrendo MS, Roswell, NM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bethel HS, Bethel, AK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Campbell County HS, Jacksboro, TN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Chardon HS, Chardon, OH	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Columbine HS, Littleton, CO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Discovery MS, Madison, AL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fort Gibson MS, Fort Gibson, OK	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Freeman HS, Rockford, WA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Frontier MS, Moses Lake, WA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Granite HS, El Cajon, CA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Heath HS, West Paducah, KY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Heritage HS, Conyers, GA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kelly ES, Carlsbad, CA	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marshall County HS, Benton, KY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mattoon HS, Mattoon, IL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Millard HS, Omaha, NE	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Orange HS, Hillsborough, NC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Parker MS, Edinboro, PA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pearl HS, Pearl, MS	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Platte Canyon HS, Bailey, CO	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Red Lake HS, Red Lake, MN	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Lion JHS, Red Lion, PA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Reynolds HS, Troutdale, OR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rocori HS, Cold Spring, MN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sandy Hook ES, Newton, CT	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Santa Fe HS, Santa Fe TX	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Santana High HS, Santee, CA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sparks Middle School in Sparks, NV	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Success Tech Academy , Cleveland, OH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thurston HS, Springfield, OR	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Townville ES, Townville, SC	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1-2. Continued.

School	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	j
West Nickel Mines, Nickel Mines, PA	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Westside MS, Jonesboro, AR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
a = rural or suburban, b= white male, c= current student, c= during school day, e= average student, f= suicide plan, g= weapons access, h=solo plan, j= multiple victims intended									

The data represented by both Tables 1-1, and 1-2, speak to the urgency of our need for a deeper understanding. These same shootings are used in the recently published Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety (Federal Commission on School Safety, 2018). This report is discussed more in the final chapter but is effectively an effort to evaluate 10 key documents from the past eighteen years on actions taken in response to crisis. These resource documents can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/key-school-safety-reports.pdf>

The macro review of the literature in the following chapter examines the broader social science theories around school shootings as well as the impact of media and politics, the trauma after the event, and the impact on whole communities. For the purposes of improving practice however, I ultimately narrowed the focus to the role of the school leader. The study explores the events specific to Heath High School in Paducah, KY through the eyes and experiences of the principal, with additional data from secondary sources. In order to ensure data convergence, additional stakeholders were interviewed, and documents, artifacts, and field notes were examined. In addition to the findings, this case study concludes with an intentional reminder that a school shooting does not define all that a leader has done and others will do after him. I posit that we should be cautious not to judge a leader's entire career by the chapter we walk in on. "It was one day...I have 3000 other days at Heath High School...it was the most

significant.....but there were 3,000 other days” (Bill Bond). By comparison, the 2018 Federal Report (Table 1-3) uses only thirty two school shootings (two of which are at the post-secondary high school level). The inclusion or exclusion of particular school shootings was evident throughout the literature review and constitutes a challenge to studies of the phenomenon.

Table 1-3

Thirty-two Shootings: 2018 Federal Commission on School Safety Report

Date	Description of the shooting
January 29, 1979	Grover Cleveland Elementary School in San Diego, CA—two adults killed, eight students and one police officer wounded
October 31, 1980	Hueytown High School in Hueytown, AL—one student wounded, shooter takes his own life
March 19, 1982	Valley High School in Las Vegas, NV—one teacher killed, two students wounded
January 20, 1983	Parkway South Junior High in St. Louis, MO—one student killed, one wounded, shooter takes his own
January 21, 1985	Goddard Junior High School in Goddard, KS—school principal killed, two teachers and one student wounded
November 27, 1985	Spanaway Junior High School in Spanaway, WA—two students killed, shooter takes her own life
May 9, 1986	Pine Forest High School in Fayetteville, NC—three students wounded, one critically
April 17, 1897	Murray Wright High School in Detroit, MI—one student killed, two wounded
December 16, 1988	Atlantic Shores Christian School in Virginia Beach, VA—two teachers shot, one fatally

Table 1-3. Continued.

Date	Description of the shooting
January 17, 1989	Cleveland Elementary School in Stockton, CA—five students killed, 29 others wounded, shooter takes his own life
February 2, 1996	Frontier Middle School in Moses Lake, WA—one teacher and two students killed, another student
October 1, 1997	Pearl High School in Pearl, MS—shooter kills his mother then kills two classmates and injures seven others
December 1, 1997	Heath High School in West Paducah, KY—three students killed and five others wounded
March 24, 1998	Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, AR—four students and one teacher killed, 11 wounded
April 20, 1999	Columbine High School in Littleton, CO—13 students killed and 21 wounded, shooters take their own lives
March 25, 2001	Santana High School in Santee, CA—two students killed and 13 wounded
December 5, 2001	Springfield High School in Springfield, MA—school counselor killed
April 14, 2003	John McDonogh Senior High School in New Orleans, LA—one student killed and three wounded
Sept 25, 2003	Rocori High School in Cold Spring, MN—two students killed
March 21, 2005	Red Lake High School in Red Lake, MN—after killing his grandparents, shooter kills five students, a teacher, and an unarmed security guard
April 16, 2007	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA—shooter kills 32 people, takes his own life
February 27, 2012	Chardon High School in Chardon, OH—three students killed and two wounded
December 14, 2012	Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, CT—shooter kills his mother, 20 students, and six adults before taking his own life
October 21, 2013	Sparks Middle School in Sparks, NV—shooter kills a teacher, wounds two classmates, and takes his own life
December 13, 2013	Arapahoe High School in Centennial, CO—one student killed, shooter takes his own life

Table 1-3. Continued.

Date	Description of the shooting
May 27, 2014	University of California Santa Barbara, CA—six students killed, 14 wounded, shooter takes his own life
June 10, 2014	Reynolds High School in Troutdale, OR—one student killed, one teacher wounded, shooter takes his own life
October 24, 2014	Marysville-Pilchuck High School in Marysville, WA—four students killed and a fifth critically wounded
April 10, 2017	North Park Elementary School in San Bernardino, CA—one teacher and one student killed, shooter takes his own life
January 23, 2018	Marshall County High School in Benton, KY—two students killed, 18 other people
February 14, 2018	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL—14 students
May 18, 2018	Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe TX – 8 students and 2 teachers killed, 10 wounded

Epistemology: Critical Realism

Driscoll (2000) defines learning as “a persisting change in human performance or performance potential...[which] must come about as a result of the learners experience and interaction with the world” (p. 11). In this sense, there is a great deal of fluid and experiential knowledge (Noddings, 2012) which has yet to be incorporated into our understanding and practices on school safety. This study is therefore positioned in integrative theory whereby seemingly disparate propositions drawn from the literature can be combined into a more inclusive way of understanding the phenomenon (Elliott, Ageton, & Canter, 1979). It would have been counterproductive to situate this study within the more than three dozen leadership theories which are widely recognized (Miner, 2005). Many of them have essentially the same components but are labeled differently, and some have negligible application in the way schools are generally configured to operate. Historically, integrative theory research has limited the inclusion

of between two to four theories. To maintain our focus on leadership as it applies a) to school leaders and b) to school crisis, this study focuses on two theories and where they might intersect: cognitive resource theory (CRT) and organizational theory. Much of the literature treats them as mutually exclusive, but I posit they are inextricably bound in our understanding of schools in crisis situations. How a leader thinks, feels, and behaves is deeply rooted in the protocols and expectations of the organization within which he or she serves. This intersection is best represented in the work of Edgar Schein (2010) who believes we must understand the culture to understand the organization, and that adaptation to the environment is a critical component of survival and growth. Schein defines culture as a collection of embedded mechanisms built on shared assumptions, values, habits, customs, language, and rules, some of which are overt and others covert. What a leader pays attention to, reacts or doesn't react to may not be outwardly articulated to the group, but are nevertheless clear indicators of what is likely to be measured and controlled. This has huge implications for leadership in crisis and therefore shapes much of the data analysis in this study. Where a leader puts time, money, and people says more about what he or she values than the espoused beliefs of the organization. In order to isolate specific elements of the impact of crisis (also considered as a primary mechanism by Schein), the study looks to cognitive resource theory. Broadly defined, this theory examines to what extent stress interferes with rational decision making (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). In essence Fiedler posits that intelligence is a key influence during low stress but that experience counts for improved decision quality in a crisis situation. This study explores this theory through the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of the school leader. This is not to discount the many alternate leadership and organizational theories but merely a way to bind the research questions within the context

of a school shooting. The reason I have opted to ‘integrate’ both leadership and organizational theories in this study is because I concur with Schein that leadership is not static, but bound by the organization in which it exists. This intersection allowed for more open research questions rather than leading data collection in a preconceived direction. While no theory is comprised of a single characteristic, I have grouped the prevalent theories in figure 1-1 according to their most dominant characteristics; interactive, relational, independent and contextual. A brief discussion of the most prominent follows so as to elucidate why each has taken a back seat to cognitive resource theory in this study.

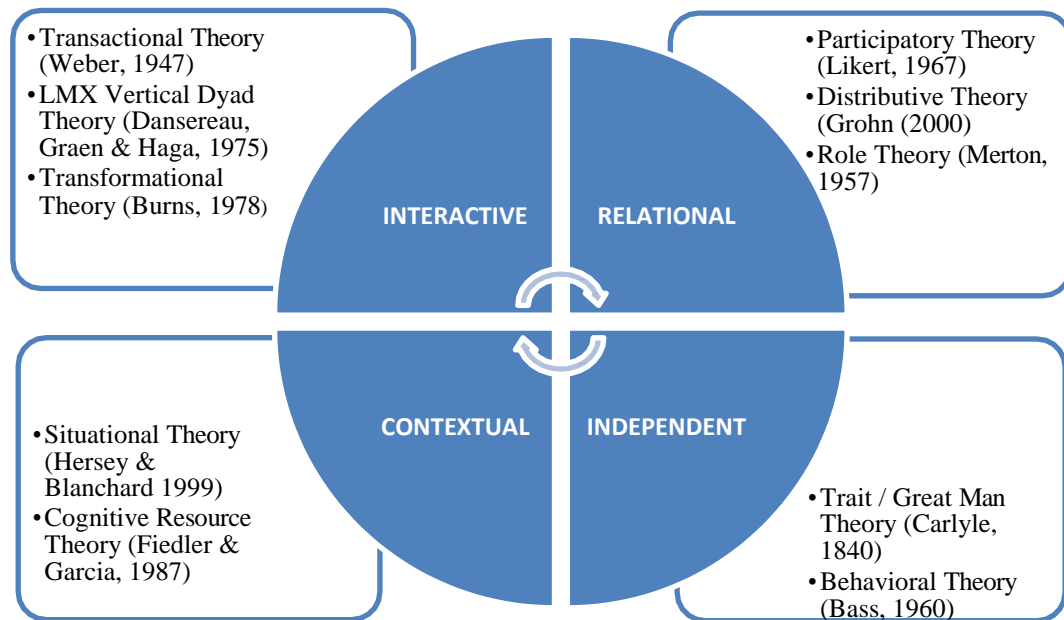


Figure 1-1. Leadership theories according to commonalities.

In *situational* theory the emphasis is on the relationship between the leader and the followers according to their competency and motivation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). More specifically, they address how this ties into perceptions of power (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979). Similarly, Rensis Likert offers the researcher the notion

of *participative* theory in which the relationship is defined as exploitive, benevolent, consultative, or participative (Likert, 1967). *Transactional* theory, originally formulated in 1947 by Max Weber was reconfigured by Bernard Bass in the early 1980s and is also focused on relational interactions through a *leader-member exchange* (LMX). This exchange determines how each member of a community or organization routinely behaves and is predicated on a sense of status quo (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). A contrary strand of theories such as *trait* theory and *great man* theory are less about the ongoing relationships and more a question of innate characteristics. Cervone and Pervin (2009) defined these as “psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving” (p. 8). Leaders are presumed to be born with certain skills which predict their ability to perform. Stogdill (1974) identified the traits of an effective leader as being adaptable, alert to social environment, assertive, ambitious, cooperative, decisive, dependable, dominant, energetic, persistent, self-confident, tolerant of stress, and willingness to assume responsibility. Herbert Spencer, a social Darwinist, refuted this concept of leadership less than two decades after its inception on the grounds that such traits are developed secondary to the environment in which such *great men* function (Spencer, 1886). Whether one aspires to an independent or contextual framework, these are admirable leadership traits under any circumstances. The findings of this study will show they become critical in a crisis situation.

For the purposes of binding this study, the focus therefore remains on cognitive resource theory (CRT) precisely because it addresses the element of crisis (Fiedler, 1964; Fiedler, 1984; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Kaufer & Ackerman, 1989; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987; Norton Jr., Ueltschy, & Baucus, 2014; Vecchio, 1990). CRT acknowledges that performance is contingent on various factors including context, style,

and the capacity of the people within a system to work together. It is sourced for this study precisely because it is not exclusionary in nature. It would not serve our understanding of school safety to assume that certain people should not be school leaders. It does however accept that strengths in one area do not always translate into strengths in another when the situation, location, or job description changes. “During high stress, a natural intelligence not only makes no difference, but it may also have a negative effect. One explanation may be that “an intelligent person seeks rational solutions, which may not be available” (Saxena, 2009, p. 150).

To flesh out the significance of this leadership theory, we looked to *organizational theory* in order to situate it within a school or district context and to determine if a point of intersection exists. Organizational theories are rife with contradictory beliefs about the tenets of organizational constructs, effectiveness, and change (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Bush & Glover, 2014). The dichotomy is while we recognize the urgency to better understand school shootings, we must also accept that organizational culture is generally slow to change (Hargreaves, 1999). In his study, Hargreaves posits that cultural change is most likely when one or more of the following criteria exist: a serious crisis (which a school shooting would represent), a charismatic leader, or one who follows weak leadership so that staff members are amenable to change.

Positionality

In this study I was mindful not to limit lines of inquiry by bringing preconceived theories about school leadership to bear upon the findings. Moustakas (1994) identifies the risks of inadvertently imposing myself into the study through the notion of transcendental phenomenology and *epoche*. This is explored later when I examine the

data as having potential to mentor or train leaders in the field. In case study interviews, the researcher has a responsibility to *describe* the experiences of individuals to provide texture, as well as to describe *how* they experienced it to provide structure (Creswell & Poth, 2018), all the while setting oneself aside. In simple terms, it requires a suspension of disbelief so that “everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). In addition, I further recognize that my “experiential knowledge” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 225) has created shadows. Years of experience have shaped ideas in my head about school leadership, school culture, and an almost palpable sense of a growing leadership dissonance in practice (the subject of a later study). This study was therefore designed to mitigate the risk of getting narrow feedback that might merely confirm my positionality (Maxwell, 2013) through restrictive interview questions (Glesne, 2016).

As an educator born outside the U.S., I bring certain ideologies to bear on the study which cannot be ignored. Having spent a decade working in international school improvement I can say with some certainty that internal threats of students with weapons is not at the forefront of most countries, cultures, and institutions with whom I engage. This includes many in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia where social unrest is periodically rampant. For these schools, the threat of violence is often external to the institution. Schools I have evaluated in these regions for example, often hire snipers or armed guards to protect them from political or religious aggressors. In 2014 students were evacuated across Lahore, Pakistan, after the December attack by the Pakistani Taliban on the Army Public School in Peshawar. Having worked with schools in Pakistan a year later, I can attest to the toll such threats take on the day to day operations of a school. This particular atrocity resulted in 145 deaths, 132 of whom were children (Sethi

& Taseer, 2014). In Bihar India, paramilitary troops occupied 8 of the 11 classrooms for a three year period beginning 2009 (Coursen-Neff, 2016), and in the 2012 high profile case, 15 year old Malala Yousafzai was shot by the Taliban on her way to advocate for girls education (Brown, 2013).

Within the twenty year focus of this study only eight school shootings have occurred outside the US that meet the same parameters. One shooting occurred in each of the following countries: Canada in 1999, (Ropiero, 2012) the Netherlands 2000 (Deutsch, 2000), Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2002 (Gajic, 2002), Argentina in 2004 (Chalmers, 2009), and Finland in 2008 (Oksonen, Kaltiala-Heino, Holkeri, & Lindberg, 2015). There were three school shootings in Germany during that same time period: Branneburg and Erfurt in 2002, the third in Winnenden in 2009 (Barbieri & Connell, 2015). Media sources list that many as having occurred in the US in the first five months of 2018 year alone.

My global perspective carries with it advantages and disadvantages in that it emphasizes the importance of safe schools, while at the same time creating a potential bias toward the need for greater gun control. This insider positionality naturally challenged my ability to observe and analyze with objectivity. Conversely, I was granted access to a case where others have been unable to gain full cooperation. I have engaged in training around school safety and climate with the primary participant of this study for a number of years. As such there is a degree of both trust and rapport that might not otherwise be available. Glesne (2016) tell us that researchers frequently use the terms trust and rapport interchangeably, however, given the emotional nature of school shootings, I concur that “it is trust, not rapport, that facilitates people to tell their stories”(Wieder, 2004, p. 25). For this reason, a critical piece of my positionality crafts one of the delimiters of this study. I do not use the name of the perpetrators in any part of this document. The leader in this case study ‘trusts’ that I will respect that request.

This is not an argument for or against insider positionality as much as it is a recognition of the need for insider researchers “to get into their own heads first before getting into those of participants’; the need to know in which ways they are like their participants and in which ways they are unlike them” (Chavez, 2008, p. 491).

Getting *into my own head* is also to draw upon the epistemological foundations of the study. I view the world through an unshakable paradigm that bad things happen in all walks of life but that we can always learn from them. This stems from my critical realist perspective. Since critical realism is not as widely used as some other epistemologies, it is helpful to deconstruct the underlying tenets in order to better understand how it frames the study and my approach to the findings.

In critical realism (CR) a reality exists this is not dependent on our understanding of it. Nor can it be perfectly detected due to our flawed ways of examining it. “Critical realists accept that our world is, of course, socially constructed but argue that this is not entirely the case” (Easton, 2009, p. 122). Easton goes on to suggest that we often construe rather than construct and that “reality kicks in at some point” (p. 122). Our role within the CR paradigm is therefore to get to the closest possible estimation of that reality. Critical realists generally espouse the need for “competing explanations since different interpretations of data are necessary to ensure that the ‘best’ current interpretation is made”. (Easton, 2009, p. 123). The literature review in Chapter 2 clearly identified these *competing explanations*.

CR has often been attributed to a post positivist view of the world but that is not always the case in research settings. For the purposes of this study, critical realism is defined as stemming from a realist ontology with a relativist epistemology. If we accept

that ontologically, realism relies on observable events, we can see that school shootings cannot be observed in the moment of research. CR allows us a single phenomenon but multiple interpretations (Fleetwood, 2014). “Reality is stratified, emergent, transformational, systemically open, becoming, processual and often relational” (p. 191). Rist (1994) reminds us that social conditions are obviously not static, therefore researchers must “position themselves so they can closely monitor the characteristics of a condition” (p. 552). Clearly then, this social condition is worthy of monitoring due to its continued impact on communities and schools. ‘Monitoring’ however is not enough because research without relevance is of no value to the practitioner (Hammersley, 2006). The ‘So what?’ cannot be ignored just because it is indeed messy and unpredictable. I would caution however against treating CR as a research method in education. It has been widely applied in economics, sociology, geography, linguistics, religious studies, management, environmental studies, and criminology (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2004; Hanson & Yosifon, 2004; Lau, 2004; Lawson, 1997; Layder, 1990; Wikgren, 2005) but within those fields, it carries with it a strong expectation of causation and prediction. While I agree with Easton’s (2010) assertion that CR is well suited as a companion to case research, I refute his claim that the most fundamental aim of critical realism is always to answer the question “What caused those events to happen?” (p. 121). “So what?” and “Why?” are not the same question. Through a CR lens, the study builds the thick description (Geertz 1973) but does not connect it inexorably with prediction. “Explanation, not prediction, is the correct objective of social science” (Fleetwood, 2014, p. 210). This research uses case study as a methodology through a critical realist lens.

This epistemological foundation is provided early to establish “what the study is and is not....and how its results can and cannot contribute to understanding” (Marshall &

Rossman, 2011, p. 76). Should opportunities for further study emerge, this epistemology would at least provide space for *tendential* prediction but not require it (Adler, DuGay, Morgan, & Reed, 2014). The finding suggests this to be the case but will require further exploration.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two overarching questions that were designed to deepen our understanding of school shootings as situated within the cognitive resource theory of leadership and well documented tenets organizational framework (Maxwell, 2013). Through this integrated framework, the study is intended to help us answer the following questions:

1. What is the role of a school leader in the midst of a school shooting and its aftermath?

- (a) What leadership skills and attributes are most useful in prevention, preparedness, and response to crisis?

- (b) How does a leaders experience shape decision-making in a school shooting situation?

2. What impact does a school shooting have on the organizational culture of a school and vice versa?

- (a) What roles do the media, community, and politics play in school shootings?

- (b) What is the role of assessing risk factors and threat in the organizational structure of schools?

The premise behind these questions is that the process was purposefully designed to be iterative. The intent was to draw out and describe the experiences of a school leader

who has experienced a shooting. This is in full acknowledgement that the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the principal are in part determined by the organization to which the school belongs. As expected, the emphasis or direction of these questions changed once in the field, but they enabled us as co researchers to ask better questions (Strauss & Corbin in Creswell 2013 p 83). It is also important to note that these questions were specifically designed with no intent to explore causality. We were not looking to know why the shooter did what he did. “It’s not concerned with whether knowledge is true in the absolute sense, since truth depends on the knower’s frame of reference” (“Education Theory,” 2013, fig. 1). That being said, the data will show that the question of “why” emerged spontaneously from participant interviews. I had not originally anticipated this as recorded in my field notes: “Surprise – in all these years he has never addressed why MC did this. Maybe the passing of time has allowed him to reflect more honestly. I wonder if he will blame himself in some way... I imagine we all would in his shoes. It is the nature of principals to take ownership of things that go wrong. This would be no exception.” Since the outcome is intended to be a *rich, thick description* this clearly then must include both the good news and the bad.

Challenges Within the Study

1. School shootings, while tragic, are nevertheless still perceived as low incident occurrences (Barbieri & Connell, 2015, p. 23; Bliss, Emshoff, Buck, & Cook, 2006; Harding, Fox, & Mehta, 2002; Paradise, 2017; Rocque, 2011). Despite being low incident, the perception is that school shootings constitute an epidemic. This is due in part to the media coverage that creates misunderstandings and supposition (Muschert, 2007; Schidkraut & Muschert, 2014; Surette2016).

2. Attempts to triangulate data within a study and across different fields inherently produce disparate results, and contradictory theories. Among the behavioral sciences, the literature review will clearly show dissonance in how each views the subject of schools shootings. The social sciences look to flaws in the fabric of society and the alleged breakdown of the family structure. Some point to schools themselves as responsible. Whether a study originates in psychology or sociology, there is a great deal of emphasis on physiology, psychosis, and criminology. In either field, most studies on school shootings in the extant literature seek to establish cause. Findings are ambiguous to say the least (Simola, 2005).
3. Collecting first order data was a challenge noted in much of the previous research on school shootings (Lee, 2013). Studies which use national data sources are frequently out of date by the time they are published (Addington, 2003). This is especially true since 2018 brought three additional rampage shootings. Some research has depended on adaptations of studies and surveys created for other purposes, which by design are doomed to produce narrow responses (Elsass, Schildkraut, & Stafford, 2016).
4. Universally accepted definitions related to school shootings in the behavioral sciences are largely non-existent which hampers how researchers refine their methodology. (Barbieri & Connell, 2015). Data on higher education campuses and work place violence are frequently included in the studies on school shootings and reported in the data, thereby adding to the complexities of validity. To further complicate the data, Hashmi (2018) tells us media is either sheepishly or deliberately moving the goalposts or widening the definition of what constitutes a school shooting. This creates a case definition problem.

(Harding et al., 2002). The research terms themselves vary according to the publication. *Rampage shooting* is used by Newman et al. (2004), Muschert (2007) and Fast (2008). The more generic term, *school shooting*, is used by O'Toole (2000), Verlingen, Hensen, and Thomas (2000), Kidd and Meyer (2002), Leary, and Kowalski, Smith, and Phillips (2003). The more specific descriptor of *targeted violence in schools* is used by Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modezeleski (2002).

By way of a side note for possible further discussion, every piece of literature reviewed referred to the person committing the crime as the 'shooter' or the 'perpetrator'. They murdered innocent people and yet nobody will call them 'murderers' which begs the question "Why?"

5. Triangulating data on disparate events that may occur months, years, or miles apart renders many studies weakest at the point of greatest potential impact. Such research uses diluted experiences removed by geographical distance or degrees of separation from the actual event. This is then used to craft policy and guide practice. However, the data will reflect that there is more to be gained from this information than should be ignored.
6. From a strictly empirical research perspective, there are three additional challenges to examining school shootings. Anonymity removes layers of important contextual information, there is little to no opportunity to develop testable theories, and the very concept of a null hypothesis does not exist for this field. In short, we do not definitively know what does *not* work.

This study however, begins from a position of strength. It provides first order data from a leader at the epicenter of the event. In so doing, we were able to shed light on the attributes leaders may bring to crisis. This is an aspect of the phenomenon which is largely absent from the literature, and has thus far been ignored. The literature review therefore expands on what has been presented here to show there is no unified scholarship and a huge gap still exists between public perception and evidence regarding school shootings and the role of the school leader. It should be stated that despite the frequency of shootings listed in Tables 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3, school-based attacks are still a rarity in the larger landscape of school crisis. The odds of a child becoming a victim of homicide in school was approximately 1 in 1 million by the end of the 1990's (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2004), and has not been statistically reported to have grown. The literature shows however that statistical odds fail exponentially to represent the harm done. "Each school-based attack has had a tremendous and lasting effect on the school in which it occurred, the surrounding community, and the nation as a whole" (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 7).

Overview of Methodology

Table 1-2 represents 36 school shootings that reflect the generalized parameters of this study. They include K-12 school shootings within the twenty year timeframe, where a current or former student brought weapon(s) with intent to do harm on school grounds during the school day to one or more of the schools staff or students. I specifically needed to isolate a shooting at a secondary high school where I could focus on the school leader's perspective and response to answer the research questions posed. A case study provided the needed methodological approach. In order to bind the case study in this way, some shootings were excluded deliberately as outliers, or not representative as what we

think of when we hear the term *school shooting*. Despite the characteristics used in the process of eliminating potential cases, the events excluded are by no means an indication that they lack importance or are any less tragic to those touched by the incident. Weapons possession on a campus without negligent or purposeful discharge, is not listed. Suicides are also excluded because no harm is expressly intended to others. Shootings resulting from domestic disputes that are not related to the institution are also removed. For example, a 2006 shooting by a jilted boyfriend at Essex Elementary School in Essex Junction resulted in death on campus after regular hours (Duffy, 2006). A 2014 murder-suicide involving an estranged wife occurred at St. Mary's Catholic school in Griffin, Indiana does not contain the characteristics of the bound case. Yet these are often included in statistical accounts of school shootings when agencies or special interest groups are attempting to further their cause. This is explored in greater detail in the chapter on methodology, but it becomes evident that documentation as a means of triangulating data can be problematic. Documents and artifacts are often created for a special purpose and audience both of which are removed from the purposes of the research. One example is the gun control group *Everytown for Gun Safety* who claim to be "conducting ground-breaking original research, developing evidence-based policies, and communicating this knowledge in the courts and the court of public opinion" (Everytown Research website, 2015). What many of these statistics are really looking at are examples of interpersonal disputes. More specifically, these disputes or conflicts are a series of three events known as *naming*, *claiming*, and *aggressing* (Luckenbill & Doyle, 1989). I posit that including such a wide definition of school shootings is damaging to schools and their communities by instilling an exaggerated sense of risk.

Other cases from Table 1-1 included weapons possession on campus that involve an accidental, negligent, or reckless discharge. These are further excluded from Table 1-2. While possession of a weapon on school grounds is extremely serious, it cannot presume to include intent to do harm in every case. In 2013 a student accidentally shot herself in the leg at Henry W. Grady High School in Atlanta, GA causing the school to be locked down. The student was charged with a felony, possession of a pistol by a minor, and several misdemeanors to include reckless conduct, weapon possession in a school zone, and disruption (Boone, 2013). There was insufficient evidence to suggest intent to do harm and was only discovered because of the self-inflicted injury. A similar incident took place in 2014 when a teacher, licensed to carry a concealed weapon, also shot herself in the leg at Westbrook Elementary School in Taylorsville, Utah (Richinick, 2014). Given that these examples represent typology outside the characteristics of the bound case, they have been excluded from the list of possible shootings to be explored.

Far more disturbing in the research accounting of school shootings are the data sources that include shootings on school properties but have zero relationship to the school. When the school is not in session and an injury or fatality occurs in such a way that the location is completely incidental to the event, these have been intentionally excluded in order for the data to present a cohesive picture of the scope of school shootings. If included, the data are disproportionate to the issue under investigation. The media is flooded with headlines that elicit a visceral response because they include the words *school* and *shooting* in the same headline. In some instances, the event is so egregious that it is difficult to know how a shooting should be classified. Take for example the 13-year-old eighth grader shot at the entrance to Benjamin Tasker Middle School in Bowie, Maryland. The headline stated: “Boy, 13 shot by Sniper at School”

(Kovaleski, 2002). At first glance, the natural assumption is there has been some form of rampage shooting at a school. In reality, this was the eighth victim of the *Beltway Sniper* in the Washington D.C. area that same year. To the extent that it occurred on school ground makes it significant on many levels, but would essentially add little to the discussion on what we can learn from school leaders on the prevention of school shootings. Late in the evening of February 14, 2014, a youth was shot and killed on the grounds of Hillside Elementary School in San Leandro, California, over the loss of a game of dice. Media sources invariably listed the event as a school shooting even though the location was completely incidental to the event. Similar scenarios are played out across the nation when alleged gang-related altercations take place in school parking lots on nights and weekends. These have also been excluded from consideration except in the event that the shooting occurred during, or directly following, a school related event on school property.

Two other exclusions complete this process. Some events appear to be outliers to such an extent as to potentially confuse the data. In 2015, a bizarre shooting took place in Richardson, TX when a 20-year-old man fired shots from the roof of William Velasquez Elementary School, while another man played the bagpipes below. After further investigation, the two individuals were deemed not to be accomplices and the shooter was charged with Criminal Mischief, Deadly Conduct, Possession of a Stolen Firearm and Trespassing. In another instance, a tragedy occurred at Theo. J. Buell Elementary School in Mount Morris Township, Michigan when a six year old shot and killed a five year old classmate having told her “I don’t like you” before firing the gun. The six year old was too young to be charged with anything. As stated in Time Magazine: “The story may be too unusual for the drawing of larger lessons” (Rosenblatt, 2000, para. 1). To include *all*

school shooting data would lend credence to the notion of a *social epidemic model* (Newman, Fox, Harding, Mehta, & Roth, 2004). The notion that all school shootings contain similar causes is not supported by studies of epidemiological patterns. The final exclusion pertains to incidents which had huge potential to be shootings, but which were thwarted prior to the incident occurring. The year 2017 saw multiple examples. In January, in a small community near Wildwood, Florida, two teens were arrested for a plot to attack The Villages Charter Middle School. In February of 2017 a similar plan was thwarted in Fullerton, California, at Troy High School. In March 2017, less than a month later, parents assisted police in disclosing their daughter's plot to be the first female mass school shooter at Catocin High School in Thurmont, Maryland. The information was gleaned from the teen's personal journal (Arias, 2017). The latest occurrence in December of 2018 in Richmond Indiana is similarly a testament to the power of *breaking the code of silence* which is addressed more fully in the findings and implications at the end of the study. Clearly, the data on school shootings is blurred due to wide ranging disparities in what is considered note worth by the individual researcher. The inclusion of events that are outside what we understand to be rampage shootings is only the tip of the iceberg. A simple comparison of Tables 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 are representative of this disparity.

Personal and professional connections through my time as president of the National Association of Secondary School Principals afforded me access to conduct this qualitative case study of the 1997 Heath High School shooting in Paducah, KY in order to answer the proposed research questions. Close collaboration between the researcher and the participants allowed the participants to tell their story (Lather, 1991). The school

shooting case study was purposefully selected to represent the commonalities depicted in Table 1-2 as well as time distance for reflection.

More specifically, I was able to gather multiple sources of descriptive data that include:

1. Nine interviews with the principal of the school so as to maintain a focus for each interview around themes.
2. In addition, I conducted interviews with other available stakeholders to provide their perspectives on the culture of the school before and after the school shooting, and their perspective of the school leader and their reactions.
3. Field observations of the school and community to provide context and sense of the community were a powerful opportunity to reflect on the event and its lasting impact.
4. Archival documents such as school and district news releases, articles and broadcasts, oral histories gathered through the local library, policies and protocols related to school safety prior to and after the school shooting.
5. Researcher's journal (where I recorded my own thoughts and reflections over the course of the study).

Each interview with the principal provided a distinct focus (Yin, 2011) on the research questions. Interviews with additional stakeholders were selected to be representative of the community to include a former student, employee, parent, victim, and family members. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using *First, Second, Third and Fourth Cycle* coding (Saldaña, 2016). Cycle two pattern coding is defined as “explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). In essence,

pattern coding enabled me to consolidate the topics into a “smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs (Saldaña, 2013). This type of meta-coding created more meaningful analysis.

By conducting interviews and coding the data for patterns, the study helped to identify and qualify the skills school leaders draw from in the midst of unfathomable circumstances. Given the fluid nature of the interviews, there was a great deal of room created for additional understandings to emerge. The principal, Bill Bond, shared freely. He was able to articulate with immense clarity what he had and had not been taught, what influenced his thinking most in the center of a crisis, how he determined what to do and when, what others did, and to what and whom could he attribute the successes and challenges. More importantly, he shared what he believed to be the major mistakes and how there were points at which the events took on a life of their own - blurring the lines between truth and reality. He was able to share his reflections on student achievement, retention, drop out, discipline and engagement in the years that followed. He spoke to who on the staff stayed and who left (nobody) and why. There was intentional room in the iterative nature of the study for the participant to dialogue in this way on his own fears, triumphs, and life events subsequent to the shooting.

Inherent to the research design, iterative content analysis, and open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1984) were cornerstones of effective analysis of the data, especially as I cross referenced the research questions with the theoretical framework. Critical Realism was introduced in Chapter 1 as my epistemological belief that reality is “stratified, emergent, transformational, systemically open, becoming, processual and often relational” (p. 191). The use of *iterative content analysis* was not used as a repetitive mechanical process, but as a reflective process, which was “key to sparking insight and developing meaning” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 76).

Through the series of interviews, there was ongoing interaction between the data, the concepts, and emerging themes. This is intended in part to address the criteria of trustworthiness (Nowell, Norris, & White, 2017). “We should never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 9). In practical terms, this could have resulted in very different data from each interview because it required the data from multiple interviews to be continuously contextualized within the broader setting (Kendall, 1999).

Significance of the Study

When speaking with the principal about the study, he was ambivalent about its potential significance. He told me many times “I don’t know if my story will do any good, but I know it won’t do any harm.” I posit that to the contrary, it provides a set of direct experiences from which we might learn new ways of thinking about school shootings beyond that which is available in prior research.

The literature review shows that there is not so much a misunderstanding of the phenomenon of school shootings as an absence of an understanding. Some of the research is flawed by inaccurate facts and or assumptions around the role of bullying, mental illness, inadequate security resources, race, breakdowns in societal structure, social media and politics to name but a few. What we are left with in the available literature are large gaps in our knowledge. It is as though the field is data rich but information poor. Critical realism is a paradigm often associated with post-positivism in that the researcher seeks to ‘falsify’ theories rather than to seek an absolute truth. With this in mind, I acknowledge that much of the literature available on school shootings comes with definite bias. I believe this to be true of the most recent federal commission report on school safety

which was chaired by Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education (Federal Commission on School Safety, 2018). Other high-ranking representation on the commission include Matthew George Whitaker, Acting Attorney General of the United States, Alex Azar II, Secretary of Health and Human Services and Kirstjen M. Nielsen, Secretary of Homeland Security and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, before he was fired.

In addition, there is no null hypothesis available in the literature which would tell us what does not work in leading schools through crisis. This study fills some of those gaps. Peter Mortimer at the University of London once described school test scores as “a useful servant but a poor master” (Slade & Griffin, 2013, p. 30). This could be said of the available literature on leadership during school shootings. By their very nature, school shootings bring with them inherent obstacles for the researcher. The available literature is predominantly from the behavioral and the social sciences and focuses intently on discerning why school shootings happen. Studies seek out descriptions of perpetrators and their characteristics, as well as causal home and school factors. There remains a dearth of research which looks directly at the school leader as a pivotal figure in navigating school shootings. By filling some of the gaps in our collective understanding, this study will begin to allow people at the epicenter to have a voice in what needs to be done to reduce school shootings.

Key Terms

Bullying - Definition of Bullying Among Youths

Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including

physical, psychological, social, or educational harm. (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7).

The Centers for Disease Control (2016) differentiates between direct and indirect modes of bullying as based on whether or not the aggressive behavior “occurs in the presence of the targeted youth” (p. 7). Their surveillance model convened a panel over a two year period (of which I was a member). This panel delineated four main types of bullying to include relational, verbal, physical and property related.

Case Study - The term is used to varying degrees of consistency across different disciplines. “In qualitative inquiry, the term *case study research* refers to the intensive study of a case” (Glesne, 2016, p. 289). Since this can refer to multiple or single cases, Stake (2010) delineates a case as being a *bounded integrated system* which contains a number of subsets or *working parts*.

Contingency Theory in Organizations and Educational Leadership - A way of looking at the structure of an institution base on size and systems. For the purposes of this study, contingency theory looks at whether the institution operates on a hierarchical or participatory model. This will also impact how the subject perceives his leadership role during crisis (; Chemers, 2014; Donaldson, 2001).

Crisis - A crisis, according to Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary (1987) is defined as “an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending, especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome”. This definition while technically accurate, does not adequately illustrate what this means to principals in the context of the work they do. A more

illustrative definition comes from the U.S. Department of Education Publications Center, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools [U.S. Dept. of Ed] (OSDFS,2007): A crisis is a situation where schools could be faced with inadequate information, not enough time, and insufficient resources, but in which leaders must make one or many crucial decisions” (p. 1-5). Some of the literature is more specific in that it defines the effects rather the act itself. School crisis is often defined as a traumatic event associated with a school – whether occurring inside or outside it – and is categorized by uncertain, complexity, urgency (Krauss, 1998; Liou, 2015).

Epoche - A term borrowed from phenomenology with multiple definitions but which in the context of this study means *to set aside or abstain from questions of reference so as to focus on meaning* (Mohanty & McKenna, 1989).

Leakage – Reid and O’Toole (2011) provide the following description:

A student intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes, or intentions that may signal an impending violent act. These clues could take the form of subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions, or ultimatums. Clues could be spoken or conveyed in stories, diaries, essays, poems, letters, songs, drawings, doodles, tattoos, or videos.

More recent definitions reflect the prolific use of electronic media, letters, diaries, emails, voice mails, blogs, journals, internet postings, tweets, text messages, video postings, and future means of social communication that are yet to be invented (Meloy & O’Toole, 2011).

Positionality - The researcher’s “social, locational, and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants in it” (Hay, 2005, p. 290).

Rampage shooting –

As we define them, rampage school shootings must take place on a school-related public stage before an audience, involve multiple victims, some of whom are shot simply for their symbolic significance or at random, and involve one or more shooters who are students or former students of the school. (Newman, 2004)

These shootings are also frequently defined by several factors, including “involvement of current or former students: and multiple victims, which often appear to have been chosen at random” (Rocque, 2011, p. 305).

In terms of the institutional data, “It is the organization more than the individual which has significance” (Bates & Swan, 2018; Muschert, 2007). Some literature recognizes rampage shootings as being similar to mass murder. The only difference is they are not a member or former member of the school. Rampage shootings are differentiated from terror attacks wherein the purpose is to advance political or religious ideologies, whereas some authors have chosen to address them as the same issue (Capellan, 2015). “They both reflect societal problems whether they are concepts of misguided masculinity in which young men feel inhibited in expressing emotion or increased isolation and alienation as a result of prejudice against mental instability” (Dorsey, 2014 ,p. 1).

Rashomon Effect - “The subjective construction of reality in which observers of a single event perceive incompatible, yet plausible versions of what happened” (Muschert, 2007, p. 3).

School Shooting - According to the CDC, a school shooting case is defined as a fatal injury (e.g., homicide, suicide, or legal intervention) that occurs on school

property, on the way to/from school, or during or on the way to/from a school-sponsored event. “Only violent deaths associated with U.S. elementary and secondary schools, both public and private, are included” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016, para. 2). However, the research has no uniform definition of a school shooting (Boeckler, Seeger, Sitzler, & Heitmeyer, 2013). This study defines it as the intentional use of a lethal weapon on school grounds in an attempt to murder a current member of the institution. The perpetrator is generally a current or former student who engages in preplanning and executes the attack during schools hours and with an audience.

Targeted school violence - Violence “in school settings – school shootings and other school-based attacks where the school was deliberately selected as the location for the attack and was not simply a random site of opportunity.” (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2004, p. 4)

Threat Assessment - Threat assessment and management is the process of identifying and evaluating the risk of harm to a particular target (group of individuals or individual) and involves intervention strategies to reduce the risk or threat (Meloy & O’Toole, 2011). More specifically, it can be defined as “a process of identifying, assessing, and managing the threat that certain persons may pose” (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 5).

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters: Introduction, Review of the Literature, Methodology, Results and Discussion and Implications. Chapter 2 explores the current literature and examines the findings through a critical realist lens. The phenomenon is deconstructed through an analysis of various perspectives to include the behavioral

sciences of sociology and psychology. It is further reviewed from a variety of periphery sources to include participant accounts, the media, politics, anecdotal evidence, risk factors, profiling, threat assessment, and the ever prevalent thirst for blame. The final section examines studies which bridge the gap between scholar and practitioner with regard to preparedness, prevention, and response. Here the theoretical frameworks of cognitive resource theory and organizational theory allow us to bind the case with more specificity and guide the methodology. The chapter concludes with the gaps in our current understanding of school shooting research. Chapter 3 takes the gaps presented in Chapter 2 to help scaffold an appropriate method of inquiry to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 revisits the purpose of the study and synthesizes the findings using the primary interviews as the *star of the data*. Chapter 5 discusses the key findings in response to the research questions and offers implications for policy, practice, and future research.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

For the purposes of providing a comprehensive review of the literature, the topic was identified and boundaries set in place. Literature was located and evaluated for relevance then sorted into topic areas (Lichtman, 2006). Counter arguments and dissenting opinions are presented in tandem with widely accepted theories, and evidence provided. The chapter is divided into seven sections each with subsections where appropriate. The epistemological underpinnings are revisited first in section one, because these have “implications for every decision in the research process” (Mertens, 2015, p. 7). Section two addresses the most prolific source of data through an exploration of scholarly studies from the behavioral sciences, with subsections addressing the many facets of society as it pertains to culture, issues of identity, politics, the media, and social disintegration. The extant literature in this section is specifically suited to a CR lens in that it is rife with contradictions and therefore subject to ‘immanent critique’. Section three examines the phenomenon through another behavioral lens – that of psychology, though I posit both sociology and psychology are so inexorably linked that efforts to separate them in a study of school shootings is counter-productive. Section four takes account of the outlier influences, which while not considered scholarly are nevertheless important considerations. Section five addresses the proliferation of available guidance on the role of school leaders in the prevention, preparedness and response to school shootings. The prevalence of such documents has increased exponentially since the time of the case study. Just in the first half of 2018, organizations have generated a plethora of

guides for school leaders. “The relentless pressure to make the right choices in a high stakes environment required leaders to be confident and decisive in an atmosphere of extreme ambiguity” (Fein, 2009, p. 1338). Sadly, this claim was made ten years ago but is even more relevant today. One of the most comprehensive guides to prevention, preparedness, and response is the 4th edition of *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools* (NSPRA, 2016). While this document is extremely well-written, it extends to 377 pages and yet only encompasses the communication aspect of prevention, preparedness, and response. Another interesting line of research would be a comparison of all the safety guides available. With the recent engagement of the federal government in providing funding to schools, along with the December 2018 release of the *Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety* (Federal Report, 2018) the quantity of training programs will expand exponentially, but that does not automatically equate to quality. Many of the documents used to triangulate the interview data are examples of companies shamelessly trying to make money with new offerings that have zero record of success to support their efficacy. One facet of the interview process will be to explore the potential value and role of such programs. Section six is derived from the theoretical framework around both organizational theory and leadership theory and thereby allows us to revisit the research questions to ensure an adequate representation of the extant literature. Section seven concludes with how this literature will guide the study and what gaps remain.

Critical realism as a guide to the literature review. In order to anchor the divergent sources of the literature for the purpose of this study, it is first necessary to revisit the notion of Critical Realism (CR) as an underlying belief about how we might extract knowledge from the literature. “CR appreciates multiparadigmatic, multi-level

research both empirical and contextual” (Okoli, 2015, p. 6). It allows the researcher to build theories or propositions to guide the case study interviews. In addition, CR employs a technique known as ‘immanent critique’ wherein we can recognize theory-practice or theory–theory inconsistencies across disciplines in the literature. For this to be effective, boundaries had to be put in place. While some high profile school shootings may be etched in the fabric of everyday society, there are others that may not be as familiar though no less significant. The school shootings from Table 1-2 reflect several shootings that are not typical of our case study but are included so frequently in the literature that to remove them would be to cast shadows on their findings. The obvious example is the number of conflict related shootings or those that were drug/gang related. In addition, the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School is left in Table 1-2 only because it represents a pivot point in all four sections of the literature review. It is effectively an outlier in that it involved more than one perpetrator which is rare in school shootings. More than three hundred events considered by one or more entity to be a school shooting were originally evaluated for the purpose of binding the study - some of which may be referenced in the literature where appropriate. As a reminder, the name of the perpetrator is intentionally omitted from all aspects of the study. It is an intentional acknowledgment of my positionality outlined in Chapter 1. Victims should be remembered, but shooters seeking attention do not warrant a place in our collective memories. The 2018 Federal Report supports this proposition and has aptly called for a “No Notoriety Campaign” in Chapter 6 of the report entitled *Effects of Press Coverage of Mass Shootings*.

Sociology: An Imminent Critique

This section dominates the literature study naturally because research on school shootings generally emerges from this field. For clarity, this is supported with subsections

addressing the influence of violence in pop culture, social media, video games and politics, mental illness and the alleged disintegration of communities and families. Dissenting theories abound in the behavioral science literature on school shootings. Each school of thought is quick to point out the potential gaps in the other line of reasoning, and at times, become quite personal toward fellow scholars (Ferguson, Coulson, & Barnett, 2011). Schools of psychology and sociology, often make use of the same data to further a particular angle making it extremely challenging to arrive at a point of convergence or tangible theory development. At the center of the divide, there exists a conundrum. For example, if psychosis is the root cause, then it is sometimes perceived as a problem *with the individual* and the research will point to a break down in our mental health provisions. If there is a social construct to blame, then it becomes *everyone's problem*, and there is a great deal of finger pointing.

Social disintegration. Boeckler et al. (2013) examined *social disintegration theory* as one of several considerations in how we might understand the phenomena of school shootings. This is a more specific iteration of social *disorganization* theory emanating from the Chicago school in the 1920's but which was focused on inner cities and poverty. The works of E. A. Ross and C. H. Cooley among others, gave us a widely accepted definition of social control as the capacity of a social group to regulate itself (Gavin & Chun, 1988). We can easily imagine therefore how a loss of personal and social control can have dire consequences. As it pertains to criminology and/or deviancy, the origin of this line of thinking can be traced to Durkheim's concept of *anomie* from whence came the *strain theory* examined in a later section on *identity*. Without delving too far into the polemic weeds of Durkheim, Merton, and Kantism, *Anomie* refers to an apparent lack of understood morays and behaviors in a group or society. This was a shift

in thinking away from the pathology and psychology of the individual involved in a school shooting, toward a group dynamic. Znaniecki and Thomas (1918) introduced the notion that behavior is a correlate not simply of psyche, but are a result of acculturation into a group. In immanent critique, this serves as an example of direct theory to theory dissonance. Thomas developed a specific theory (Thomas Theorem) a decade later, which stated “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Merton, 1995, p. 380). Within this theorem, Thomas identified man’s desire for new experiences, recognition, domination, and security to be driving forces – which makes sense when we consider the actions of school shooters.

To go from *disorganization* to *disintegration* is a substantial shift when you consider that in the former, society still exists, but in the latter, it ceases to function at all. It is within this intersection of conditions (school, society and psyche) that Boeckler et al., (2013) suggest we should work to create a setting which is not *violence affirming*. “School shooting incidents need to be understood as resulting from a constellation of contributing causes, none of which is sufficient in itself to explain a shooting” (Boeckler et al., 2013, p. 1). He recommends looking at the *violence affirming setting in its entirety* to include how youth are influenced through culture, specificity of the school setting, and the psycho/biographical history of the individual (Boeckler et al., 2013). Boeckler is effectively following Isaksen’s suggested application of immanent critique by “noting contradictions in the positions of others” and suggesting better conclusions (Isaksen, 2018, p. 98). Our participant Bill Bond puts it in much simpler terms in a refrain he utters multiple times: “It is never, ever, just one thing”. It is the contention of this writer that schools, support services, and law enforcement have a duty to work together, not to simply negate the affirmation of violence - but to replace it with alternative outlets to be

practiced and honored by our society. This will be explored more in a review of prevention, preparedness, and response measures which school leaders must navigate.

Pop culture, violence, and video games. Few theories appear to be more vehemently argued than whether or not school shooters are themselves victims of violence in society. An increasing number of games, movies, and music portray violence in an exaggerated form through popular culture. Some theories have emerged from studies specifically addressing the influence this has on youth (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Newman, 2004). It is a much repeated theory that violence in popular culture will “increase aggressive behavior, reduce normative constraints, and promote violence” (Wike & Fraser, 2009, p. 163). This became the center of a lawsuit in our case study. Two parents of victims at Heath High School in West Paducah, KY sued Time Warner Cable®, Polygram Filmed Entertainment Distribution Inc., two internet sites, and multiple video game manufacturers. This was predicated on the belief that media violence was a significant factor in the shooting. In one related document, Judge Boggs stated: “Our inquiry is whether the deaths of James, Steger, and Hadley were the reasonably foreseeable result of the defendants’ creation and distribution of their games, movie, and internet sites” (James v. Meow; Media, Inc., 2002, p. 693).

The lawsuit is significant in that the outcome would reasonably be expected to influence policy around culpability. The concepts under discussion are highly germane to the resulting studies during, and subsequent to, the decision rendered by the courts. The case investigated far reaching theories around whether there is an element of ‘foreseeability’ when violent media is prevalent in the life of a potential shooter. The case further studied to what extent the defendants might reasonably be expected to shoulder a ‘duty of care,’ and therefore be considered negligent in the production and marketing of

their products. The lawsuit was eventually dismissed in 2002 by the sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that it was “simply too far a leap from shooting characters on a video screen to shooting people in the classroom” (Trager, Russomanno, Dente Ross, & Reynolds, 2014, p. 303). At its most basic level of immanent critique level, this represents a theory to practice inconsistency. Despite the court ruling, there exists a proliferation of negative studies claiming proximate causation. Kidd and Meyer (2002) studied nine shooters within a three-year period from 1996-1999 at many of the institutions listed in Table 1-2 from (Moses Lake, Pearl, Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield, & Littleton). In their findings, Kidd and Meyer posit: “Writing about killing and exposure to violent media may provide youths who are already emotionally vulnerable with an avenue to enact their homicidal ideation in the safety of fantasy” (p. 8). In a similar study, Langman (2009b) concluded that violent media reduces our perceptions of right and wrong. It has even been suggested that violent video games act as training tools (Grossman & Degaetano, 1999). In their book, *Stop Teaching our Children to Kill*, Grossman and Degaetano point to our case study at Heath High School as the quintessential example of this in action. Some of the most often quoted works on school shootings seem to be the most contradictory (Kutner & Olson, 2008). Some of these studies share a great deal of data to describe how gamers get into more fights, damage property, and get into trouble in school. Kutner and Olson (2009) conducted their correlative study on video game usage. The study claims they “found significant relationships between M-rated game play and a broad range of aggressive or problem behaviors” (p.194), “positive perceptions of aggression” (p. 105), and found that these youth were significantly more likely to bully others. Yet Kutner and Olson conclude their correlational data are no cause for concern. They go so far as to suggest that children who

do NOT play video games may suffer from a lack of social skills because gamers play with others. It completely ignores the fact that children socialize in ways other than through video games. Not only is this a theory to theory contradiction but it would also qualify as what Isaksen (2018) would classify as a competing voice within their own study (p. 104).

Manufacturers and software developers are quick to counter such research with their own which finds no correlation between sales and violent crimes among youth ("ESA Newsletter," 2015). In their zeal to mitigate negative publicity, entire departments and websites are dedicated to their own research (<http://www.theesa.com/category/research/>). Langman's (2009a) contention best summarizes the mindset that pop culture is a contributing factor. He believes that violent media legitimizes real life violence, and provides the blueprint from which potential school shooters may glean both information and motivation. Statistically however, the numbers constitute a potential data inconsistency (Isaksen, 2018). In one study by Griffith and Hunt (1995), 90% of school shooters engaged extensively in media violence. Conversely, in the combined Safe Schools/Secret Service study (Vossekuil et al., 2004), the percentage was less than half that. Regardless of which figure is an accurate representation, it is clearly not feasible to irrefutably claim causation between increased use of violent video games and school shootings. The role of video games was explored in the interviews. The principal stated "He shot like a kid playing video games", but he was also quick to add a disclaimer: "I'm not saying video games caused it".

Media, politics, and moral panic. Those who refute the existence of a nexus between violence in popular culture are equally emphatic in their convictions. They often place the blame squarely on the shoulders of politicians and fellow scholars which will be

explored further in the next section. Ferguson, Coulson, and Barnett (2011) call it “the quixotic desire by politicians, advocates, and some scholars to link school shootings...to playing violent video games, despite considerable and increasing evidence to the contrary” (p. 142). It has been argued from this perspective that such shootings have been socially constructed in the realm of media interpretation and public perception. One author, Stein (2000), went so far as to label Columbine as a metaphor for a contemporary crisis of youth culture. Depending on the author, it is evident the lines between fact and perception are increasingly blurred. This is well illustrated by Muschert (2007) who posits the events at Columbine are an example of the *Rashomon effect*. At its core, the Rashomon effect is a phenomenon which originates from a Japanese film made in 1950, where instead of a definitive outcome, the audience has to decide for itself which character rendition of a single event is the correct one (Akautagawa & Kurosawa, 1950). So many renditions of school shootings exist in popular culture, the media, publications, and personal accounts that it becomes difficult to ascertain at which point the event or version has taken on a life of its own. In our case study, there are conflicting accounts of how the shooting ended and who, if anyone, disarmed the perpetrator. There are extensive accounts of Ben Strong, a senior, as the hero of the moment even though the facts do not support the media accounts. In a chilling article about Ben with this quote as the title, Glaberson (2000) suggest “When grief wanted a hero, truth didn’t get in the way”. This was addressed in more detail through the interviews and provided significant lessons to be learned which are discussed in the findings. The principal feels that his decision to let the hero story play out is one of his greatest regrets. “The further he got away from Paducah, the more they applauded” (Bill Bond).

In deference to all research on school safety in the U.S. during the post-Columbine era, the impact of school shootings in the 1990's led to a widespread call for response from all segments of society, compounded by an increasing sense of urgency. According to Ferguson et al. (2011), this resulted in "a considerable amount of misinformation and arguably considerable damage to individual youth, scientific integrity, and misguided public policy" (p. 142). What the literature reveals is that there has been a divergence of public perception and sociological evidence regarding school shootings (Muschert, 2007). It has been repeatedly argued that the number of incidents is out of proportion to the attention received from the media on school shootings being caused by video games (Ferguson et al., 2011). More specifically, "There simply is no quality evidence for the predictive value of violent game exposure as a risk factor for school shootings" (Ferguson, 2008, p. 34). It will be interesting to see if the 2018 shootings result in similar claims of correlation or causation. Our data suggests that it takes an average of five years for the legal and litigious arms of a crisis to play out. Bill Bond explained:

The day after the shooting, we were sitting in a conference room with lawyers. I don't know who they were. It didn't matter. One lawyer told me his five year prediction. It was accurate in every way. I would be sued as an individual along with everyone else. He said all the other lawsuits would gradually fall away. He told me that I would be the last one standing. He said not to worry because I probably didn't have six million dollars anyway. He was right to the last detail.

(Bill Bond)

Clearly there is contention around the role of pop culture in school shootings. This is further compounded by the misinformation promulgated by the speed and tenacity of today's media in a digital age.

"If it bleeds, it leads." This phrase belongs to journalist Eric Pooley who, in 1989, wrote an article for *New York Magazine* on the prevalence of gory stories in the media (Pooley, 1989). Nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of school-based shootings. The propensity to embellish, or at the least showcase tragic events resulted in the creation of what came to be known as *moral panic* (Cohen, 1972). A moral panic is defined as "the process of arousing social concern over an issue – usually the work of moral entrepreneurs and the mass media" (Scott, 2014, p. 492). Ferguson (2008) contends this moral panic serves politicians, social researchers and the media. "It has long been recognized that negative news... including that which promotes extreme views of a potential problem, 'sell' better than do positive news" (p. 30). Cynical though this theory may be, it is rooted in psychology and anthropology. Humans have a natural tendency toward negativity, or what Daniel Kahneman (2011) calls more precisely *cognitive biases*. At its simplest, our brains are wired to be alert to danger emanating from the hunter-gatherer days. We quickly gather data, employ our intuition, and make assumptions. Negative stimuli catch our attention and that is what we respond to. The media is highly adept at taking advantage of this human foible (Angermeyer & Schulze, 2001; McGinty, Webster, Jarlenski, & Barry, 2014; Robinson, 2011; Sieff, 2003). Kupchik and Bracy (2009) call it *constructing dangerousness and fueling fear*. Ferguson (2008) contends that politicians and some researchers perpetuate the issues because grant money is awarded more often to research with an identifiable social problem to solve. Media loves bad news and even though research does or does not support it, the dialogue

continues (Ferguson, 2008). To add complexity, people's beliefs regarding the influence of media coverage on attitudes and opinions can impact their own behaviors (Gunther & Storey, 2003; Hoffner, Cohen, Seate, & Fujioka 2017). This could reasonably be expected to be a factor in copycat shootings. Killingbeck (2001) draws on Cohen's work to offer substantial evidence that exaggerated accounts of events are often intentional. "Central to the moral panic concept is an argument that public concern or fear over an alleged social problem is mutually beneficial to state officials—that is, politicians and law enforcement authorities—and the news media" (Bonn, 2015, para. 5). The underlying implication is that law enforcement builds on the panic as justification for increased resources. A less cynical assumption might be the benefits of 'heightened awareness' so that law enforcement and the public could work together on securing safe schools. Regardless of which theory garners the most traction, our data clearly support the notion that copycat/contagion is a very real phenomenon and that it has a highly significant role to play in prevention and preparedness. Bill believed unequivocally that this is true. "If there had not been a Heath, there would never have been a Columbine".

A political agenda. It has been argued that politicians will use the phenomenon to further a particular agenda. A specific example is cited in a 2011 journal article, where Ferguson et al. (2011) describe connecting video games to school shootings as *a wrong turn* in research practice and connect it to political motives. They accuse Senator Joseph Lieberman of remarkable hyperbole by describing gaming as "digital poison" (2011, p. 146). Similarly, they draw criticism upon former Florida attorney Jack Thompson, who also promoted the concept of a causal relationship (and was the author of the *James v Meow Media Inc.* lawsuit discussed earlier). Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va)

introduced one of the first pieces of legislation in response to the Newtown massacre followed by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), and Representative Frank Wolf (R-Va.). Vice President Joe Biden later launched similar lines of inquiry. Both Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump have addressed the issue on numerous occasions. Clinton believes “We need to treat violent video games the way we treat tobacco, alcohol, and pornography” (Peterson, 2015, para. 3). Trump tweeted “Video game violence & glorification must be stopped – it is creating monsters!” (Trump, 2012). While there is little consensus between political parties on gun control, it appears that restrictions on violent video games are ‘safe’ for both sides to support – lending the appearance (rightly or wrongly), of being nurturers of their constituents. “Politicians seize upon the panic, eager to be seen as doing something particular as it gives them an opportunity to appear to be concerned for children” (Ferguson, 2008, p. 32). Whether or not we support the notion that media carries culpability for school shootings, we can see where the two are inexorably bound. “Media are part of school shootings and school shootings are part of the media” (Muschert & Sumiala, 2012, p. xvii). The term used in the social sciences for this phenomenon is *mediatization*. This was originally used by Swedish researcher Kent Asp (1990). It is the idea that life and society are essentially shaped by the media. For the purposes of this study, this is a critical concept for it reminds us that we experience school shootings through the media, since the majority of us are not directly involved. The interviews in this research are therefore only with those who have directly experienced the phenomenon. This was introduced as a delimiter and will be explored more in a discussion of the chosen methodology in Chapter 3. Suffice to say, the literature in this area remains contradictory. The data from this study however will show

the power of media and politics, and consequently the school leaders need to navigate the landscape of perception with great skill and tenacity.

The extent to which the media and culture intersect has increased exponentially with the arrival of cell phones and the internet. To put this in context, cell phones did not have photo or video capabilities in the 1990s and the internet was in its infancy. Once these tools became readily available, the pressure to release information through the media developed a sense of urgency. To all intents and purposes, this seemed to circumvent the ethics of accurate reporting. Nowhere is this more apparent than the massacre at Columbine. Misinformation ensued. Media seemed to promulgate myths around shooters being alike, that they were loners, had aberrant interests, were all victims at school, and were revenge motivated (O'Toole, 2009, p. 4.; *Threat Assessment*, 2002). The list of media reporting errors is not limited to guesswork around motive. Simple facts were frequently inaccurately reported, sometimes with far reaching consequences. In their fervor to be the first to press, a Denver news station showed an incorrect yearbook photo. Media reported the shootings to have lasted hours when in reality the perpetrators were dead themselves with 49 minutes and the remaining sounds were from law enforcement going room to room. The story of one victim being asked if she believed in God was completely misappropriated. The victim, Bernall, was shot outright and the student asked about God was actually someone entirely different. An alleged eyewitness cell phone transmission was publicly aired and yet turned out to be a complete hoax (Moritz, 2009). Contrary to stories from students with no firsthand knowledge of the shooters, the perpetrators were not part of a Trench Coat Mafia, did not listen to Manson, had friends, did well academically and no evidence exists to suggest they were bullied or that a traumatic event preceded the rampage. Having been granted the opportunity to

learn from the actual investigators a few years after the event, I was left with a far more rationale and factual understanding of what transpired. When sealed documents were later released in 2006, it further became evident the intent of the perpetrators was far broader than ever imagined. They had not for example, singled out ‘jocks’. Their intent was a widespread explosion hoping for a death toll in the thousands. Despite media claims to the contrary, the date which coincided with Hitler’s death had nothing directly to do with him. It was actually intended to coincide with the anniversaries of the 1993 Waco siege and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing – both of which occurred on 19 April. The massacre was delayed according to records released later. What still remains sealed until 2027 are the depositions of the shooters’ parents. Those waiting for a rational explanation are anxious for that time to come, though I posit no such thing exists that might fit our collective understanding. While these events are unfortunate and unintentional, other aspects of media coverage have a chilling effect on how society views school shootings. A study on media sequencing (the order in which events are reported) found that:

Journalists initially tended to select sequences that more clearly assigned blame.

Over time journalists tended to rely on details that highlighted the contextual elements, rhetorically reducing the moral responsibility of the perpetrators.

School shootings may ultimately be remembered as horrible events, but the youthful nature of the offenders and other contexts of the events will tend to mitigate the shooters’ moral culpability. (Sumiala & Muschert, 2012, p. 182)

Nowhere is this more evident than in the events following the 2005 Red Lake shooting. In our primary interviews we learned that that television media had aired an innocent image of a fourth grade child rather than show him as he was at the time of the murders.

It was not representative of the man who had just murdered nine people including his grandfather and his partner before going on a shooting spree at the reservation high school he attended. Seven people were killed and five more injured before he turned the gun on himself. “The photo was a 4th grader with a buzz cut But this guy was six two...a scary looking SOB...But not in the picture... Pictures are powerful and kids will identify with him” (Bill Bond).

Effectively, our empathy for perpetrators is shaped by the media’s portrayal of their life circumstances rather than by the heinous act itself. I would ask again why it is that they are not referred to as murderers. Naturally there are highly charged and contradictory reports. *Media Framing and Policy Post-Columbine* (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009) explores this concept in depth. Muschert (2007) speaks to media framing that result in wrong interpretations of perpetrators. He blames the media for creating a ‘super-predator’ image based on myths and inaccuracies. Blame is a constant theme.

Gun rights activists (among others) blame medications (Roberts, 2013), but the evidence does not support this. In the shooting at Thurston High School in 1997, the shooter had long since stopped taking his medication. This could be considered unfortunate because he describes his period on Prozac as the happiest time of his life. In several instances where the shooter was on anti-depressants, the shooter had been planning the attack before ever receiving a prescription. In the 2005 Red Lake High School shooting on an Indian reservation in Minnesota, the shooter had attempted suicide prior to his diagnosis and medication (Langman, 2009b). In fact, only two of the ten shooters in Langman’s study were even on medication, although eight of ten were using drugs or alcohol. Pharmaceutical companies have nevertheless been targeted for their

promotion of ADHD and anti-depressant medications sometimes used by school shooters. It does not help clarify the accuracy of this theory that pharmaceutical companies allegedly favor and promote research which supports their products, or that researcher bias is rife in clinical trial studies (Turner, Linardatos, Tell, & Rosenthal, 2008).

When you consider that consistency across media coverage is tenuous at best, this has far reaching implications for how our views are shaped. The simple data on how many articles appeared in *The New York Times* on school shootings over a three-year period is indicative of the rising social awareness and ‘moral panic’ referenced earlier. In 1997, the school shooting in Pearl, MS resulted in only four media articles. That same year, Paducah, KY garnered 13. In 1998, Jonesboro, AR, was featured 31 times and Springfield, OR, resulted in 28 references. By the time Columbine occurred almost exactly a year later, coverage increased to 152 articles in The New York Times alone. These data were extracted from a 2003 report and will most likely have changed by now (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). While the numbers may have changed, the concept has not. In a 1963 study on the media and foreign policy, Cohen (1963) stated that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think *about*” (p. 13). Nevertheless, they reflect a clear indication of the power of increasing media presence in our collective consciousness.

Bullying. The topic is so prolific it could be placed in every section of the literature review. For clarity, I have categorized it into three themes related to: 1) risk factors for prevention, 2) psychological disturbances, and 3) cultural/sociological disintegration. I have studied bullying, cyberbullying and bulicide for many years and

spoken hundreds of times on the subject. I have assisted legislators in crafting laws, school districts in creating policies, and schools developing protocols and best practices. There is little doubt I carry a strong conviction of the harm done by bullying to individuals and school climates. However, bullying is one of the first possible reasons to be mentioned following a school shooting and yet the research is still unable to provide evidence of a definitive causal relationship (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013; Socio-Emotional Learning Summit (SEL), 2013; US Dept. of Education, 2014). What is frequently suggested however is a strong correlation. Leary et al. (2003), Newman et al (2004), Verlinden, Hensen, & Thomas, 2000, Vossekuil et al. (2004), provide compelling data connecting social rejection, teasing and bullying to more than a dozen of the high profile school shootings. In direct contrast, Langman (2009b) found that the shooters in his studies were not always socially rejected. They belonged to various school-based groups, had friends, were on teams, and were considered social.

From my own experiences, there was a distinct resurgence of interest in the subject once the laws were rewritten to include electronic peer aggression, which became known as cyberbullying. The challenge was, and remains, the extent to which school authorities have jurisdiction over conduct that occurs *outside the school gates*. A fine balance exists between knowing that cyberbullying is brought back on campus each day - thereby interfering with the educational process, and recognizing rights to free speech, limited authority, and the burden of proof that the incident caused *substantial disruption*. Much criticism has been levied against policies designed to mitigate conflict in schools. One of the most frequently criticized is the use of *zero tolerance*, a practice we shall examine again as it pertains to organizational theory. Klein (2013) refers to these policies

as *ubiquitous* and claims they “do not prevent the specter of violence from returning again and again” (p. 3). In *The Bully Society*, Klein places much of the responsibility for school shootings on the school itself. “Nearly all the school shooters were violently reacting to oppressive social hierarchies in their schools” (Klein, 2013, p. 3). From her interviews, Klein puts forth a theory that *gender policing, masculinity imperatives, and normalizing bullying* within our schools are the underlying reasons shooters act out. What this theory fails to consider is that criminals invariably blame others. In our case study, the perpetrator made claims of bullying once arrested, but “when that did not work, he moved on to hearing voices” (Bill Bond). Within the field of criminology and psychology there is abundant research to this effect (Langman 2009a, 2015). History is rife with examples of this phenomenon (Campbell, 2012) and empirical research affirms its prevalence. “Blame externalization emerged as the strongest predictor of career delinquency in ordinary least square regression, logistic regression and t-test models” (DeLisi et al., 2013, p. 1415). Clearly many shooters are angry, but if we dig a little deeper, we may well find more plausible antecedents. The media is always quick to look for a cause in a school shooting because they need a story and the availability of accurate information is scarce, especially when you take into account privacy rules. As a consequence, less ethical reporters will often latch on to any angle they believe may extend the shelf life of the story and clearly, bullying is an easy target. Yet below the surface response of bullying, which elicits instant sympathy for the perpetrator, it is just as likely that he was angry for a myriad of other reasons (Langman, 2009a). This might include a disciplinary action received, rejection by a love interest, or a tinge of envy for something a peer may possess. These are all normal adolescent emotions, but they do not normally result in murder as in the following quote from the Oregon shooter: “I hate

being laughed at. But they won't laugh after they're scraping parts of their parents, sisters, brothers, and friends from the wall of my hate" (Verlinden et al., 2000, p. 40).

I would refute that schools *normalizing bullying* is the primary factor in school shootings. If that were the case, then school shootings would have also occurred in large cities where bullying is certainly just as prolific. If revenge against bullying were truly a key factor then the shooters would have targeted the alleged bully, but the facts do not support this as having occurred. The murdered and injured in ten of the most high profile school shootings were bystanders, and selected opportunistically (Langman, 2009a). Having spent the latter half of my career in education promoting civility as a path to building a positive school climate, I would not presume to suggest bullying is not *a* factor under certain conditions, but there is no evidence to suggest it is the *only* factor.

A question of identity. Masculinity as a social construct has also been blamed for school shootings. This is not surprising given that almost exclusively males have historically committed school rampage shootings. In a study of three massacres, Kalish and Kimmel (2010) make connections among three disparate shooters. They conclude that in all three instances, the perpetrators demonstrated *aggrieved entitlement*, which they define as someone who "retaliates far beyond the initial provocation and destroys others to restore the self" (p. 463). The prevailing sense they are 'owed' this opportunity is perpetually reiterated. The authors cite Margaret Mead's *Culture of revenge* (1942), Bruce Springsteen songs, Western movies, and modern action movies as representative of this as a prevalent theme in popular culture. This, they posit, remains a gender specific issue of our time: "...the culture of hegemonic masculinity in the US creates a sense of aggrieved entitlement conducive to violence" (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010, p. 451). In simple terms, perceived injustice by school shooters permeates the field.

Faggots, Fame and Firepower (Evans, 2016) is a doctoral candidate's dissertation that explores "teenage masculinity, school shootings and the pursuit of fame". His research specifically examines masculinity against the backdrop of current media and the entertainment industry. He references some of the most disturbing but enlightening novels and movies that address a school massacre. One reference which stands out is that of the novel *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (Shriver, 2003) and the movie by the same name. Kevin is a high school student who appears to be a normally functioning teenager – at least through the eyes of his father if not his mother. He eventually commits a carefully planned school massacre. The story explores every angle if not overtly. The character of the perpetrator develops at times as both psychotic and as a sociopath. "In a country that doesn't discriminate between fame and infamy, the latter presents itself as plainly more achievable" (p. 168).

This concept of school shootings being socially constructed phenomena is not isolated. Studies which compare the United States with other countries have found "public mass shooters in the United States are significantly more likely to arm themselves with multiple weapons and attack at school and work place settings, while offenders from other countries are more likely to strike at military sites" (Lankford, 2016). This was visited briefly in chapter 1 with regard my positionality. Lankford attributes this to the nation's gun culture and its *particular set of social strains*. The *strain* Lankford is referring to, originates in *Strain Theory* from the work of sociologist Robert Merton. He speculated that the way our society promotes success and fame results in untenable expectations and disappointment - leading to an overwhelming sense of entitlement. Lankford maintains that shooters see school or the workplace as symbolic sources of their strain. This theory has been strongly challenged by fellow scholars. "Professor Lankford

makes an error in attributing mass shootings to social strain in the American culture rather than to personality makeup of the individual who rejects society before it rejects him” (Samenow, 2015, para. 6). There is however, a body of research which clearly refutes this correlation. “If every teenager (who) owns or has easy access to guns, and virtually none of them commit murder, school shooters are clearly aberrations. Their acts cannot be blamed on the culture, because the acts themselves are contrary to the prevalent social norm of law-abiding use of firearms” (Langman, 2009a, p. 19).

Psychology: A Minefield

Much emphasis was placed on outside influences in the section on sociology. If nothing else, it is clear that “Media violence research has shown us that when we watch, we learn” (Gentile, 2014, p. xvii). Simply put, watching cruelty fosters indifference. Indifference interferes with empathy, and without empathy, there are no social boundaries. This represents a definite link between the social and psychological research. Our social interactions are inextricably bound to our emotions, intellect, and psyche.

An almost linear pattern emerges when we use the preceding social theories to deepen our collective understanding of how the mind considers heinous acts of murder. Within the psychological studies, several themes dominate:

1. Evidence exists of psycho-emotional disorder in some of the school shooters
2. These conditions are not universal to all situations
3. A large number of widely accepted risk factor have emerged from the research
4. The risk factors have led to a wide discussion on the use and misuse of profiling
5. Threat assessment is a powerful practice to emerge from the research

6. Policies and practices have evolved from the research to create guides for prevention

Mental health. The psychology of shooters, indeed of all humans is not clear and linear, but rather an amalgamation of factors. Terms have been used interchangeably by those who have written about school shooters, yet they often have little to no training in the field of psychology. It is therefore important here to review terms of relevance in the literature. For a deeper understanding of the individual characteristics of psychological disorders, and the point at which they intersect, it is recommended that the DSMV 5 be used as a source of reference (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013).

While frequently used as a negative term, people who suffer from psychosis (psychotics) are not by default, a danger to themselves or society. The condition encompasses a range of symptoms including depressive disorder, detachment from reality, bipolar disorder, and delusions. Conversely, psychopaths are generally understood to be without a conscience, lack empathy, and have a propensity to commit crimes. They can range from fully functioning manipulators who are generally intelligent and charming, to serial killers. A third relevant condition exists among the literature is that of 'sociopathy'. A sociopath is frequently considered to be a product of his or her environment, whereas a psychopath is believed to have genetic or biological causes behind their actions (Bushak, 2015). One might expect this concept to be part of the social science review, however, if viewed as a cognitive disorder, it fits here in a study of the mind. While both psychosis and psychopathy are categorized as antisocial personality disorders, only the former is considered treatable. This is a significant factor in how we view prevention and preparedness.

Peter Langman (2009b) studied ten schools that experienced shootings. His research is of interest because it isolates them from so many others where the criteria are less specific. His work focuses on sites where youth were the perpetrators, rather than including some of the more notorious killings such as the 2007 Virginia Tech rampage and the 1966 killings at the University of Texas. Of the ten perpetrators, he determined three were traumatized, five were psychotic, and two were psychopathic. By his own admission, Langman (2009b) states many assumptions as fact rather than say repeatedly “it is alleged that”, since he was unable to authenticate all of the information on the shooters. This would generally result in exclusion from the extant research, but Langman’s analysis and subsequent work with potential school shooters brings insight to a possibly thicker description of the phenomenon. Of particular note, Langman (2009a) states: “...most people who are traumatized, psychotic and psychopathic do not commit murder” (p. 79).

I posit that despite the overwhelming number of articles and books that address psychological disorder among school shooters, this study may well refute the proximate causation so often referenced. Most of the literature under review for this study seeks an answer to the penultimate question “Why?” At the conclusion of the novel *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (Shriver, 2003), and the movie by the same name (Shriver, Ramsay, Reilly, & Miller, 2012), Kevin has committed his heinous high school massacre. He is the penultimate psychopath, (some may claim sociopath) and by any definition, he has no semblance of empathy, emotion, or sense of culpability. When his mother asks him why he did it, he responds; “I used to think I knew. Now I am not so sure” (Shriver, 2003). Despite all the literature and research at our disposal, and even once this study had

concluded with all data synthesized, nobody can claim the reason for school shootings. In the words of Tennyson: “Theirs not to reason why”.

Intersection of psychology and community. Twenty-three separate government agencies form the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (Forum). The Forum provides useful data for social researchers. Their most recent report gives data on 41 indicators of child well-being to include health, economics, family, healthcare, school, safety, behavior and physical environment (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics [the Forum], 2016). Data trends from the previous report in 2014 indicate a decrease in teen births, smoking, and binge drinking. Poverty, health, obesity, and crime victim rates remain the same. In its significance for understanding school shootings, the report is a reminder that school holds a pivotal role in assuring well-being for children within the community. Moreover, “...students’ academic motivation, commitment to democracy, values, and resistance to problem behaviors, depend on their experience of the school as a community” (Miller, Hess, & Orthmann, 2014, p. 358).

In their seminal work on partnerships for problem solving, which is already in its seventh edition, Miller et al. (2014) consider family, school, and community as inexorably linked. While the work is predominantly geared toward law enforcement, the study employs research-based practices, and offers fresh insight into where the social sciences meet policy and programming. Negative studies and anecdotal accounts relative to Zero Tolerance have eclipsed the value of such partnerships. In a recent attempt to bridge the chasm between law enforcement and the school community, a new Texas Law, introduced as Senate Bill 30 was co-authored by Royce West (D-Dallas). This bill, requiring the implementation of public school curriculum on how to interact with police went into effect with the 2018-2019 school. This bill is as much a product of timing as of

data driven research. It follows prolific social media expressions of high profile deadly encounters between law enforcement and communities around the country. Senator Royce stated “the proposal isn't focused on telling someone what they can't do but about establishing expectations of civilians and law enforcement” (Silver, 2017). Having attended the hearings for the bill, it was interesting to note that nobody testified against it, especially educators. The burden of implementation falls yet again on school systems to build in unfunded mandates into their already under-resourced budgets. One can only assume that they view the benefits as outweighing the burden. Fortunately, the establishment of the *Texas School Safety Center* at Texas State University has at least provided a resource and the expertise to operationalize this mandate. Since school shootings are clearly a crime however, we must provide space to connect the dots between criminal and organizational practices. Where these two intersect, policy and practice are defined. Such things as risk factors, contagion and threat assessments converge to provide some form of structure on which organizations base operational protocols. Newman et al. (2004) conducted more than 100 interviews on school shootings and their findings are widely referenced by other researchers as a preeminent source in the field. While they acknowledge the confluence of factors, they nevertheless put schools front and center:

Those who commit rampage school shootings are boys for whom a range of unfortunate circumstances come together—those who are socially marginal, are psychologically vulnerable, are fixated on cultural scripts that fuse violence with masculinity, live in areas where firearms are readily available, and attend schools that cannot identify this constellation. (Newman et al., 2003, p. 230)

This concept actually appears in the form of a recommendation in the 2018 Federal Report on School Safety. “An effective security plan can be especially valuable in rural areas where law enforcement response times may be significantly longer than in more urban jurisdictions” (p. 64).

The way in which Newman et al created a shortlist of risk factors is common practice for researchers when trying to bind the phenomenon. Indeed I have done the same thing by limiting my exploration to cases containing the elements listed in Table 1-2. The U.S. Post Office was one of the first organizations to identify what they termed ‘risk indicators’ in 2007 with a segment on school context. These indicators included *inequitable discipline practices, an inflexible culture, a tolerance for disrespect, acceptance of bullying, lack of connectedness, unsupervised electronic use, and an imbedded code of silence*. While not necessarily easy to quantify, few practitioners would argue that these are clearly recipes for dysfunction of an organization.

We are repeatedly cautioned throughout the literature that there is no definitive profile or set of risk factors for a school shooter, but as Van Brunt (2012) describes it, “these lists provide the equivalent of a flashlight-in-a-darkened-room approach” (p. 7). When turning that same flashlight on the family, the list is surprisingly short. Common hallmarks of the *family dynamic* include lack of intimacy and a turbulent child-parent relationship. The image is of a home where the child takes on a ‘head of household’ mentality, has access to weapons, and experiences zero limits on access to electronic media.

Clearly then, if school shootings are, to any degree *socially constructed*, then our communities are the artists. It is here we learn acceptable behavior, shape our thoughts and beliefs and act out our *thinking, customs, traditions and roles* (O’Toole, 2013).

O'Toole reminds us that teens develop their outlook, attitudes, sense of identity, opinions, preferences and choices from school. By extension therefore, these choices may include attitudes towards drugs and alcohol, entertainment, friends and activities. I posit however that schools, families, and communities are too interconnected and embedded within each other to place blame on any one context. Hence the refrain from our primary participant "It is never, ever only one thing". Since the identification of risk is rife in the current school safety climate studies, let us consider in more detail to what degree the literature suggests a nexus.

Risk factors. The notion of analyzing risk is not new with regard to organizational theory. "Properly managing and assessing risk requires an understanding of the impact of organizational factors on risk" (Marais, 2005). If we consider that organizations are essentially sets of people grouped together to form a function (in our case education), it follows naturally that part of an effective organization is to manage, control, or mitigate external factors using the resources available. This is a point at which cognitive resource theory and organizational theory intersect. Both trust (leadership) and structure (organizations) are inextricably bound. In a 2002 edition of the *Journal of Homeland Security*, researchers Powely and Nissan studied this very intersection of contingency factors in a threat assessment context (Powley & Nissan, 2012). Their findings are aptly summed up by the title *If You Can't Trust, Stick to Hierarchy*. As applied to school safety however, it stems predominantly from the medical field (Boyko & Alderman, 1990; Neff & Teska, 2016) and law enforcement (Calhoun & Weston, 2003; Ellwood, 2009; O'Toole, 2013). In the medical field, specialists are able to identify factors that predict adverse outcomes for prevention purposes (Shader, 2001). More specifically, they are able to analyze "the interaction of risk factors, the multiplicative effect when several risk factors are present, and how certain protective

factors may work to offset risk factors” (Shader, 2001, p. 11). When applied to school safety, these tools provide valuable, if incomplete, insight. There are many versions of what researchers believe to be a comprehensive list of risk factors, but they intersect at a relatively short list of descriptors. Table 1-2 represents the majority of these factors found throughout the extant literature.

Table 2-1

Risk Factors Extracted from the U.S. Surgeon General’s Report

Domain	Early Onset (age 6-11)	Late Onset (age 12-14)	Protective Factor
Individual	General offenses	General offenses	Intolerant toward deviance
	Substance use	Psychological condition	
	Being male	Restlessness	High IQ
	Aggression **	Difficulty concentrating **	Being female
	Psychological condition	Risk taking	Positive social orientation
	Hyperactivity	Aggression **	Sanctions for transgressions
	Antisocial behavior	Being male	
		Physical violence	
		Crimes against persons	
	Exposure to TV violence	Negative attitudes/beliefs	
Family	Medical, physical	Problem (antisocial) behavior	
	Low IQ	Low IQ	
	Low socioeconomic status	Poor parent-child relations	Supportive adult relationships
		Harsh, lax discipline; poor monitoring, supervision	
	Antisocial parents		
	Poor parent-child relations	Low parental involvement	Parents' positive evaluation of peers
Family	Harsh, lax, or inconsistent discipline	Antisocial parents	
		Broken home	Parental monitoring
	Broken home	Low socioeconomic status/poverty	
	Separation from parents		
	Other conditions	Abusive parents	
	Abusive parents	Other conditions	

Table 2-1. Continued.

Domain	Early Onset (age 6-11)	Late Onset (age 12-14)	Protective Factor
School	Neglect	Family conflict **	
	Poor attitude, performance	Poor attitude, performance	Commitment to school
		Academic failure	Recognition for involvement in conventional activities
Peer Group	Weak social ties	Weak social ties	Friends who engage in conventional behavior

This table provides a model for understanding risk factors for school shootings and is selected for several reasons. It acknowledges and identifies the differences in how risk factors manifest during adolescence at different times. *Protective factors* are included, many of which were present in the lives of school shooters. This model includes peer group, which is often excluded when a particular branch of behavioral science is making a case for a specific hypothesis. In Chapter 4 of the Surgeon General's Report (Office of the Surgeon General, 2001), the authors remind us "To be considered risk factors, they must have both a theoretical rationale and a demonstrated ability to predict violence - essential conditions for a causal relationship". This is further substantiated in earlier works (Earls, 1994; Kraemer et al., 1997; Thornberry, 1998). It is for this reason that almost without exception, the literature on *risk factors* is careful to reiterate correlation over causation ([Office of the Surgeon General], 2001). While of great practical use for the practitioner, this model is not conclusive. Other contributions to the field add depth to our understanding of the phenomenon.

Verlinden et al (2000) established risk factors in school shootings based on similar assumptions about the psychological, social, and contextual conditions preceding an event. Similarly, the FBI report published seven years later (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2007), specifies a number of factors which I believe will be significant in

our research because they remove the emotive tendency to want to blame someone or some entity. They identify instead: leakage, low tolerance for frustration, poor coping skills, lack of resiliency, failed love relationships, the idea of an *injustice collector* (no forgiveness of perceived injustices), and depression as statistically significant in their research. These terms alone seem to unite what we have been able to glean from the primary source literature. The list is long. Add to these the more abstract concepts of narcissism, sense of alienation, dehumanizing others, and lack of empathy. As the list grows, so does our sense that we recognize these people as fully functioning students in our schools. Entitlement, attitude of superiority, the need for attention, externalizing blame, intolerance, strange humor, and manipulation - all contribute to the realization that these are not the solitary, head-bowed victims of our empathic and guilt-ridden perceptions. Any one of the descriptors applies to any one of our students walking the halls daily.

Ioannou, Hammond, and Simpson (2015) published one of the most recent empirical studies for differentiating school shootings. This study explored 40 school shootings and used *Smallest Space Analysis* (SSA) to establish 18 characteristics to sort into themes. Of the risk factors/characteristics, the top five were male, bullied, mental illness, weapon fascination, and loner in order of frequency. The outcome was identification of three themes *disturbed* in 60% of cases (mental illness medication, *rejected* (recent break up suspension expulsion, abuse at home) *in 12.5%* and *focused revenge* (Newman, 2004). Also of statistical significance were fascination with weapons, a violent past, and having planned the activity. Unfortunately, while the methodology and intended outcomes appear to be non-biased, “the findings are based on secondary data and media reports” (Ioannou et al., 2015, p. 197). As a result, the researchers offer a

disclaimer. To the extent that many of the findings appear to contradict previously noted studies, the methodology of this study is limited by its reliance on unauthenticated data. It comes as no surprise therefore that characteristics, risk factors, and typologies in more recent publications, claim that events have been inaccurately reported in the media. Goforth (2016) goes so far as to call the majority of the preceding data *a myth*.

One might put shooter profiles in the category of myth also, since there is nothing to authenticate any one particular portrait of those who commit rampage shootings, both in and out of schools. Profiling has a high incidence of over identification/false positive (Sewell & Mendelsohn, 2000). The best cautionary words come directly from those who have developed such profiles, i.e. The United States Secret Service (Vossekuil et al., 2004). There has emerged however an interesting field of study around social media and school shooters. Newman, Assaf, Cohen, & Knoll (2015) studied the texts of six school shooters as compared to 6,056 comparisons. They used an automatic text-based analysis system not dissimilar to the ones used for sex offenders. This employs the use of vectorial semantics by analyzing the frequency and placement of words. Their study found that shooters scored significantly higher on *narcissistic*, *humiliated*, and *revengeful* personality dimensions. They conclude this may have a future application in screening students' social media (p. 4) for the purposes of identifying another potential risk factor.

Despite the proliferation of literature on risk factors, some studies on school based rampage shootings found that many factors normally considered *protective* were also present. Shooters were from two parent intact families, the students were successful academically, and contrary to popular media belief, they were not loners at all. One study also found enough differences between the inner city cases and rural/suburban cases to separate their typology. In the inner city examples, there was a specific grievance

between individuals. In the latter the perpetrators felt aggrieved over more abstract and non-specific issues (National Research Council, 2003). It would be an understatement to conclude that the literature is contradictory around the significance of risk factors, threat assessment, and potential adverse outcomes of over simplifying a highly complex phenomenon. The Surgeon General offers substantive cautions (Office of the Surgeon General, 2001). He states in part that single risk factors cannot predict violence. Garmezy (1985) reminds us to make full use of protective factors. Both Rutter (1985) and Werner and Smith (1982) stress the importance of resiliency as a buffer to risk factors. While these studies are now almost thirty years old, their wisdom is timeless. In an updated version a decade later, Werner and Smith (1992) still maintain that protective factors have the power to cushion high risk youth from engaging in criminal activity. The OSG report further cautions that risk factors derived from group studies cannot be used to predict behaviors of individuals. In addition, even youth identified with multiple risk factors do not always become violent (Farrington, 1997; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1995) offers additional positive implications for schools:

“The findings about resilience are very encouraging, indicating that malleable factors that reduce violence exist and provide opportunities for intervention efforts” (p. 80). Some risk factors however (such as being a male) are not candidates for intervention (Earls, 1994). In addition to being male, Hawkins, Laub, and Lauritsen (1998) offer a range of additional factors such as race, poverty, and ethnicity, which defy intervention. Clearly then, risk factor studies based on white males therefore have limited predictive value for varied ethnicities and girls. Kraemer et al., (1997) offer this succinct summary: “Terms such as risk, risk factors, and especially the term cause are inconsistently and imprecisely

used, fostering scientific miscommunication and misleading research and policy” (p. 337).

Despite the limitations, organizations and professionals establish threat assessments from these risk factors. The process for validating the relative significance of each risk factor is surprisingly linear and is viewed by some as a *pathway* to violence. (Vossekuil et al., 2004). This pathway, according to the U.S. Secret Service model, moves from *ideation*, to *planning*, to *preparation* and eventually to *implementation* if no intervention is initiated. One factor in this theory that is worthy of its own consideration is *leakage*.

Leakage: Breaking the code of silence. “Leakage, in the context of threat assessment, is the communication to a third party of intent to do harm to a target” (Reid & O’Toole, 2011, para. 1). More specifically, “a student intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes, or intentions that may signal an impending violent act. These clues could take the form of subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions, or ultimatums. Clues could be spoken or conveyed in stories, diaries, essays, poems, letters, songs, drawings, doodles, tattoos, or videos” (p. 14). While this description is comprehensive for its time (Reid & O’Toole, 2011), more recent definitions have been updated to reflect the prolific use of “electronic media letters, diaries, emails, voicemails, blogs, journals, internet postings, tweets, text messages, video postings, and future means of social communication that are yet to be invented” (Meloy & O’Toole, 2011). Leakage is therefore a frequently referenced subject in the literature which seeks preventative solutions (Miller, Hess, & Orthmann, 2014). The findings in this study highlight the importance of leakage as a possible tool. This is further validated in the recently thwarted attack in Indiana where leakage resulted in someone notifying the authorities of what was about to happen. The Federal Commission Report also supports

this approach by asserting that prior to most attacks, other students had concerns about the attacker yet did not report what they knew.

Other warning signs exist which Meloy and O'Toole categorized as *pathway* behaviors which are acts of preparation (Calhoun & Weston, 2003). An additional preemptive warning sign is *fixation*, whereby an individual perseverates on an issue or person. Mullen, et al. (2009) defined it in clinical terms as a *pathological preoccupation*. A somewhat less prevalent, but by no means less significant theme is that of *identification* with a warrior mentality or "as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system" (Meloy & O'Toole, 2011). Other more nebulous indicators such as *novel behavior* and *uncharacteristic energy* are also listed, but would be very hard to separate from normal teenager fluctuations in demeanor. As with many attempts to categorize relevant factors in school shootings, there is inconsistency in terminology surrounding what leakage actually looks like. Scant studies of convenience and a substantial lack of interrater reliability means that 'leakage' in and of itself is difficult to quantify, but is explored more as part of this research in the need to break the code of silence which exists. Some of the literature suggests that both leakage and pathway behaviors were highly significant in the cases of both Columbine and Red Lake. In the latter, the evidence was substantial enough to result in the prosecution of an alleged conspirator (Morewitz, 2008). The possible reasons that leakage occurs are so wide that it would be difficult to identify a pattern given the low frequency of school shootings, but again, it may be a beneficial line of research for those more focused on the perpetrator than the school leader. Meloy and O'Toole (2011) identify *excitement, power, fear, intimidation, attention, anxiety, inability to contain emotions, desire to be memorialized, pride,*

narcissism, and *martyrdom* as potential motivators. What is strikingly significant in terms of its relevance to school leaders, is that the research does NOT identify leakage as an act of remorse or desire to be stopped, as we may wish to believe (Meloy & O'Toole, 2011). The implications of this for the practitioner are huge as supported in our data. If there is negligible chance of eliciting remorse or future oriented thinking, there is an equally negligible chance the event can be stopped, once started. This leads us naturally to a consideration of suicide as a theme. The nexus is that school shooters are presumed to be suicidal and the research tends to support that assumption. Anthony Preti introduced a term to describe this: *suicide with hostile intent* (Preti, 2006). In an extremely narrow, almost fictional analysis, McGee and DeBernardo (1999) refer to these individuals as *classroom avengers*, a term which I believe sensationalizes the perpetrator as though his actions were somehow honorable. In their conclusions, the authors readily admit that their study lacks *crucially important data sources* such as interviews, forensic test results, and crime scene photos.

The Scholar-Practitioner Conundrum

Clearly then, not all risk factors are created equal. As the following study will show, many factors explored in the literature have limited application for the practitioner. There are however common interpersonal, psychological, and logistical factors which emerge as significant in the transition to prevention, preparedness, and response. While many of the preceding references are speculative in nature, one extant document warrants an in depth consideration of its own because it speaks directly to the purpose of this study. Beginning in 1999, the United States Secret Service worked in conjunction with the United States Department of Education on the Safe Schools Initiative. Their study was designed to answer two very specific questions: Could we have known these attacks

were being planned? and “What can be done to prevent future attacks from occurring?” (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. i). This study specifically cites the events of Littleton CO, Springfield OR, West Paducah KY, and Jonesboro AR, as being central to the data collection. These attacks all occurred within a very short time-span and resulted in an elevated sense of urgency among policy makers, practitioners, and researchers alike to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of a school shooting. There were 37 incidents between 1974 and 2000 included in the study. The findings acknowledge in the introduction that while their data provides insight as to pre-attack behaviors, it does not profess to offer simple solutions to prevent school shootings. In its simplest form, the “objective of *the Safe Schools Initiative* was to attempt to identify information that could be obtainable, or ‘knowable,’ prior to an attack.” (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 3). Because the study was not created to further any particular theory, it has since provided a knowledge base from which many policies and strategies for prevention, mitigation, and response have been created and refined in the seventeen years since its publication. Of particular note, the concept of threat assessment has been extensively incorporated in scholarly research and has deeply influenced recommendations coming from the social sciences. An *Interim Report* (Safe Schools Initiative, 2000) by the same organization was based on early data and published in 2002 (Fein et al., 2002). It was designed for use by school leaders, law enforcement officers, and mental health professionals in forming policy and practice around creating safe school climates. Specifically the guide “provides suggestions for approaches schools can adopt to foster school environments that reduce threats of targeted violence” (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 6). In terms of methodology, this particular study references only primary source materials to include mental health records, school records, court documents, and investigative reports, rather than a heavy reliance in other extant literature on media and third party accounts. Coded

items in the data analysis include the attacker’s development of a plan or idea, target selection, demographics, motives (if known), communication records, psychological / health history, family dynamics and school performance. Outlier information or themes occurring in less than 50% of the 37 cases were excluded from conclusions, but were noted when the absence of an item was thought to be significant. The study presented ten key findings culminating in the statement that “there is no accurate or ‘useful’ profile of students who engaged in targeted school violence” (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 11). I have sorted the remaining nine findings into categories that might inform policy and practice and are further explored in Chapter 4:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Interpersonal: | There was prior leakage of information |
| | Others were aware of concerning behaviors prior to the event |
| | Other students were involved in many but not all cases |
| | No prior direct threat/warning was made to the victim |
| Logistical: | Attacker had access to weapons |
| | Law enforcement were rarely engaged in ending the assault |
| Psychological: | Low coping skills to deal with failure or loss (84%) |
| | Attacker felt victimized and there was a detailed planning process – not impulsive |

Other findings of use for further study include the fact that *the majority or all* of school shooters in the study killed more than one person, attacked during the school day, used a gun, were current students rather than former, were males, had a prior grievance with at least one victim, and acted alone. Statistically less significant (in approximately

half the incidents), a school employee was included as a target as were specific students. In the final victim count however, more than half were not students pre-selected as targets, and more than a third were school employees.

It would appear with the data provided that a profile would have emerged, yet the authors are clear in their explanation as to why that is not the case. Interestingly, the only consistent characteristic is that of gender and yet at time of writing there have been at least two reports of potential female rampage shooters openly expressing their desire to be the first female shooter. In Randor PA, a 17 year old was arrested for planning an attack on her high school (ABC Action News, 2014). More recently, a Maryland teen claimed similar intent (Levenson, 2017). Despite the common perception that all school shootings are carried out by Caucasians, the study included Asian, African-American, Native Alaskan, Hispanic, and Native Americans among their perpetrators. Most, but not all lived with in-tact two parent families at the time of the incident, school performance (both academically and behaviorally), was statistically insignificant and social relationships covered the entire spectrum from isolated to very popular.

Not surprisingly, the study did find a high occurrence of perpetrators who claim to have experienced bullying, persecution, or injury from others. There was evidence in some but not all incidents to substantiate the claim. One statistic which refutes much of the behavioral science research is that of mental health history. In this study only a third had ever had an evaluation for mental health, only a quarter had any history at all of substance or alcohol abuse, less than 10% had a record of psychiatric medication noncompliance, and yet slightly more than half (61%) “had a documented history of feeling extremely depressed or desperate” (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 22).

Entertainment, movies, music, and games are often on the blame line for teen violence, but this study found only 59% of the attackers expressed an interest in media violence (but not a similar platform across subjects) and the majority had no violent history or arrest record. As a cohesive and comprehensive study, the report offers threat assessment as a ‘promising strategy for preventing school violence’. Updated studies using the same criteria for the period 2004 – 2018 would provide useful insight as to whether these findings remain constant in more recent times and whether the model for threat assessment is a plausible and sustainable tool for violence prevention in our schools.

Outlier Theories

With a phenomenon as contemporary as school shootings, much of the scholarly literature is speculative by virtue of the very tenets which make it difficult to study. It is low incidence and the quantitative data from which studies emerge are rarely up to date. This means that even serious efforts to understand the problem are gleaned from disparate sources. In many cases they are writings on the periphery of research but are nevertheless ideas which shape our perceptions and versions of reality. A proliferation of literature points to other societal issues for proximal causation of school shootings. Many are anecdotal at best. Fast (2008, 2009) refers to school shootings as *cleansing ceremonial cathartic* rituals akin to Satanism, and Voodoo. He links the frequency with which school shooters commit suicide to ancient patterns of revenge – suicidal ceremonies. This outlier theory is supported in part by Preti (2006) who contends that research has largely ignored the ritualist desire for ‘cultural recognition’. Surprisingly, Bachman, Randolph, and Brown (2011) reference school shootings in their work on *race* in which they examined fear between black and white students in inner cities. The

connection between these fears and shootings was implied but largely unsupported by the data if we look at incidents beyond urban settings. Harvey Yoder (2007) framed the Amish shooting at Nickel Mines through a religious lens, centered on societal lessons of forgiveness. While not considered peer reviewed scholarly works, these feature in our collective understanding and as such cannot be completely ignored because “We know the world by the stories we are told about it” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 199).

On the same day as the Sandy Hook shootings, *Education Week* offered a listing of nine of their most recent perspectives on school shootings from the post-Columbine era (Wicker, 2012) which are frequently rife with hyperbole and misinformation. Much of the available literature recount compelling stories from those connected to the events, whether or not their stories can be validated by facts Hasday (2012) authored a number of such accounts and even geared them toward teen readers. While prolific, such works contribute emotion and depth but are problematic in shaping research or informing best practice. Some compelling personal accounts are from victims such as Missy Jenkins who was paralyzed in the 1997 Heath High School shooting in Paducah, KY. Such stories are a testament to many things, not least the resilience of victims (Jenkins & Croyle, 2008). As recently as February of 2017, Sue Klebold authored *A Mother's Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy* (Klebold & Solomon, 2017). There is clearly no denying the impact of personal accounts of those at the center of the incident. On the cover of the Klebold's book, a *New York Times* Reviewer is quoted: “What could a parent have done to prevent this tragedy? She earns our pity, our empathy, and often our admiration; and yet the book's ultimate purpose is to serve as a cautionary tale, not exoneration”. Lunsford (2012) published an anthology of essays written by community members affected by Hurricane Katrina, Sept. 11, the mass shootings at Columbine High

School and Virginia Tech. The essays speak to what the authors believe has and hasn't worked for their communities and why. Again, it has limited application but does include one of the principal's essays on leadership after a tragedy. A 2015 reflection on the Arkansas shooting is aptly entitled *The ghosts of Jonesboro: Fifteen Years After a School Shooting, a Small Town is Still Recovering*. The book includes a series of interviews with those touched by the tragedy and their lives since the 1998 shooting. In a piece posted on an independent news feed, Suzann Wilson, a mother of one of the victims stated that at first everybody was horrified and they couldn't do enough, but later wanted to remove the memory as though it were an ugly spot on the town (Peisner, 2013).

Far less connected in real-time to these tragic events are attempts by reporters to author books on the subject. Lysiack (2013), a newspaper writer, attempted to tell the story of Newtown but focused largely on the incapacity of our mental health care system to care for the shooter. His is an example of the many works that attempt to identify causes and assign blame, written by those with little to no empirical research acumen. Notwithstanding the more trivial media accounts, the personal stories do aid the researcher to ground the work in context and allow us to know the phenomenon *'by the stories we are told about it.'*

Contagion (copycat). A glimpse into school shootings within the realm of organizational theory would be incomplete without consideration of the *copycat* phenomenon. This is certainly the view of our participant who stated multiple times "If there had not been a Heath, there would not have been a Columbine" (Bill Bond).

Theoretical perspectives are varied with regard to this concept. It can be viewed through the behavioral science lens as *imitation*, rendering it both biological and psychological. The social *contagion factor* positions it within sociology and the

application of *social learning theory (SLT)*. SLT is a theory of how human behavior is learned and bound by context (Surette, 2016). For simplicity, the term refers to a crime for which there is evidence it is related to one previously reported in the media. More specifically, it includes four components: a *generator crime* which is the original event, one or more *criminogenic models* (the media representation(s), the *copycat criminal* who is influenced by the criminogenic dynamic, and lastly the *copycat crime* (Surette, 2016). It is therefore a plausible assumption that media clearly has a serious correlational (but not necessarily causal) relationship with this phenomenon: Once ‘infected’ with elaborated stories of a shooting from media coverage, some data show that a person is statistically more likely to commit a similar crime (Smart, 2015). The copycat phenomenon was widely blamed for the rash of shootings in the 1990’s (Fox & Burstein, 2010; Sullivan & Guerette, 2003) and media coverage was prolific. I underestimated the power of this phenomenon in crafting my research, and hope to conduct more in depth studies in this arena at the conclusion of this study.

Surprisingly, the first empirical study using a contagion model for school shootings was not actually published until 2015, which is surprisingly delayed considering the media attention given to the subject. (Towers, Gomez-Lievano, Khan, Mubayi, & Castillo-Chavez, 2015). Jack Levin, a criminologist, told CNN news “It’s the excessive media attention that creates the copycat phenomenon. We make celebrities out of monsters” (Smart, 2015). Our findings support this theory.

A prolific contributor to the field of research, FBI Agent Mary O’Toole, believes that shootings which receive intense media attention can generate threats or copycat violence elsewhere. “Copycat behavior is very common, in fact. Anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that threats increase in schools nationwide after a shooting has

occurred anywhere in the United States” (O’Toole, 2013, p. 23). I was surprised to learn that shortly following the shooting in our case study, serious and tangible threats were made toward the same school, but were mitigated and yet not widely reported.

Clearly the concept of copycat crimes is not new. Some records indicate it was first used with reference to Jack the Ripper as early as the turn of the 19th century, but there are again, only anecdotal accounts to that effect. The first record I could locate was a 1961 article in The New York Times which reads: “*When Crime Comes in Waves, Simple Imitation Plays a Large Part in the Phenomenon*” (Dressler, 1961). Coleman (2004) states emphatically that the copycat effect is undeniable, and Andre Simons of the FBI’s Behavioral Analysis Unit appears to support this claim. “As more and more notable and tragic events occur, we think we’re seeing more compromised, marginalized individuals who are seeking inspiration from those past attacks.” (Dipaola, 2014). The term *copycat* is merely a euphemism for the more scientific term *contagion effect* which has been a subject for discourse among scholars for decades. In a 1973 study, researchers Ritterband and Silberstein (1973) attempted a mixed methods study to differentiate between disturbing school events of contagion and those which were heterogeneous. In 1980, an integrative study was conducted which elucidates the media’s role in shaping society and influencing behavioral patterns (Comstock, 1980). While the work predates the rash of school shootings in the 1990’s, it provides a glimpse into the potential risk factors which would only later become evident. At the onset of this study, I was ambivalent on contagion and copycat but the data will show I was mistaken and the phenomenon is one which needs to be given greater attention.

The Leader at Work: Prevention, Preparedness, and Response

For any of the social sciences research, or personal accounts of the phenomenon to be of value to the study, there comes a point for the scholar-practitioner where we must consider the “So what?” This is addressed in the highly robust prevention, preparedness, and response literature –sourced from both theory and practice. In the same sense that waterfalls do not originate half way down, neither does the literature designed for practitioners. While it begins with threat assessment, this concept is sourced from risk factors developed from the social sciences. Using the risk factors, professionals in all fields (law enforcement, mental health, education, and community) establish the threat assessment from which to craft policies for prevention, preparedness and response.

Threat assessment. Reeves, Kanan and Plog (2010) created the *M-PHAT Approach*, which is an acronym for *Multi-Phase, Hazard, Agency, and Tier* (p. 8). This exceptionally comprehensive guide addresses both physical and psychological safety through a three-tiered system of universal, targeted, and intensive practices. These in turn are carefully applied to guide mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and response.

Kano & Bourque (2008) included school principals as a key element of their recommendations but the document is context bound. Literature generated in the last decade has become more inclusive of school personnel as part of threat assessment (Ellwood, 2009), and more comprehensive tools have emerged which triangulate personality, family, and social dynamics as part of the process (O’Toole, 2013). A continuing theme however, is that of not over compensating for the horrors of the true potential risk. Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, and Jimerson, (2010) propose a more cautious approach to threat assessment so as not to promote wrong impressions of schools being unsafe: “Exaggerated perceptions of risk can lead to inefficient or

ineffective policies such as zero tolerance that do little to create a sustainably safe and secure learning environment” (p. 34). Saltmarsh, Robinson, and Davis (2012) go so far as to say that such policies are not simply ineffective but detrimental. Their work explores power dynamics in our schools and they describe a Foucauldian relationship at work: “not as something ‘held’ by some and ‘wielded’ over others, but rather as circulating between....social relations” (p. 2). To the extent that video monitoring, police presence, and secure entries can be seen to imply a power imbalance (Mayer & Leone, 1999), this question was incorporated into our interviews. The principal stated “You will never feel better than before you went through a metal detector”. His interview data align with a different mindset in which it is relationships and not equipment which contribute to a safe school. It cannot be ignored however that organizations may be failing to recognize opportunities for intervention. One of the more comprehensive programs (PREPaRE) makes use of empirical data provided by the 2013 U.S. Department of Education report on school safety prepared by Roberts, Kemp, Rathburn, Morgan, and Snyder, (2013) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2008). From this datum, the program draws heavily on the National Incident Management System (NIMS, 2016) and integrates the Incident Command System (ICS) into its curriculum (Brock, 2011). What sets this system apart from locally developed protocols is that it is universally known. It is the one system that all first responders, regardless of location or incident type, know and can implement immediately. The Incident Command System depends heavily on consistent terminology, clearly identified roles, and a unified chain of command that can be adjusted among attending agencies according to need. Examples tailored for use by specific entities are readily available (Banerjee & Gillespie, 1994) (Federal Emergency Management Agency, Emergency Management Institute and the U.S. Department of Education [FEMA], Rev

2017). From a leadership and organizational theory perspective, there is an interesting component of this system. Several years ago the district in which I worked was undergoing extensive re-training in the model. Our campus had served as a shelter during the latest hurricane and it was a timely review. In the ICS model, the Incident Commander (IC) is generally presumed to be the school leader. However, just as situational leadership and contingency theory allow for an adjustment to the dynamic, we came to see that on our campus, that may not be the right person for the job. The position requires that the IC remain in the Command Center at all times and is not permitted to leave to attend to whatever the crisis might be. That function belongs to a different person on the team. We were quickly made aware that would not work for us. During our simulation, the trainer identified the crisis, the IC team was assembled, and I attempted to leave the room to attend to the incident. The trainer intercepted me: “Where do you think you are going?” I, being the principal, wanted to leave the Command Center to go to the site of the crisis. I was quickly reminded that this action would violate the protocol. We had to reassign that role because we all knew that it would be against my innate character to stay put. This serves as an example that leadership behaviors are to a certain extent bound by the organizational structure, but are also impacted by the traits of the leaders. In the foreword to a comprehensive manual on Incident Command, Reeves et al. (2010) make the case for the scholar-practitioner in so much as we must intentionally build our capacity to translate empirical knowledge into best practices.

There exists a myriad of more locally developed protocols, many of which are written by practitioners for practitioners. One study compared protocols used in 280 Virginia schools and found a significantly different outcome based on which one was selected. Schools using the Virginia threat assessment based on Cornell & Sheras’

Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence (2006) reported “less bullying, greater willingness to seek help, and more positive perceptions of school climate” (Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, & Fan, 2009, p. 126). This is intriguing datum which loses some of its luster when we recognize that the article is authored by the same people that created the assessment tool. While it does not definitively negate the findings, it calls into question an element of researcher bias. Other literature which targets practitioners is helpful, but for the most part, not grounded in theory or empirical data (Sharp, 2009; Lubrun; 2009). Some less linear models have been suggested using such terms as *dynamic responsiveness to crisis* with varying degrees of success depending on for whom the study was created and who is doing the reporting (Liou, 2015). Despite the many ambiguities around which research yields the best information for practitioners, there exists a wealth of high quality protocols accessible in digital, printed, and interactive form at the Texas School Safety Center website (<https://txssc.txstate.edu/>) which address prevention, preparedness, and response to crisis.

Integrated Theoretical Framework

This study examines the school shooting from a leadership perspective. However, it would be impossible to separate the thoughts, actions, and responses of the principal from the organization in which the shooting occurred. To illustrate this point, figure 3 in Chapter 1 organizes leadership theories into categories according to their dominant features: interactive, relational, independent, and contextual. I posit that with the single exception of the independent theories, all others are greatly impacted by design, policies, protocols, and practices. Hatch (2006) differentiates between four approaches to the study of organizations. A *modernist* viewpoint examines the environment, *post-modernism* emphasizes the formal structures and institutional practices, and the *symbolic interpretive*

approach studies the culture meaning and interactions within the organization. In looking at schools through the lens of organizational theory, we must consider the physical plan and the systems in place to manage it, as well as the actions of the principal. This section is therefore intended to explain the tenets of organizational theory to include goals, structure, culture, and context (Bush, 2015, p. 36) to the extent that they impact school safety.

Substantial research has been conducted around creating safe spaces where the design of the buildings creates its own informal social control. The concept was formalized by Newman in the 1970's relative to urban planning rather than schools (Newman, 1972). The concepts were later applied to school architecture to where considerable attention is given to safety in designing schools (Bosch, 2006; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Johnson, 2014; Mayer & Leone, 1999; Plank, Bradshaw, & Young, 2009). The surge of safety measures and building modifications in the two decades since our case study speaks to the urgency placed on the threat of a school shooting (Floreno, 2009; Lowe, 2014).

While greater attention to building safety may seem a logical approach, there exists a strain of literature which refutes the efficacy of these efforts. There have even been studies where efforts to put preventative measures in place have been vilified. The concept of law enforcement and cameras in schools is the subject of a scathing study by Addington (2009) who is diametrically opposed to most security/law enforcement measures, and the presence of officers and school resource officers (SRO's) in the school setting. Indeed, while school remains one of the safest places on earth for children to be, it remains a frequent target in the blame game. This hotly debated concept is explored during our interviews.

If we accept that structurally, schools are being modified or designed for improved safety, what then of the systems and policies within the walls? Many of the available data stem from self-reporting mechanisms around discipline. Unfortunately those data are frequently marred by bias from school leaders fearful of repercussions when numbers are high (Bradshaw, Milam, Furr-Holden, & Johnson, 2015). School crime reporting statistics at the governmental level are therefore notoriously unreliable. Many factors converge to make this so. The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 was a U.S. Act of Congress which reauthorized the 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* and included Title I funding provisions for disadvantaged students. Some components of its replacement, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) enacted by President Obama in 2015 were radically changed, but marginalized groups remained at the forefront of the provisions. Problematic in both versions, the requirement to report campus crime resulted in labels which differed from state to state. They depend on the self-reporting previously mentioned. The criteria for being named a *persistently dangerous school* are so varied as to be incomparable (Gastic & Gasiewski, 2017). Not surprisingly, schools allegedly misreport, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Additionally, school officials are not trained in law enforcement and therefore frequently mislabel events (notably *assault*, *harassment*, and *threat* based on personal experience working with k-12 schools). There is also ambiguity over jurisdiction (on/off campus/school related events/ boundaries for fights etc.). This is an unintended consequence based on fear of negative outcomes when labeled by the federal government as *persistently dangerous*. Our primary participant became a safety consultant for the National Association of Secondary School Principals upon his retirement from Heath High School. In one interview, he told *Education Week* that the NCLB law's current language of *persistently dangerous* "punished schools with a

degrading term, but didn't really achieve any objective of changing the environment of the school" (Klein, 2007, p. 20).

In my own experiences as an administrator, it was difficult to differentiate to employees, parents and students the subtle nuances of direct threat, indirect threat, veiled threat, and conditional threat (Miller et al., 2014, p. 368). This makes it very difficult for school personnel to predict or mitigate a potential shooting. I remember clearly being reminded by a school police officer that a parent's angry outburst to me was only conditional. "If you don't let my f---ing son out of suspension I will break your f-----ing neck, bitch". Evidently, the parent had given me a choice (rescind the suspension), rendering the threat only conditional.

Safer buildings are a concrete effort by policy makers and organizations to mitigate violence, but clearly the policies and practices are equally important. Schools are accused in the literature of developing policies from which the wrong social dynamic evolves by reinforcing "exclusion and hostility" (Wike & Fraser, 2009, p. 163). In some instances the nature of school as a competitive environment is blamed for issues of power and personal identity which contribute to the risk factors associated with school shootings (Thompson & Kyle, 2005).

In alignment with the purpose of this study, Brickman, Jones, and Groom (2004) explored threat assessment and school safety from the role and perspective of school leaders. Their work highlights the concept of *environmental scanning* which could be loosely defined as an acute awareness of exactly what is going on in and around school, both literally, and with regard school climate. One stakeholder in the study advocated that all school personnel should make this a daily priority. I posit however that this adds another layer of complexity, rightly or wrongly, to time and purpose. The necessity to

mitigate crisis is a huge challenge to leaders as they go about the role of being an instructional leader in their schools. Its complexity however, should not be allowed to negate its necessity. In a timely book following the run of school shootings in the 1990's, Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2001) caution that "inadequate pre-crisis communication increases the probability that a crisis event will be surprising, that precautions will be inadequate, and that serious harm will occur" to the organization (p. 158). A doctoral dissertation by Albert Fein (2001) and his subsequent book: *There and Back Again* (2003) examines in depth the effects a school shooting has on school leaders. It is the only one I could locate with this degree of specificity. His methodology is not dissimilar to this study except that it was forced to rely frequently on interviews with several degrees of separation from the actual shooting. Organizational theorists recognize the challenge of putting boundaries around the many contextual variables, but it is potentially through CRT that leaders must respond to each unique set of circumstances in order to adequately lead, regardless of the context (Bush, 2015).

Allen, Cornell, and Sheras, (2008) consider the responses of *all* campus personnel since it is the interaction of members of an organization which determine outcomes. Drabek and McEntire (2002) take the macro view of how multiorganizational coordination is critical in crisis situation, and their conclusion supports the significance of this research. "There has never been a greater need to understand human behavior and more effectively coordinate response to disaster" (p. 215).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to organize and synthesize what is readily available in the extant literature. The delineation of one field of study from another is not always apparent because to over compartmentalize it would have rendered it unrecognizable. The

empirical studies, media accounts, and scholarly articles referenced in this chapter focus specifically on safety as a multi-faceted phenomenon. They attempt the complex task of identifying “enduring underlying causal relationships (generative mechanisms) that lie beyond common experience” (Johnston & Smith, 2010, p. 29). These theories, largely unchanged for the past decade, are still used to drive policy, practice, priority, and expenditure in schools.

In terms of the gaps, what struck me most about the extensive literature available and the prevalence of behavioral science studies is that I was unable to locate (with any degree of credibility) a null hypothesis. “There is little systematic knowledge about variables and interventions that do not work” (Wilson, 2016, p. 13).

With the exception of Fein’s doctoral dissertation and book, there is negligible first order data on a school shooting from start to finish from the perspective of a school leader. It is an unfathomable experience with huge implications for organizational or leadership practice. What the literature does is to tie an all-encompassing bow around it. “The social imagery of schooling, gender, postmodern media, state power and consumer capitalism” (Shuffleton, 2015, p. 369), and yet leaves us no universal promise of a better time to come in our understanding of school shootings. At the conclusion of the literature review thus far, it became necessary to revisit the research questions. Things I assumed to be available in existing literature were not evident and yet the vast majority of what was available ultimately focused on causation and not the responsibilities actions and responses of the leaders. How then are they to know how to be?

This is by no means a complete review of literature. It encompasses work beyond peer reviewed research because for the most part, even in the scholarly works, the sources were not always able to be authenticated (Lichtman, 2013). I make no apology for the inclusion of news stories, personal accounts, and grey literature as secondary sources.

While these sources may be ephemeral, they are inherently “more inclusionary than standard peer-reviewed and commercially published works” (Jones, 2004, p. 99). It left room to “maintain an openness that is precluded by a priori review and prevents [me] from going down a path already known” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 173).

III. METHODOLOGY

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest: second by imitation, which is easiest: and third by experience, which is the bitterest.”

-Confucius

Epistemological Underpinnings

Critical realism may seem a complicated approach to the phenomenon of school safety, but it provides a framework which holds the methodology true to the following dichotomy: there is the reality of having experienced an active shooter in school, but there are also the values, perceptions, and judgments generated by the lived experience. There exists “an ontological gap between what we experience and what we understand, what really happens - and most important – the deep dimension where the mechanisms are which produce the events” (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobson, & Karlsson, 2002, p. 39). In essence, it gives participants the freedom to say ‘It is what is it – an active shooter fractured the very fiber of all that we hold dear. Now let me add my voice to the collective experience so that you may better understand’.

School leaders who have experienced shootings tell me they are frequently interviewed and asked the same questions, “Why do you think he did it?” “What could you have done to stop him?” The focus is clearly on the perpetrator. Leaders are rarely asked to reflect on the experience in a way that does not demand speculation or causation. In response to these experiences, the theoretical framework of critical realism pays no homage to the perpetrator. The study was designed to allow space for participants to make sense of their experiences in a way which may be shared to serve the scholar practitioner. Critical Realist Bhaskar is concerned with *emancipatory social practice*. “For him the world cannot be changed rationally unless it is interpreted adequately”

(Corson, 1991, p. 223). In order to interpret these events adequately we must build on the body of knowledge directly from the source, rather than filtered through the media and public perception.

Case Study Approach and Data Sources

A case study approach enabled me to explore the phenomenon of leadership in crisis. Triangulated data allowed for repeated deconstruction and reconstruction so as to examine the phenomenon in depth, develop theory, and eventually inform practice (Yin 2003). Summarily, I maintain that context and decision-making in crisis are inextricably bound, though it is equally possible that at times, they function independently of one another. By using a single exploratory case study, the resulting data are intentionally bound, detailed, and in-depth, creating a clear opportunity to question old theoretical relationships and explore new ones (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Hyatt, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Thomas, 2011). Ultimately, the depth of data allowed reliable focus on the research questions as compared to the extant literature and existing data (Solberg, Soilen & Huber, 2006). These relationships naturally form subunits within the larger case (Yin 2003), and thereby produce supporting material to guide discussion about a highly significant problem for school leaders.

The primary source of data comprises extensive interviews with a principal, Bill Bond, who has experienced a tragic school shooting. It matters to the authenticity of the results that this research was conducted with a primary source subject in an environment that is relevant. In order to adhere to an ethics of care, the researcher demonstrated a substantial travel commitment of time and resources as a way to demonstrate appreciation. It was therefore intentional that these interviews were primarily conducted in Paducah, KY with follow up interviews via phone, and email. This research design is

not well represented in the extant literature, rendering it a unique contribution to the phenomenon under investigation. There is no example of a school shooting case study in the research which reflects adherence to the participant as a co-researcher. Similar studies were often conducted remotely, involved third party participants, or were events which do not fit our criteria. To that end, Bill Bond meets the definition as a co-researcher. Articles abound around this concept. Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Marshall and Rossman, (2011), and Yin (2003) posit this enables the researcher to be able to predict similar results across cases. I originally hypothesized that this would not be the case given the unique frequency and disparities of the phenomenon. However, with the increased number of shootings which have occurred this year, I now believe the data highlight a number of significant factors regarding all three legs of the phenomenon: prevention, preparedness, and response. At the very least, the findings provide direction for further investigation (Stake, 2010).

The case study design was iterative and centered on nine semi-structured interviews with the school leader, and five interviews with additional adult stakeholders who were able to speak to the leadership of the principal and/or the organizational culture of the school around the school shooting. Spicer (1976) maintains the researcher has a responsibility to gather data “directly from the people engaged in the making of a given policy and those on whom the policy impinges” (p. 341). Since policy and practice most definitely impinge on all school stakeholders (as well as the personal lives of those involved), the additional stakeholders are described in Table 3-1. All participants interviewed agreed to use their names. These include the principal’s spouse, Linda who was interviewed in person, a former student, April who was in attendance when the shooting occurred, an employee, Terri, the school librarian who

was present and assisted at the shooting, a parent/board member, Randy, who was called to the scene immediately following the shooting, and a victim, Hollan who was shot in the head but survived.

Table 3-1

Table of Participants Interviewed

Name	Age	Role	Type/ Number of Interviews
Bill Bond	72	Principal	In person / 9
Linda	72	Spouse	In person/ 3
Terri	51	Teacher	Phone / email 3
Randy	62	Board member/parent	Phone / email 3
April	32	Student	Email / 1
Hollan	32	Victim	Email; LinkedIn® messaging / 2

Additional sources of data included:

1. Field observations of the school and community. These were pivotal in providing context and enabled me to view past events as having a lasting impact.
2. Archival documents available to the public including newspaper clippings, online reporting, newscasts, and oral histories in the local library. These documents addressed not only the shooting itself but policy/program implementation related to school safety prior to and after the school shooting.
3. Researcher journal in which I recorded my own thoughts and reflections over the course of the study.

Table 3-2 provides a rationale for the methods selected. By carefully considering the challenges inherent with single case study field work, this table provided a means to ensure the data was valid and representative of the whole story.

Table 3-2

Strengths and Challenges to Exploratory Design

Interviews/transcripts	Safeguards	Field notes/memos	Archives/Documents	Safeguards
Precisely targeted		Created in situ	Stable	
Provide clear representation of perceptions, attitudes and meanings		Guided by the participants responses	Not created as a result of the study	
Sometimes poorly articulated	Participants were responsive, expressive, and articulate.	Reflective of setting	Specificity as to names and details	
Possible responder bias	Breadth of the respondent who has attended 15 major school shootings	Allowed for organization of data in real time	Access	Archives readily available
Reflexivity	Participants were committed to telling their story Responses were authentic.	Opportunity to identify and explore emerging themes	Broad, longitudinal perspective	

Interviews

The interviews constituted the cornerstone of the data collection process in this case study. I originally believed that the data I received would only be as good as the questions I asked. In this I was mistaken and opted instead to allow the participants to tell

their story rather than the one I imagined for them. The interview questions themselves are not the same thing as research questions, they are a vehicle to arrive at an understanding of the phenomenon. For this reason, they were not rigidly structured, but deviated further than I had planned in the initial interviews. However, by using the checklist (Appendix C), I was able to ascertain that eventually all pertinent questions were addressed. The protocols used for the principal interviews were very detailed and intentionally designed to elicit increasing depth of reflection (Appendices D-M). The single protocol used for additional stakeholders was more generalized since each experienced the shooting in a very different way. The parents, students, staff and board member were specifically asked to describe their experience. The questions offered the flexibility to reflect on the organizational response, the leadership of the principal, and the impact of external factors such as the media and community response (Appendix M). This approach traded “generalizability and comparability for internal validity and contextual understanding” (Bickman & Rog, 2009, p. 233). Interviews took place over several weeks but with the core being captured during a two-week period in October 2018. Time was provided between interviews for transcription, initial field note review, and an important emotional and cognitive separation.

Audio recordings of each interview took place using the VoiceRecorder® App for iPhone®. These recordings were then downloaded to a password protected secure laptop. Transcripts were generated with the assistance of Temi®, an automated voice recognition service. Once the recordings were transcribed, the transcriptions were reviewed in conjunction with the audio recordings to ensure alignment of the written representation. Transcripts were checked for accuracy prior to analysis. Interviews lasted between twenty-five and ninety minutes with variation based on the degree to

which each participant delved into the questions being posed. Copious notes and quotations were recorded throughout the process. Sample notes are provided in Appendix O.

Guiding Principles of the Data Collection Process

Organization of the data was in many ways any initial attempt at analysis in that I was beginning “to interpret the multiple realities of my subject” (Yin, 2016, p. 134). The following criteria exemplify the constructs of widely accepted data collection practices, and are adapted from a number of primary sources to guide this study.

- The data are intended to represent an in-depth understanding using quotes to capture specific details and perceptions of the lived experience.
- The researcher’s experience is not excluded from the interpretation but is carefully scrutinized and bracketed in an ongoing effort to account for bias.
- *Empathic neutrality* -- an empathic stance in working with study respondents seeks vicarious understanding without judgment [neutrality] by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and responsiveness; in observation, it means being fully present [mindfulness] (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 378).
- The researcher respects and accepts that the data collection underwent many organic changes and shifts as the study progresses. It is not a static snapshot.
- Approach to data analysis. Consideration was given to an inductive ground up approach akin to grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), the establishment of chapter themes, rival explanations, theoretical proposition analysis, and allowing the data to speak for themselves using quotations as the point of departure (Yin, 2018).

- MAXQDA18 was used to increase reliability and further constitutes a valuable chain of evidence in the research audit trail. (Yin, 2018). This database contains all notes, transcripts, analysis, new articles, photographs, and narrative compilations. An annotated bibliography of evidence provides an audit trail (Appendix N).
- Consideration of rival explanations. *Direct rivals* would have implied there was causation, *comingled rivals* suggest multiple causes, and an *implementation rival* would have needed an intervention element. None of these apply to this study. Conversely, there is the risk of *societal rival* pursuant to rapidly changing norms and social mores. This is acknowledged in more depth in the final chapter.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013) and triangulated with field notes, community observations, examination of artifacts, and secondary documents such as oral histories (the collection of which is an ongoing project archived by the McCracken County library). Data analysis and coding was facilitated through the use of MAXQDA18. The interview protocols with the school leader were inductive in that codes were built during analysis rather than in an a priori fashion. This was to allow space for rapport and a sense of the participants' thoughts, experiences, and emotions to emerge. The use of follow up narrower questions allowed me to hear the extent to which a priori topics were already a part of the participants' thinking before explicitly asking them to think in those terms (Morgan, 2018). The interviews with additional stakeholders were more focused and sought out clarification of themes introduced during the leader interviews. Consequently, no predetermination was made as to how many rounds of coding were necessary for an understanding to emerge. The additional stakeholder

interviews were reserved for data triangulation after the first two rounds of coding were complete. Each comment was given equal value (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The invariant meaning units were clustered into themes in order to synthesize them into “a description of the textures of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p 122). The color coding system within MAXQDA18 allowed me to see patterns as they pertain to how organizations and leaders navigate school shootings.

Cycle 1: open coding. In its simplest form, words were identified to represent the case (Saldaña, 2013). Each piece of datum was analyzed and labeled with either a single word or phrase to represent the meaning. These labels represented attributes, descriptors, emotions, magnitude, process, and values, and each was given equal weight. Examples include media, bullying, first responders, victims, perpetrators, leakage, contagion etc. The frequency of each descriptor was identified along with the number of documents in which they appeared.

Table 3-3 shows the first cycle of open codes. Since they are given equal value, they are simply sorted alphabetically. The table also shows the frequency of each code, what percentage of the coding this item occupies, and the number of documents in which the item appears. A total of 667 coded segments emerged from the interview and interview notes combined from a total of 39 separate codes.

Table 3-3

Cycle 1: Open Coding

Code	Coded segments	% Coded segments	Documents
Bill Bond The Person	29	4.35	17
Bullied	2	0.30	1
Change Something	2	0.30	2

Table 3-3. Continued.

Code	Coded segments	% Coded segments	Documents
Community	38	5.71	16
Comparison	28	4.20	16
Connectedness	14	2.10	6
Contagion	5	0.75	1
Friend	2	0.30	1
Guns	21	3.15	8
Incident Command	21	3.15	10
First Responders	7	1.05	5
Leadership	88	13.21	29
Leakage	6	0.90	4
Media	33	4.95	16
Memory	2	0.30	2
Mental Health/Counseling	12	1.80	8
Messaging	15	2.25	8
Mistake	5	0.75	3
Money	7	1.05	3
Movies	1	0.15	1
Never One Thing	2	0.30	1
Nurturer	18	2.70	14
Organizational Culture	28	4.20	16
Outside Agency	21	3.15	10
Perpetrator	23	3.45	10
Politics	3	0.45	2
People Won't Understand	10	1.50	9
Preparedness	10	1.50	6
Public Opinion	11	1.65	3
Religion	2	0.30	2
Reliving Event/Acting	23	3.45	10
Shooting	15	2.25	4
Teachers And Staff	31	4.65	9
Time	8	1.20	5
Unrequited	1	0.15	1
Victim	38	5.71	7
Video Games	1	0.15	1
Yellow = Potential Quote	83	12.46	41

More than three dozen potential quotes were extracted from 41 documents. These comments, reflections, and responses offer deep insight into the phenomenon and were identified early in the coding process. The participant would frequently repeat a sentence whenever he found it to be either of value or a highly significant emotional moment in his story, as was evident in the transcript excerpt. There were many things said that would physically stop me in my tracks as the researcher. I could hardly catch my breath, find the right words to write what I was hearing, or speak – such was the harsh reality of the story being told.

Cycle 2: focused coding. Cycle 2 coding can be approached in a variety of ways and has been described in the literature as pattern coding, focused coding, axial coding, parent coding, selective coding, or theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2013). In this study, the approach was to use cycle two coding to bring focus to the more than three dozen original codes. Table 3-4 shows the focused codes still listed alphabetically. Of the original 39 codes, extraneous data were set aside and 15 codes remained. This was the most difficult level in that frequency was never intended to be a criteria, and yet for the most part, the high frequency items (considered here as double digits) are retained and low frequency items are removed. *Contagion* (informally known as *copycat crimes*) and *leakage* (letting others know of potential threat) are the exceptions to this pattern but are retained because they are of great significance to the phenomenon and are embedded in several of the remaining codes. The principal asked that I not use legal or criminal terms because he believes this moves us subtly away from the role of an educator. The term *leakage* is therefore replaced in further discussion to *breaking the code of silence*. This effectively describes circumstances where students are aware of a potential problem (the story has leaked out) but they do not pass the information on to a trusted adult. During cycle 2, the

frequency with which a code appears in different documents does not appear to be significant.

Table 3-4

Cycle 2: Focused Coding

Code	Coded Segments	% Coded Segments	Documents
Teachers And Staff	31	4.65	9
Bill Bond The Person	29	4.35	17
Community	38	5.71	16
Comparison	28	4.20	16
Connectedness	14	2.10	6
Contagion	5	0.75	1
Guns	21	3.15	8
Incident Command	21	3.15	10
Leadership	88	13.21	29
Leakage	6	0.90	4
Media	33	4.95	16
Mental Health/Counseling	12	1.80	8
Messaging	15	2.25	8
Mistake	5	0.75	3
Never One Thing	2	0.30	1
Nurturer	18	2.70	14
Organizational Culture	28	4.20	16
Outside Agency	21	3.15	10
Perpetrator	23	3.45	10
People Won't Understand/Speak The Truth	10	1.50	9
Preparedness	10	1.50	6
Public Opinion	11	1.65	3
Reliving Event/Acting Out	23	3.45	10
Shooting	15	2.25	4
Victim	38	5.71	7

When sorted according to number of coded segments (Table 3-5), it is significant to note that issues pertaining to campus level leadership occur at a rate four times that of the overall organizational leadership.

Table 3-5

Cycle 2: Focused Coding Resorted According to Number of Coded Segments

Code	Frequency	%
Leadership	88	13.21
Community	38	5.71
Victim	38	5.71
Teachers And Staff	35	4.85
Media	33	4.75
Bill Bond The Person	29	4.35
Comparison	28	4.20
Organizational Culture	28	4.20
Perpetrator	23	3.45
Reliving Event/Acting Out	23	3.45
Guns	21	3.15
Incident Command	21	3.15
Outside Agency	21	3.15
Nurturer	18	2.70
Messaging	15	2.25
Shooting	15	2.25
Connectedness	14	2.10
Mental Health/Counseling	12	1.80
Public Opinion	11	1.65
People Won't Understand	10	1.50
Preparedness	10	1.50
Leakage	6	0.90
Contagion	5	0.75
Mistake	5	0.75
Never One Thing	2	0.30

There is clearly a dissonance which is later supported by additional stakeholder interviews. In short, the data suggest that principals are in a powerful position of trust and are depended on to support the community, whereas the district, superintendent, and central office support staff are mentioned rarely, or with an element of ambiguity for how they handled the shooting. Additional stakeholder interviews did not comment on this except to say the board gave 100% support to the principal around decisions during the recovery phase. All interviews were representative of a strong bond of trust and respect around allowing the principal to lead the school through the recovery. Conversely, some of the issues deemed most significant by the principal have low frequency discussions, but the depth and impact of those issues are paramount to our understanding of the phenomenon. There are represented as outliers within the synthesis. More significantly they provide evidence of what leaders might consider when seeking to ensure a safe school. Simply the magnitude of the item is not accurately reflected as a quantitative item – hence the adherence to a data system which initially gives equal weight to each code. The relevance of this becomes evident once the data were sorted at level three and the additional stakeholders were included. Items of significance include guns, student performance, and the role of teachers in crisis response.

Cycle 3: axial coding. The axial coding process made another pass at the same data to make connections (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This underwent several different axes before finding the ones which best answered the research questions. It was at this stage that additional data sources were identified for potential examination to include the site visits, documents, and artifacts. These provided data as shown in Table 3-6 which built on the storyline to help explain the phenomenon. What the data show is the complexity of the story and this is explored in depth in the implications. Additional

stakeholder interviews were reserved for later inclusion in order to bring clarity to the themes in cycle 4.

Table 3-6

Cycle 3: Axial Coding

MAXQDA 18	Themes	Code
●	People, Leadership	Leadership
●	People, Prevention Preparedness & Response	Community
●	People	Victim
●	People	Teachers And Staff
●	External	Media
●	Leadership	Bill Bond The Person
●	Prevention Preparedness & Response	Comparison
●	Culture	Organizational Culture
●	Culture	Perpetrator
●	People, External, Guns	Reliving Event/Acting Out
●	External, Guns	Guns
●	Prevention Preparedness & Response	Incident Command
●	External	Outside Agency
●	People, Leadership	Nurturer
●	External, Leadership	Messaging
●	Leadership	Shooting
●	Culture	Connectedness
●	External	Mental Health/Counseling
●	External	Public Opinion
●	Leadership , BB	People Won't Understand
●	Prevention Preparedness & Response	Preparedness
●	Prevention Preparedness & Response; Culture	Leakage
●	Prevention Preparedness & Response ;External	Contagion
●	Leadership, BB	Mistake
●	Leadership, Culture, BB	Never One Thing

Several codes from level 2 fit into more than one theme which is to be expected.

Discussions of the findings for each category are synthesized according to these themes.

Cycle 4: thematic coding. Theoretical concepts emerged from saturated categories and themes (Hahn, 2008) and are represented in Figure 3-1. These are examined in Chapter 4 from an ontological perspective by looking predominantly at the attributes and emotions in order to identify the nature of the participants’ realities. I took dedicated time for reflection in order to know and understand the phenomenon through the narrative stories shared. This was a critical component of the methodology because it would have been impossible to separate the experience of a school shooting without attending to emotions. “In reality, theories synthesize, organize, and classify facts that emerge from observations and data collections in various situations” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

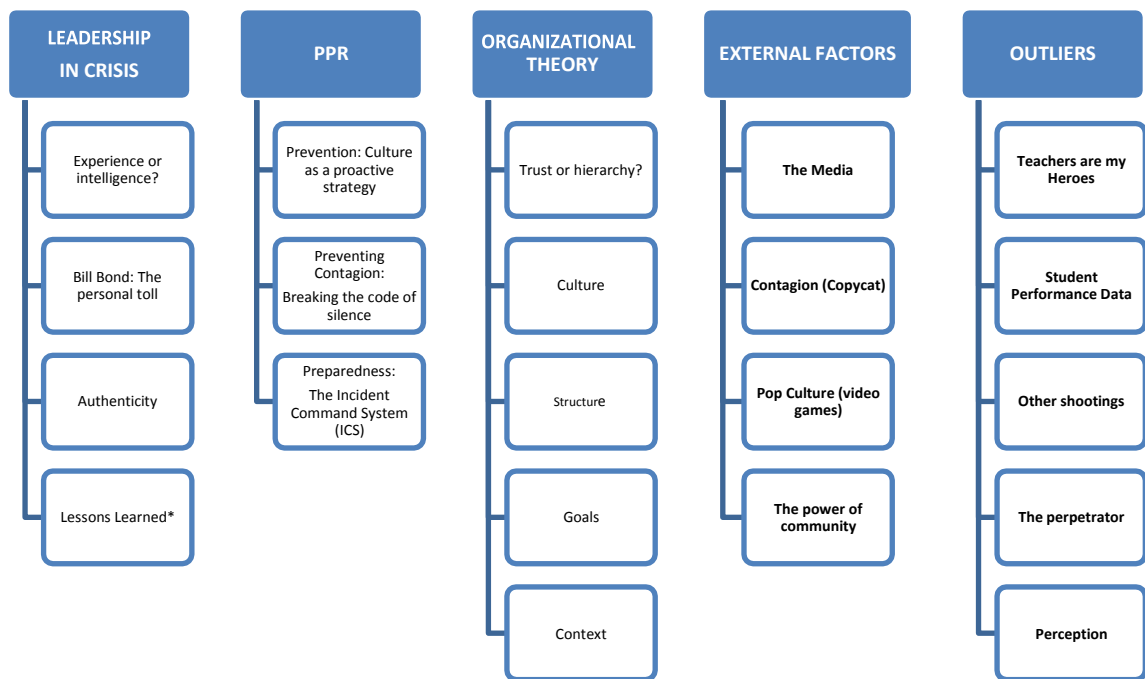


Figure 3-1: Cycle 4, thematic coding.

Note: *Lessons Learned** in column one (Leadership in Crisis) includes strong communication, knowing the needs of the staff, adhering to an ethic of authenticity, trust,

capacity and the need for change. Specific descriptions of each lesson learned appear in the text.

What is clearly evident in Figure 3-1 is the number of factors which are external to the organization or are unintended outcomes (whether good or bad). They all made a significant impact on the tragedy at Heath High School and yet are effectively outside the span of control for the school leader. This has implications as discussed in Chapter 5.

This deviation from expected outcomes caused me to pause and validate how I was moving the data from open collection to a thematic interpretation. I had developed the framework built on a critical realist perspective so that the first and second cycle codes would help uncover the "the nature of the participants realities" and an "understanding of the phenomenon" (Saldaña, 2013, page 61). Once the principal redirected the order of the interview protocols away from the prescribed questions, and instead gave his description of the shooting, I opted to introduce an element of a modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen coding system, largely because it intentionally focuses on the relevant statements only (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This was not planned for in the original design but since we are "the instrument through which participants tell *their* stories" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 139) it was an appropriate shift. This need to hit pause and regroup was initiated by a single question from the participant. It was the only one he asked throughout the entire study. He wanted to know "Do you have the courage to tell the truth about this story? The good the bad and the very ugly?" I knew in that moment that whatever process I had designed for the study, I would have to be flexible. Once I accepted that premise I was able to respond with confidence "I have the courage to tell the true story if you have the heart to share it". This is after all, *a professional conversation* (Kvale, 1996).

This process was not without its challenges in terms of depth of emotions and ethical responsibility. Rosenblatt (1999) tells us there is no single ethical formula and that we must co-construct the terms as we proceed. As a novice researcher I found this difficult and would have preferred a more definitive system that was neat and clean, but this would not have allowed the real truths to emerge. In the end, what emerged in situ was potential quotations I gathered along the way actually became the ‘relevant statements’ at the core of the data.

Validation Strategies

“All field work done by a single field worker invites the question: Why should we believe you?” (Bosk, 1979, p. 197). The subject of validity in qualitative research has been hotly debated, in part because it is not always definitively addressed until the data have been gathered. For the purposes of ensuring quality findings, this study adhered to what Anfara and Menz (2015) define simply as common sense strategies. The final analysis seeks “credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account.” (p. 122). The fact that the strategies are common sense does not make them infallible and time was given to assess threats to the validity and establish how my findings might be wrong. Simply being trustworthy and authentic was not enough (Huck & Sandler, 1979). The most prevalent threats to case study research are bias and reactivity (p. 127). These were mitigated through the application of specific safeguards. The purpose here was to be both concrete and transparent. Anfara and Menz identify a wide range of actions, six of which were applied to this study:

1. Intensive, long-term involvement with the phenomenon and/or participant.
2. Rich data which are varied enough to mitigate threats to validity, specifically reflexivity (Glesne, 2016).

3. Respondent validation – also known more widely as member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). I constantly shared the transcripts, archival documents, artifacts, media, and notes with the respondents to ensure it culminated in an accurate representation of the case.
4. Consideration of any emerging discrepant evidence. The key here was to identify it, acknowledge it, and be transparent by reporting its existence (Wolcott, 1990).
5. Care was taken not to attribute quantitative conclusions to emerging themes.
6. Every effort was made to contain the tendency to compare this case to other school shootings as though the findings could be generalized. It must be noted however that over the course of nine interviews, the participant made more than a dozen references to other school shootings he had worked with as part of the recovery phase.

In addition to the above, I used my professional peer resources in the field of research to ‘spot check’ my work for discrepancies, potential flaws, and gaps. It acknowledges however that there are missing pieces by virtue of being a single case study. This does not negate the findings, only contextualizes them. Geertz (1973) relates the story of colonial India in which a man learns that the world is seated on the back of four elephants, who in turn are standing on layers of turtles. He wants to know what the bottom turtle is standing on. In Geertz’ analysis, there is no identifiable ‘bottom turtle’. He states “You do not have to get to the bottom turtle to have a valid conclusion. You only have to get to a turtle you can stand on securely” (p. 106).

Potential threats are addressed on an ongoing basis. Credibility was addressed through member checking and training, construct validity required a clear plan for

measuring the data. A cornerstone of the study was truth in the collection and presentation of data and therefore offers the possibility of transferability stemming from a description which richly describes experiences and context. The audit trail provided also shows triangulation of multiple data sources (Yin, 2016). This is in full acknowledgement that a single case study does not offer statistical variance.

Triangulation. Multiple sources of evidence were used (Yin, 2018). Documents including memoranda, letters, diaries, calendars, newspaper articles, or broadcasts were examined. These are notoriously unreliable in research, in part because they were generated for a specific audience and purpose outside the scope of the study, but their role here was simply “to corroborate and augment evidence from the other sources” (p. 116). Some items such as a box of letters from all around the world were examined by the researcher but not copied to the database. To date, the school leader has been unable to read a single one, but instead assigned volunteer letter readers and responders. Archival records to include maps, photographs, and census data were explored as well as any memorial artifacts germane to this case study. I observed the site of the shooting, the memorial which was constructed and later moved, the city, and its environs. To the extent that it was relevant to this study, I further explored and documented similar items from the Benton shooting which occurred 33 miles from Paducah earlier this year.

1. The nine interviews were conducted to reach data saturation, though to be exact, some interviews blended together and others were interspersed by outside events (visitors, meals, and drives to different locations). Interviews were face to face and scheduled at the complete convenience of the interviewee in terms of time, place, date, location, and length. The researcher traveled to Paducah and rented a cabin at the lake as a base of operations.

2. The researcher did not intend to take copious notes during the interviews and wanted to retain a neutral posture (Yin, 2010; Creswell, 2005). Originally it seemed that note taking would suggest some specific responses as being more significant than others. However it quickly became evident that transcripts alone would not capture the degree of emotion and reflection shared by the subject. The interviewee would recall and physically act out some responses so notations were made to that effect throughout the interviews.

Self-disclosure, rapport, and reciprocity. As previously stated, I have worked extensively with the principal who is the focus of the case study giving school safety training to school leaders, law enforcement, community groups, and other stakeholders. I would not therefore qualify as what Michael Agar terms ‘the professional stranger’ (Agar, 1980). However it is through this professional connection that I was able to negotiate entry.

In as much as I clearly wish to “protect the participant from harm” (Allmark et al., 2009, p. 50), I was very aware of the potential for both *dual role* and *over involvement*. In a dual role, as the interviewer, I could have found myself in counselor mode offering unexpected and inexperienced consoling *refrains* (Siding & Aronson, 2003). In reality, I reduced my utterances to the bare minimum so as not derail his flow of consciousness – however painful or emotional the story he was sharing. In effect there was an element of reciprocity), or as Daly defines it *fair exchange* (Daly, 1992). I was acutely aware of both my inadequacy to fulfill this role, as well as the *weight of the privilege* being granted to me. (Dickinson-Swift et al., 2007, p. 340). “Even in the most empirical, double blind research, we can treat participants with an ethic of friendship. We can solicit fears and concerns, listen closely and respond compassionately, and use such exchanges to refine

the study and direct its implications” (Tilman-Healy, 2006, p. 290). I am confident this ethic of friendship was honored. Despite misgivings about how to navigate the role of the participant as a potential co-researcher, I have come to recognize the unique opportunity this gave me. Contrary to the assumption that there should be anonymity or degrees of separation, Tillmann (2015) tells us that some degree of involvement is not only desirable but possibly *necessary* given the nature of this study. “When we engage others’ humanity, struggles, and oppression, we cannot simply turn off the recorder, turn our backs, and exit the field” (Tillmann, 2015, p. 22). Indeed, that was certainly the case here. It is an understatement to say the whole process was demanding, but I hope through sharing the experiences of this participant to stimulate discussion and inform practice around the issues of school crisis.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Three primary delimitations allowed me to ‘set the context’ (Glesne, 2016, p.) of this study. As an administrator in Killeen ISD in the early part of 2000, I had an opportunity to study with the law enforcement agencies that had investigated the Columbine shootings. Much of the material we used appeared later in an FBI publication (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2007). As a result of the training, I took on a mantra which I did not understand the significance of at the time. Nobody involved in the training ever mentioned the names of the shooters. It was a choice they made intentionally. They repeatedly spoke the names of the victims and school personnel in reverent whispers, but they purposefully would not allow the perpetrators to become recognized names, allowing the victims to fade into anonymity. It was a powerful lesson which strongly influenced my commitment to do the same in this study. The synthesis of data in Chapter 4 will address this issue with regard the potential power of anonymity versus notoriety. Around the same theme, the second delimitation was a natural extension of that commitment. This study does not ask, or attempt

to resolve why school shooters do what they do. To do so would be a study of the perpetrators, and that I gladly leave to others or to a later study. These were deliberate delimitations of this study and for which I make no apology. On the contrary, they would detract from my epistemological stance by suggesting there were other possible outcomes. As a critical realist, I believe terrible things are going to happen as a part of school leadership, but there are lessons to be learned.

The final requisite delimitation pertains to interview participants. I would only interview a school principal who had experienced a shooting and I would only conduct the primary interviews in person. To me this is an ethical research boundary. In my review of the literature, it became evident that this would make the study unique. The only comparable dissertation of its kind by Fein, (2001) is a phenomenological inquiry of school shootings, but the participants were interviewed remotely and were frequently several degrees from the role of principal. The insight from the study was profound and is referenced later in this study as it pertains to the Heath shooting, but the role is clearly not the same if the tragedy is experienced from central office versus on site, or the primary participant is interviewed long distance. It was significant to me that these voices be neither silenced nor disregarded by mainstream culture (Wieder, 2004).

In order to narrow the focus of the study and be able to answer the research questions, I established the parameters early in the process of selecting a case study subject. The study would need to be about a secondary campus where the principal was present at the time of the shooting. Since most shootings are by single male perpetrators, who are (or were) students at the school this would further focus the data. As previously

stated, this study purposely does not consider offender intent, motive, or outcome. The names of perpetrators do not appear anywhere in this study although interviewees did refer to the shooter by name on several occasions. Instead of using a pseudonym, he is referred to by his initials (MC) in a conscious effort not to personify him.

Potential case studies were additionally screened using the Safe School Initiative Final Report definition of *targeted schools violence*, which is slightly more specific than the general definition given in the glossary. Here the definition describes “an incident where (i) a current student or recent former student attacked someone at his or her school with lethal means (e.g., a gun or knife); and (ii) where the student attacker (s) purposefully chose his or her school as the location of the attack. Consistent with this definition, incidents where the school was chosen simply as a site of opportunity, such as those related to gangs, drugs, or an interpersonal dispute were not included (Vossekuil et al., 2004).

It is not a requirement of the study to imply causation or be able to *predict similar results across cases* (Yin, 2016), though room is allowed through critical realism for tendential prediction. It is a purposefully selected event which is representative of the phenomenon and enables me to address the research questions (Patton, 1990). A brief synopsis of the case study is given below merely to provide context to the phenomenon but will be described more fully in Chapter 4 using the participant’s own words.

An Introduction to Heath High School, West Paducah, KY

Incident: A student shot and killed 14 year old Nicole Hadley, 17 year old Jessica James, and 15 year old Kayce Steger. Among the wounded were 17 year old Shelley Schaberg, 16 year old Kelly Hard Alsip, 14 year old Hollan Holm, and 15 year old Melissa “Missy” Jenkins. Paducah is a home rule-class city in and the county seat of

McCracken County, Kentucky. The population at the time of the shooting was approximately 26,000. The shooting occurred as students met in the lobby for a morning prayer on December 1, 1997 - exactly two months after the Pearl, MI shooting in which a 16 year old student bludgeoned his mother to death then drove her car to school where he killed two and injured seven others.

These delimitations of the study are inexorably bound to the study purpose and questions. School leaders involved in shootings have been interviewed, questioned, scrutinized, challenged, criticized, gagged and bound by their stakeholders, communities, law enforcement agencies, their spouses and families, friends and colleagues. Moreover, they have clearly been tried by the court of public opinion and the media. This means that access to participants willing to take on this study was very limited – either through personal choice, or some other entity preventing them from engaging in a research study.

The research is unable to keep up with events and as school shootings continue to occur, I am bound eventually to limit my comparisons. The CDC publishes the School-Associated Violent Deaths Study (SAVD) but trend data only goes up to 2010 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016) which does not begin to factor in what we know of Santa Fe High School, Noblesville , Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School or Marshall County High School in Benton, KY.

An Endnote

I was effectively asking the participant to “extend the shadows of the future” (Morieux & Tollman, 2014). In essence, we are saying this information will extend beyond this conversation. What this participant was trained and expected to do at the time was to operate under an ethic of justice (Gilligan, 1993). As principals, we completely

comprehend “rules, policies, standard operating procedures, and information systems” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 48). It is within this organizational theory that we create a sense of order and predictability for the people we serve; parents, students, and colleagues. In light of what I learned from this event, and from the response process afterwards, I posit that cognitive resource theory (CRT) of leadership alone is an inadequate descriptor of what transpired. It led to far deeper discussions around “loyalty, trust, and empowerment” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016, p. 17). What emerged instead is a blended ethic of care with an unshakeable authenticity around decision making. In the moment of crisis, authenticity is the ethic upon which the recovery depended. This is discussed further in Chapter 4. Since the tenets of CRT were evident and the school leader needed to draw on experience rather than intelligence in his moment of crisis, this has implications for the novice school leader and the organizations they serve.

IV. RESULTS

The researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know, be known, and trusted by them, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed. This material is supplemented (triangulated) by other data such as [artifacts], observations, memos, records, newspaper articles, and photographs.

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 16).

This chapter revisits the purpose of the study and identifies the qualitative findings which represent both the process and the data generated. The findings are synthesized with regard to prevailing themes, the theoretical framework, the literature review, and from previous research. Having considered multiple approaches to organizing the data, I concur that data should be *the star* in this chapter. Chenail (1995) describes such data as having richness and depth. To that end, the quotations will provide exemplars to guide the synthesis, rather than simply support the findings. The voice of the participants will take center stage in order to deepen our understanding and provide evidence (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Nowhere is this more evident than through the principal's chilling refrain: "You don't know what a bad day is".

The purpose of this case study (Glesne, 2016; Yin, 2018) was to explore a school shooting through the eyes and experiences of the principal at Heath High School in Paducah, KY. As Patanjali reminds us at the onset of this study: "The same problem, the same danger or difficulty, will present itself over and over again in various prospects, as long as we continue to resist or run away from it instead of examining it and solving it." The findings provide insight into the research questions around the role, skills, and

decision-making of the school leader in a crisis as well as the interconnectedness of the organization, the community, and external factors which impact a school crisis.

Before any synthesis is presented, the reader needs to become familiar with the eight minute story. For the purposes of understanding the event as it was described, the following section reflects excerpts from the principal's first transcribed interview. The quote which introduced Chapter 3 spoke to how we acquire wisdom through *reflection*, *imitation*, and *experience*. *Experience*, it was stated, is 'the bitterest'. No amount of data synthesis can replace the telling of the principal's opening story. What is striking from a research perspective is the emergence of two very specific themes which remain throughout the study: Gun capacity is a significant determinate and teachers are unequivocally the heroes in a school shooting.

Transcript Excerpt: The Shooting

It was 12 seconds. Pow... pow.. pow... pow.. pow.. pow.. pow..pow..pow..pow''.

From the time of the first shot to the time I had the gun in my hand was 12 seconds.... it was eight minutes before the first responders arrived. It was actually a fireman. It was eight minutes. (very long pause. Bill stands up.)

[08:39] It was of no concern to him who he killed. The thing that was really strange is that he purposely, slowly, and deliberately shot Nicole Hadley... on purpose... with purpose.... when in reality they were very good friends. They were in the band together. People.... they teased him about being romantically involved. But they had never, you know, I mean they're freshman and they went to the same parties and ran in the same circles and, and did the same things. But when he chose to do it with fifty people standing in front of him, he picked the person he knew the best.

[10:04] And after, after he picked the person that he knew the best and he deliberately and purposely shot her right between the eyes... deliberately and purposely... without.. deliberately and purposely.. you've got to think about that... and he shot her. He shot what would have been his best friend in the group. And after that, what happened is... it became anything that moved in front of him. After he shot Nicole - where he took dead aim... leveled the gun ... held it and aimed it like we would think about a person shooting a pistol... he deliberately aimed it. After that the gun just would drop to his side and he didn't.... he would just spontaneously shoot anything that moved in front of him...without, without any, without anything other than just a moving target. And.. and he... he emptied his gun.

[12:33] A high capacity magazine allows you to... when you go into your shooting mode, it just allows you to stay in your shooting mode more often.. The reason I'm talking about the magazine is because one of the lessons that's there is... people often ask: "well what difference does it make about the capacity of the magazine?" Well, it makes a huge difference because when you start shooting a gun, it's just instinctual. There's no thinking about it. You're just picking out targets and shooting... just shooting.... but when the last bullet... when the magazine is emptied, your bolt carrier flies back. The gun's empty. You've got to reload. Now to reload..... not only does reloading take time... and everyone thinks about the time it takes to reload, but there's something there that's different...

[14:54] When you go to reload, you have to break out of that instinctive shooting mentality that you're in, like a game. I don't mean that games caused it, but if

you're just locked in on the game, you're just locked in mentally focused on what's happening.... When you have to reload... everything, everything has to shut down and you have to concentrate on a mechanical process of pulling that clip out of your pocket and putting it in the gun and coming back to those positions. Now he had four more clips, loaded in his pocket. Hmm.... But I saw it in his eyes. I saw it. He was finished.

[15:57] I was approaching him, I was behind a brick pillar..... about right here, and he was about as far away you are... and I'm coming up behind this pillar... He just stopped. He would have had to reload and it was like...I could tell he was thinking, "I need to reload or I need to quit". He had a choice then. He had to reload or he had to quit and he just chose to quit - just like that.... as I'm coming towards him. He just chose to quit. You could see it...and I know why. If... if that had been an AR15 let's just use that as an example because it's out there everywhere. If he had been shooting an AR 15 which is a high capacity magazinethen instead of stopping at 10, he would've gone to 30 because he would've been in the rhythm.... When he was in the rhythm..... He was just in the rhythm of killing things moving.

[17:53] People might not be able to understand that unless they've spent a lot of time with guns and shooting, but I will use, for example, duck hunting. ..Ducks come in sometimes in huge numbers, maybe 50 at a time, come right in front of you and you pick out your first duck. ...And you consciously pick it out and you come up on that duck and after that you are just shooting ducks ...as long as there are ducks in front of you.. until your gun is empty... you will shoot ducks until your gun is empty and you will not think about which duck you're shooting.. it is

just so fast ... and that probably seems very cruel to people. I could not use that analogy when I was working with people.... It sounds cruel.... People wouldn't understand...but I want you to understand the difference magazine capacity makes.

[21:07] He had planned to kill a lot more because right here he had four clips. Each had 10 rounds and all he had to do is drop the clip in. He was shooting, he could put another clip in and go back to shooting, but there's got to be a mental change. That's the reason high capacity magazines make a difference... because there is a... there has to be... you have to flip switches. Now, does that mean you can't do it? Absolutely not. A lot of people flip switches. Now, the guy at Fort Hood he knew this too so he carried two guns... and so if you have two guns and you're in your shooting mode, you're in a killing mode.

[23:13] My shooter had five that were all loaded. He had two shotguns with 100 rounds of ammunition for a 12 gauge shot guns and two twenty two rifles that were loaded. He had all those with him. Yeah. And he had a thousand rounds of ammunition. A Thousand rounds of ammunition. He had a backpack full of ammunition..... a thousand rounds of ammunition for a school that had 486 kids. But why? Why he didn't continue to shoot? Now this is just me. It has to do with that gun being empty ... he had to make a mental adjustment to what he was doing.... He couldn't operate on instinct and reload at the same time. You have to think about what you're doing and when he, when he thought about what he was doing..... When I got about this far from him, he just laid the gun down.Just laid it down.... and... just laid it down... No intimidation, no eye contact... I said

nothing to him. People want to know why he didn't shoot me. I don't know why he didn't shoot me. Except....

[26:56] people that were hunkered down beside him weren't shot..., it's like a cat and a mouse. Once he started shooting, it was anything that tries to move and flash in front of him. He didn't raise his gun.....He didn't raise his gun and aim at that target like a trained police officer or soldier would do. He didn't shoot like anyone that had been trained to shoot. No one shoots like this. He, he shot like a kid playing video games. He just looked at the screen and instinctively when something popped up in front of him.... When something got his attention and popped up in front of him, he shot.... If that object were lying on the ground he did not shoot.

[28:11] Not all school shootings are like this. Sometimes when the kids have laid on the ground like in Sandy Hook or Parkland or many others.... when they lay on the ground, they'd been massacred. You know, he just continued to shoot, but in this case when I came from behind this pillar.. I had about this far to go... and I'm not running, I'm not screaming, and I'm not talking, I'm not doing anything that gets attention. He is completely focused on what's moving in front of him and I'm completely focused on the gun. I have no focus anymore except...I don't see anything except the gun so just completely focused on the gun. I am only looking at the gun. Can you see what I'm saying? I can't even see him... On television, they always make a big deal out of the eyes.... Eyes meeting... eye contact... I don't even see his eyes... and he didn't see mine. I can only see a gun and that is all I can see as I approach. I cannot see anything else.... and he made

no move. He made no gestures towards me, he made no recognition that I was there until I grabbed him by the arm. He did not shoot at me.

[30:21] So he was already putting the gun down. He was putting the gun down before I ever touched him. He put it out maybe one step from me. I didn't take the gun out of his hand. He just.... He just, he just laid the gun down. He didn't struggle to get a clip out of his pocket and like, 'I gotta get a gun'. He didn't reach for another gun that was at his feet. You know at his feet... like a 12 gauge shotgun to shoot. He didn't do any of that. He just quit.

[31:18] It was everything. Because I know that you have to flip a mental switch to reload. You have to flip that switch. You know when you reload, you have to make a very conscious decision to reload and take your mind on loading and not target acquisition. And he made that mental switch. You know, he didn't.. When he made that switch and he should have reached for his clip.. Now, could I have gotten him before he got his clip in? Yes. I absolutely could have, you know, I absolutely could have disarmed him before he got that clip in.... I was that close and I was that focused and I was thinking about it.... - but I didn't have to do any of that. It didn't require me to do that because he was finished, you know, I could tell he was finished, you know, because his body language with the gun instead of being.....

[32:34] When his chamber flew back and stayed open, he just... looked, he just looked at it.....and at that time he made no effort at all to reload even though, without a doubt, he planned on doing it because he had the clips right in his right front pocket, you know, he had them. I mean literally right here that's all it would have taken. But on the other hand, he didn't not reload because I was there

because he made no attempt. He wouldn't have been able to do it because I'm too close ...he let me get too close to him now. He couldn't have done it, but he didn't even think about doing it. He didn't even make an attempt to do it and had two shot guns at his feet. He used a Ruger Mark II twenty two caliber pistol....he had a loaded 12 gauge shotgun at his feet and he made no attempt to pick it up... He wouldn't have been able to do it because I'm too close. You know, if you let somebody get that close to you. A gun's no good. If you let somebody get within 10 feet, a gun is no good....He said nothing. He said nothing. And after I grabbed him by the arm... and picked the gun up,..... he looked at me and I'm holding him by the arm pretty tight.. Just like you would have if two kids were in a fight.... you know...I'm holding on... And I have a gun in this hand. ... And uh, (very quietly) he said "I'm sorry", and it just... And it was a.... It was a sincere I'm sorry... But it seemed soooo inappropriate. It just seemed sooo inappropriate you know....

[36:36] Fury just went all over me,... and I just said, "shut up".....and that's all that was said. About that point as I was moving across the lobby towards the office with M in one hand and the gun in the other... and kids could see I had him and everything... kids start to stand back up off the floor, come out behind pillars and furniture.... And kids start to stand up and still no sound but kids moving....If there was any sound... I couldn't hear.

[37:12] And at that time then teachers started to come to the, they started to come to the lobby, you know, to assist with the kids that are down. I took him into the.... the door's right there...to the officeTook him into the office and there was a male teacher, Toby D and I said, come with me Toby. I took him into the conference room which was right across from our office.... in a conference

room...it had no windows, just a conference table. I walked him in and sat him down just sat him down, still hadn't talked to him. I said, Toby, don't let anyone come in this door under any circumstances, and I shut the door behind me.

[38:36] Then I go back out to the lobby... And when I get out to the lobby... First kid I get to is on the floor... is Nicole... Nicole was laying there and she has a bullet hole about an eighth of an inch off dead center right there... just... and brains are coming out that hole... You can see...see her brains and I left her there to die.. it's just like.. it's just instinctive.. I just didn't..... I just left her to die.. because I can't help her, that's justI can't help her. I just moved to the next kid.... And I don't even know who the next kid was I moved to... but I, I just left Nicole becauseAt that moment, at that particular moment, you absolutely knew she was dead. There is no surviving that.... and I just moved to the next kid.

(BREAK. The participant requested a break to regroup his thoughts.)

[00:00] Twenty seconds, thirty seconds after I returned to the lobby... within a minute every kid had a teacher taking care of them, you know, so now.... I'm almost just encouraging teachers if you know what I mean. I'm now... I've switched back to a mode of just being principal...instead of, instead of, I didn't take care of any kid, you know, just literally take care of any kid... because every kid had a teacher taking care of them. So then I was trying to get, I was trying to get towels to stop the bleeding. Now I was trying to get stuff, you know, that would help...and so you are, you're back in your principal mode, you know, because the teachers are doing the work and all you're doing is trying to assist them and get them what they need.

[01:29] I was buzzing around and I talked to each of those teachers... Its 13 minutes in. At this point it's the teachers with these kids... and these kids are dying and the teachers are doing everything they can to save them. It's 13 minutes from the time BM called 911... You know the principal's secretary called 911 from the moment 911 was called until the first responders showed up... it's over. It was 13 minutes and mainly you are trying to assist these kids that are dying, but you're also talking to teachers that have kids in the classroom. You're getting the janitor to lock the doors. I'm going back into where Toby is, you know where the shooter is being held.. and I would check on them to see that everything's okay. I don't stay long.

[03:19] Then I'm back to talking to the secretary, you know, about calling the central office... and then I'm back to the teachers who are trying to help the kids. And then I'm talking to kids. They're crying and upset and then I'm talking to teachers. You know, so for 12 minutes, so for 12 of those 13 minutes, for 12 of them, you're strictly in principal mode and you, you know what I mean by principal mode, you are trying to help everyone at the same time without being anywhere. You're trying to be everywhere, but you're not anywhere. I wasn't anywhere. I was with the kids, I with the janitors, I with the secretary, I was with students, you know, other students. I was with teachers. I'm everywhere....I have no recollection of what I told anyone and uh, I have no recollection of what I said... During that 12 minutes. I have no recollection was I said anymore. I know what I was doing, but I don't know what I said.

[05:11] But I do remember I was just trying to be everywhere. I was trying to be a principal. You just, same thing you always do... But this much I do know... I do

know this, that when things are absolutely, absolutely as bad as they can getteachers will be fine. Teachers will take care of kids. They'll do what they need to do. You don't know what they're going to need to do, but they will absolutely do it every time. I knew that from my situation, but then I went to 15 other school, other school shootings, fifteen of them.. There were a lot of things that weren't a common thread, but one thing that is a common thread is that under these circumstances, teachers as a group will do exactly what they should do. It is just in their instincts to try to take care of kids. They don't try to run, they don't try to protect themselves. They don't panic and scream.... you know, they're conditioned to taking care of kids, they are conditioned to taking care...to being around kids when there is a lot of drama. Now here, the drama is just magnified, but it doesn't change the conditioning of teachers. They will take care of the kids and do what they think they need to be doing.

[07:38] In my case, in that eight minutes, there was not one teacher that lost it or gave into their emotions.... No crying and screaming... I promise you.. there was not one teacher they gave in to that. Until those kids were in the ambulance, I never saw a teacher just break down ...into just uncontrollable crying ... not until those kids were on the ambulance. You know, and it's, it's not, it's not just the teachers that are in the thick of things, in what I call 'in the blood' that do that, it's all staff...the teachers that have other kids that need to be taken care of and kids need to be protected and taken care of. Those people do their job and it's.... It's a universal situation. Teachers are my heroes. (Bill Bond)

The remainder of this chapter is organized in such a way as to illustrate how the eight minutes described above changed everything about our collective understanding of school shootings, and how facets of the larger community and society come to bear upon one another in crisis. It begins with highlighting the four major themes that resulted from the data analysis related to: leadership, prevention/ preparedness/response (PPR), organizations, and external factors. Within the theme of leadership, four subthemes are presented from the data: whether intelligence or experience is more relevant in a crisis, the personal toll on the leader, an authenticity in leadership, and the specific lessons he wished to share from his experience. Within the major theme of PPR, three specific subthemes include culture as a proactive prevention strategy, the significance of leakage/ breaking the code of silence, and the Incident command System as a model for preparedness. These are given separate consideration because each one constitutes a different approach to mitigating school shootings. The organizational theme explores the concept of trust versus hierarchy and addresses the four pillars of organizational theory (culture, structure, goals, and context). They are not treated as subthemes because they are interdependent. The fourth theme on external factors encompasses three subthemes around the media, contagion, pop culture, and community.

An additional section on significant findings which fall outside the four major themes are addressed as outliers. Specific examples include gun control and teachers as heroes as described in the eight minute story, as well as student performance, other shootings, the perpetrator and stakeholder perceptions of reality. Since they are by their very nature each ‘outliers’ they are not considered subthemes and are addressed individually. This chapter concludes with a return to our epistemology and to what extent the data bring us closer to being able to identify Bhaskar’s *emancipatory social practice*.

In order to offer rational options for policy, practice, and research in the remaining chapter, we must reconfirm whether the phenomenon has been “interpreted adequately” (Corson, 1991, p. 223).

Theme 1: Leadership in Crisis

The predominant theories of leadership introduced in Chapter 1 were grouped according to whether they were primarily interactive, relational, independent, or contextual. In practice there are elements of all these at play in any given moment. The way in which educators interact and respond to crisis is inherently shaped by their relationship with one another, but a school shooting provides a unique context. The theoretical framework which directed the study was therefore based on an intersection of cognitive resource theory (CRT) and organizational theory. The tenets are not dissimilar to those defined by Schein in Chapter I in that crisis requires *cognitive restructuring* and a new sense of *psychological safety* (Schein, 2010), but CRT allowed for a more targeted correlation to crisis.

Experience or intelligence? In CRT, intelligence is purported to be of high value during day to day operations but a hindrance in times of crisis (Saxena, 2009). When asked about this concept, our school leader stated “When it comes to intelligence versus experience, you have to look for purpose, competence, and communication skills in a crisis. I simply use my experience to help intelligent people”. He explained that he had a crisis plan formulated as part of his personalized growth plan, but it was not embedded into the fabric of campus culture. It was neither operationalized for the school nor specific to active shooters. Upon reflection, he summarized: “In a crisis, every speck of training is gone... the only thing that remains is what you have similarly done before.” There had been several school shootings in the 1990’s the most recent at Pearl High

School in Mississippi where two students were killed and seven injured after the shooter murdered his mother. This event, exactly two months prior to the Heath shooting, had given the principal cause to reflect on how he would handle a similar scenario.

While I had not experienced an active shooter in the literal sense of it, I had a clear plan of how I would approach such an event. It was just a question of acting on it when the time came. Things were different back then. There was no such thing as Incident Command and while we planned for crisis – this was not the kind we prepared for with any degree of commitment.... There are a lot of well written plans out there these days, but they are completely useless if you don't practice them. There is no time to get it out and read it in a real crisis. The plan is not important...the process of developing it is everything. (Bill Bond)

The triangulated data on Bill Bond and his leadership in a crisis is consistent. The additional stakeholders interviewed were unequivocal:

- “He made it clear “This is not going to stop us. We are going to have a great school” (April).
- “He had planned to retire the next year but many of us begged him to stay on another year to continue to lead our school. He agreed to that even though I know, or I think I know....that it was hard for him to carry this burden” (Terri).
- “Mr. Bond had been in his office on the phone with a parent and he rushed out after hearing all the pandemonium. He cautiously walked toward MC...Mr. Bond then grabbed the gun with his right hand, gripped M's arm with his left hand, and whisked him into the office (Jenkins & Croyle, 2008, p. 13)

- “Mr. Bond held all of us together. I don't really know how he didn't crack under the pressure” (Terri).
- “He just went out there....as shots were being fired.... and Bill walked right up to him.... a kid shooting a gun..... That's pretty amazing when you think about it” (Linda).
- “I think you can tell that I felt like we couldn't have had any better leader in this horrible situation. I am not saying Mr. Bond was a perfect principal before this happened, but I always knew one thing about him. He put kids first” (Terri).
- “I should tell you that Bill did a fantastic job. He was phenomenal in how he responded” (Randy).
- “I can't say exactly what Mr. Bond did during the shooting because the library was upstairs and I didn't know what was going on for a few minutes after it happened. However, I can definitely tell you Mr. Bond was a rock after” (Terri).
- “I know that I personally put a lot on him and I felt bad later. At the girls' funeral, I was by myself and was sobbing. Mr. Bond put his arms around me. He asked me to sit with him and his wife. I knew he had so many people who were leaning on him. I hated that I put that on him as well. He kept us together” (Terri).
- “Mr. Bond greeted all of us and the crazy media storm with a strength that we could hold on to. We had lots of counselors there to talk with us over the next few weeks, but it was Mr. Bond who kept us together as a family” (Terri).

When asked about people's perceptions of him as a leader, the participant was somewhat more self-effacing: "Evidently some folks said I was a hero and others said I was a worthless son of a bitch. There is probably some truth to both." He explained that of the thousands of letters they received there were plenty that were accusatory:

"If you had allowed prayer this would never have happened".

"You are a fucking idiot. No wonder kids kill each other in your school."

"It's your fault. You took prayer out of school."

Bill Bond: The person. Despite the bravado, it is critical to examine what the data also tell us about Bill Bond the person if we are to be able to understand the leadership which guided his actions during the school shooting. In the interview with his spouse, Linda, it was discovered he had planned to retire that year but chose not to. "He needed to be with his school family and vowed to stay long enough to see all students cross the stage."

As discussed in the literature review, Fein identified a number of common themes among leaders in school crisis, which similarly emerged in this study:

1. *A different view of death.* This was very evident when in an unguarded moment toward the end of the interviews, Bill told me "I had an opportunity to die for something that meant something.... That was taken from me.... Few people die a valiant death... we simply die".
2. *Immense self-doubt.* It was clear from the data that our participant had regrets. He maintains he made two major mistakes. When one of the students became entrenched in a highly embellished story that made him the hero, Bill not only

allowed it to happen, to a certain extent he admits he encouraged it. “I felt the community needed a student hero”. The story unfortunately took on a synergy of its own with the help of the media. Ben Strong became a motivational speaker and traveled extensively to share his version of the shooting and how he helped disarm the perpetrator. The story appeared to become his version of reality over time. Bill Laments “The further he got from Paducah, the louder they applauded.” *The New York Times* sent an investigative reporter and there was an honorary meeting with the governor. It escalated quickly. Ben found himself some time later having to stand up in front of his church congregation and apologize. The principal believes his own inaction to be one of his greatest mistakes. “I should have put the brakes on it and I didn’t. It hurt him and angered the community. I could have stopped him and I simply didn’t. At one point I even introduced him during a media event as the student that may have saved my life. I regret that so much”.

3. *An irrevocable need to restore order.* In this vein, the leader allowed a number of groups access to the students to provide support. In retrospect he would have put some constraints on this phase. “It really became too much of a Jesus camp. Youth pastors took advantage of the circumstances to promote their own agenda. It gave them an audience”. Upon further clarification, he was extremely disenchanted by the organization Focus on the Family®.

“Dobson and I met several times. I assumed we had a common motive...it didn’t turn out to be true. He just wanted to further his theme about the breakdown of the American family. It was not appropriate. I regret that liaison a lot.”

4. *A changed view of the world.* The principal frequently compared the shooting with war. “The most important theme of human progress is war. In crisis you are required to change things...All your resources become focused on that war. It took a whole generation...Change came as a result of the worst human crisis the world had ever known”. I must have looked puzzled because he went on to explain “When there is a crisis... I mean a real crisis... we are not looking at data... we are focused on beating the enemy. We have to think differently about the purpose of school... If this works, the next time maybe a kid will...” At this moment there is break in our dialogue as a wood cutting instrument roars in the background. Bill contains himself: “You know the saying ‘know thy enemy’? You establish who the enemy in crisis. My enemy was that probably more than two dozen kids knew or had heard something... People knew.”

In the case of the Heath shooting, the principal believed the enemy was the code of silence. “I could have prevented all this... this story... this conversation...had I known”. Clearly, Fein’s assertion about self-doubt is substantiated by these data for this case. His became *a changed view of the world*.

Bill’s wife was so concerned for him she expressed fears that he was suicidal. “He would disappear in the evenings and I would go and look for him. Eventually I would find him – wandering the halls of the school”. In a candid moment, she told me that he never shed a tear around others including her. “He handled grief very differently from the rest of us”. As the months unfolded there were additionally challenges. He had a heart attack and she was diagnosed with cancer. The personal toll on the family was substantial. Years after, even at grandchildren’s birthday parties, a balloon popping was

more than he could stand. Randy, the parent and board member claimed “To this day, I am constantly scanning crowds around me. If I go to a movie theatre I instantly feel trapped. I will sit on the end of the row. If someone stands up, I study them and assess if they are a risk”. Linda summarized a feeling I imagine is widely shared by the community: “If MC is ever released, the community will still be grieving, the girls will still be dead and Missy will still be paralyzed”.

One unique facet of the research process was the degree to which the principal appeared to be physically reliving each moment. He acted out the shooting with focus and precision, he occasionally winced. When the memory of the story he was telling became particularly painful, his hand would shake. A fear and a refrain he repeated multiple times during interviews is that *people won't understand when you tell them*. It is evident the event has left an indelible mark on all those who experienced it.

Authentic leadership. This subtheme was not explored in the literature review and did not closely align with any single theory of leadership identified in figure 1-1 but needs introducing here. Having described the toll on Bill as a person, it is at this juncture that I wanted to know what drove his decision making. What was it about the manner in which Bill navigated the crisis which guided decision making? What I discovered was his actions reflected the descriptors used to define authentic leadership (George, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Upon examination, there was a great deal of dissonance within the research field. Some claim that there is no such thing as “one true self” borne of authenticity (Caza & Jackson, 2011), but it was impossible to disregard a theory which was predicated on the measure of a leader's actions – one in which the pursuit of truth was a central tenet. This makes perfect sense when I examine the need to *break the code of silence* later in this synthesis. Field notes identified clear purpose, values, heart,

positive relationships, altruism, credibility, and an ability to encourage others. This is not an exhaustive list of authentic leadership qualities but were most evident in the case study data. Additional interviews also indicated that the leader's actions were based on doing what he believed to be the right thing even when there were reasons to deviate. Possibly the single moment when researcher bias or reflexivity might have skewed the findings came when discussing the involvement of law enforcement. The principal would not allow anyone to interview either the perpetrator or other students implicated without a parent present. He knew, as did the outside agencies, that the best chance of getting viable information would come immediately upon questioning. Bill Bond would not permit that. For a moment I allowed my experiential knowledge to interfere with my researcher role and admitted I was confused. His rationale was that in times of order we can bend rules slightly but that in times of crisis a school leader must "stand by policy." This struck me as counterintuitive to everything I had hitherto practiced. Their policy was that a parent be present when legal authorities outside the school district were going to interview a student. He paused for a very long time. "If you don't treat the worst well... you will treat the best badly."

This spontaneous utterance was an example of the notion introduced in the opening of this chapter that not all themes of *gravitas* are represented equally in terms of frequency. This redirected the field notes and personal reflections for an entire 24 hours. I reexamined how Schein (2010) differentiated between primary and secondary embedded mechanisms in order to more accurately interpret this leader's actions in a time of crisis. Schein identifies what a leader pays attention to and controls as the first primary mechanism, although he is cautious never to rank them. In this instance the principal controlled access to the students and protected the individual child. He attended to their

needs no matter the allegations that they may have contributed in some way to the shooting. We visited the topic again in a later interview and he was steadfast in the decision he made. “It doesn’t matter how I feel about it.... It was the right thing to do”. As the school began to develop new norms, there was naturally what Schein defines as a “heightened emotional involvement” (p. 243) and the principal believed it was his ethical duty to protect all students not just those he considered worthy. We discussed the terms *authentic* and *ethical* leadership and agreed they share several attributes such as altruism, integrity, and adherence to a set of morals. Where we struggled as co researchers is whether one has to believe in the actions (authenticity), or whether simply doing the right thing is enough. Schein identifies resource allocation and hiring/coaching staff as additional primary mechanisms of leadership, but I posit these are as much a product of the secondary mechanisms attributable to organizational factors because they are frequently controlled by the policies and processes we inherit from the organization. Over time these integrate as the primary mechanisms controlled by the leader become woven into the fabric of the organization at large, but organizational culture is slow to change. While the intensity of learning is increased after a crisis due to the heightened emotions (Schein, 2010), the data in our study aligns closely with the increased need for trust, belonging and authentic relationships in the struggle against school shootings. This tenet of leadership will be revisited as we examine the lessons he wishes us to take away.

Lessons Left to Learn

In allowing the data to be the star in this chapter, the principal felt the need to share his hard fought wisdom in a loosely structured set of lessons on leadership. What follows is a summary of each lesson as divulged organically from the interviews. No specific order is intended to suggest importance but serves as a reminder of how we

became co-researchers on this journey. He shared his thoughts knowing he was addressing a fellow educator. As our time together began to wind down, Bill developed a sense of fragmented urgency. He returned to the hours and days immediately following the shooting several times. “The ambulances are gone now...the blood is off the floor and walls...I’m not thinking about what happened yesterday. I’m in full planning mode for the next day... Everything now is about tomorrow”. I asked him to identify those lessons every principal should learn proactively rather than in response to a crisis.

Strong communication. Strong communication was a major topic in this portion of the interviews. How a crisis is communicated to the community is critical. Bill believes in transparency as a precursor to trust. This is accomplished by sharing as much detail as possible no matter how seemingly irrelevant. He would repeat the phrase “Mama will never get too much information”. At Heath the board opted to have Bill be the district spokesperson. The key was not so much *who* but *what*. All communication, both internal and external, must convey a consistent message that the school or district is taking every measure possible to facilitate recovery. He learned from the principal in the Pearl, MI shooting that it made a strong impact when they created a motto “We are Pearl Strong”. Immediately following the Heath shooting, he emulated this approach with success. Photos and memorabilia always bear the mantra: “We Are Heath Strong”. This has become a common theme following other shootings. As part of the research process, a break was taken from interviews and a visit was made to Benton, KY where a very similar shooting had happened at Marshall County High School two months prior to my visit. These photographs were taken during that visit and are indicative of messages seen throughout the community on business marquees, in front yards, and painted on the windows of cars. Images 4-3, 4-4, and 4-5 were taken outside local businesses. Image 4-6

shows Marshall County High School having successfully resumed daily operations, however it is clear from image 4-7 that a law enforcement presence was intentionally made visible from the highway.



Figure 4-3. Photo showing community support at a bank in Benton, KY, 2018. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October)



Figure 4-4. Photo showing community support at a store in Benton, KY, 2018. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October).



Figure 4-5. Photo showing community support in Benton, KY, 2018. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October).



Figure 4-6. Marshall County High School (MCHS): Normal Day: Back to School After a Shooting. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October)



Figure 4-7. Law enforcement at MCHS subsequent to the 2018 shooting. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October).

The data reflects the need to be honest, direct, and consistent in sharing what you can with both the media and community. The principal was forthcoming with his criticism of organizational structure. He believes that superintendents are incorrectly trained to say “Let me think about that/I’ll get back to you”. He does not believe either is appropriate in a crisis and that to say *no comment* is always the wrong answer, crisis or not. Bill believes strongly that the foundation of good communication must come from day to day operations. It will not emerge from the ashes of a crisis – it is too late then. The example given is to train those who answer phones or greet visitors to a campus. They must never say “He is in a meeting /off campus / not available”. Instead, if not available, they were always to say:

The principal is with kids or with teachers. It is the truth. It is also true when they say *not available* – but the outcome is different. If you say he is not available the

implication is the caller's issue is not important enough, whereas when you say he is with kids or with teachers – then you at least leave them with an accurate image of you doing your job. (Bill Bond)

Know the needs of your staff. Three lessons are to be learned from the data around knowing the needs of the staff you serve. *The first lesson* is that people need to be needed. The data was mixed on Bill's need to control the recovery process while meeting the emotional needs of his stakeholders. In his initial decisions, there was relatively little negotiation, but he acknowledged that he could not manage every detail and others in the community had a need to be needed. He described how "people will intuitively offer help and it is your job to find them something they can contribute". If the leader fails to do that, it makes a person feel they are not valued and that will erode trust. He quipped that lots of cookies were baked and shared in the weeks following the crisis just to ensure people felt valued. The data therefore indicate a pervasive need for a distributive style of leadership, but which becomes more hierarchical in the moment of crisis and its immediate aftermath.

The second lesson on staff is that they want direction: "Just tell me what you want me to do". Once they have a responsibility then you trust them to carry it through. You check in periodically to see if they need additional resources for whatever the assignment might be.

The third lesson on staff was the need to understand how their needs in a time of crisis are different from the leader. "My biggest mistake was assuming others function the way I do". As a school leader and as a person, Bill Bond was not interested in being counseled or attending any form of support group. In essence he was indignant about the possibility. This aligns with Fein's fifth theme around school leaders in crisis, that they

believe a *part of professionalism is emotional control* (Fein, 2001). Bill admitted he failed to formally attend to the psychological or emotional needs of his staff in a timely manner. He acknowledged there was never a break in his tenor or a tear shed, but that at night when he was by himself, he was inconsolable. Nobody ever knew this aspect of how he was truly dealing with the incident. A crisis counseling team was brought in by the district and it transpired that there were several members of staff who appreciated the counseling – somewhat to his surprise. When approached by one of the outside counselors about how he was feeling, he exclaimed, “I feel like shit... how the hell do you think I feel?” He recognized that he took on a huge amount of emotion for the kids but underestimated the needs of his staff. The outside counseling team took a week to arrive which he asserts is excessively long and defeats the purpose of them being there. “These days, folks are mobilized within 24 hours”. There were group sessions organized as well as individual counseling made available. The staff member stated: “We did have counseling available. We did group counseling after school in the library and several of us also did individual counseling. Some people had a more difficult time than others dealing with it. I know one marriage that broke up”. Bill’s response to counseling was less amenable “I could never have agreed to the counseling. I would have destroyed your sharing circle.” In recognition that his coping strategies were not universal, the data show the school leader carried immense regret for not providing more structured counseling, though not initially.

The day we went back... the day after the shooting... I didn’t organize anything and that was on purpose. People simply went wherever they felt most comfortable. They gathered in classrooms, hallways, gyms, locker rooms, cafeterias, and classrooms..... When you are in a life and death agony, you just

look out for one another... in that moment and the next day and the day after that.

How that looks changes each day. (Bill Bond)

When prompted to say who looked after him the response was simple. “Grandkids. They don’t care what kind of day you’ve had. I would come home and Alexander would say: ‘Grandad, get your books out. I am going to be the teacher and you are the student. Now pay attention!’”

Adhering to an ethic of authenticity. In the case of Heath, the principal protected the perpetrator and alleged accomplices where many of us may have been less altruistic. There was strong suspicion that several boys had known about the plan and had engaged with the shooter around it. After the investigation, they were given the option to transfer to another campus. When they opted to stay at Heath, the principal had to make a professional commitment to protect them from the wrath of their peers. When advisory groups were formed, he put all four in his group for fear that such an environment would give too much leverage for students to attack them. We examined this from the embedded mechanisms delineated by Schein (2010) but the principal summarized it as: “the difference between being highly effective in what you are doing and doing the right thing”.

Trust. While the interviews did not address the topic of trust in the form of a direct question, it emerged strong from triangulated data. When watching news broadcasts, reading articles, listening to oral histories, and speaking with additional stakeholders, it was evident that the community was strong in their collective trust of Bill Bond as a leader. It allowed them to occasionally question decisions but trust him to do what was in the school’s best interest. One area that was initially challenged was the decision to go back to school the next day:

I did not want anyone's minds to be disengaged. After two days of hugging and crying people finding their own niche...no formal assembly. Then you sense that it's time to change up...They were not happy about coming back the next day. They questioned my decision for sure. Later they said it was the right thing to do...You have to understand, there was little in the way of previous examples to follow...Columbine was 13 days. I hated that for them. Kids needed to be with their peers.

The staff member expressed an almost identical emotion which speaks to the power of the messaging at the time: "I am sure you know that we returned to school the very next day and I was so relieved to be at school. I needed to be with my people and the kids needed us to be there, too. When other tragedies happen, they often stay out of school. That, to me, is a mistake. Kids need to be with their teachers and their friends." A student put it this way: "There is no one who understands what you are going through except those people who went through it with you".

Capacity. Bill believes most skills come through experience. However, the data show the need for the leader to be both flexible and intuitive which are more than the sum of past experiences. Capacity to navigate a phenomenon such as a school shooting requires an amalgamation of experience and intelligence. It is the juncture at which these become reified with other attributes such as talent, skill, training, judgment, and wisdom. The principal claimed to have none of those and yet his actions suggest otherwise. He returned instead to the war analogy and how goals must be adjusted in crisis. When asked what was done about semester exams, state testing, and curriculum after the shooting, there was a long pause: "We might focus on data when things are going well, but following a crisis we needed to focus more on people". They made multiple changes

which are examined in the following section on prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR), but it was clear that the purpose was now different. In a staff meeting the second day after the shooting, the principal instructed his staff:

Bring out your A game lessons... I don't care what it is or whether it is aligned to any scope or sequence. Engage kids. If it's a lesson you have already taught – teach it again... Hell, they weren't paying attention the first time anyway! (Bill Bond)

The role of the principal clearly ebbed and flowed in the first twelve months following the shooting – he became what he described as a *coordinator*. There was money to be processed, allocated, and accounted for and the victims' families had various needs to be met. Missy Jenkins, who was paralyzed, needed a vehicle which could accommodate a wheelchair and their house needed handicap modifications. In addition, there were decisions for post high school which needed to be made for the surviving victims. Bill takes no credit for the help that the community provided. "I just made phone calls". He called the local Ford® dealership and local building contractors to explain Missy's situation and they simply provided what was needed. One of the survivors was a star athlete with a full scholarship, but the shooting left her unable to use one arm. He called the university and they completely honored the scholarship regardless. "They told me, she is the kind of scholar athlete we need. It will be our privilege to have her as a student". Examples such as these abound in the interviews and speak volumes about the power of community and trust which is addressed further in the section on external factors.

The need for change. Bill believes unequivocally that after a crisis some things must change or perception will be that we just as vulnerable now as prior to the event. He

acknowledged however that some of the changes were there for the sake of letting stakeholder see that action was being taken, whether it would have a lasting impact or not. Most of the changes put in place were logistical and are described in the following section, but the message from the principal was that change constitutes an integral part of the healing process. Even such things as the timeline for memorials, as he explained:

They will occur organically in the beginning and then before you know it you have piles of messages and flowers outside the gate. The monuments must remain and then be incrementally condensed. There is no specific timeline but eventually school has to resume normal operations, so the memorial cannot be the focal point of every day. (Bill Bond)

Ultimately a stone memorial which had been erected in front of the campus was renovated and relocated. “In 2017, The McCracken County Board of Education voted to move the memorial to a lot across the street from Heath Middle School. The new site would allow the public to visit and pay respect at any time” (Barger, November 27, 2017). Image 4-6 depicts the original memorial, images 4-7 and 4-8 were taken during the data collection, and images 4-9 and 4-10 show the latest iteration of how students have opted to pay their respects.



Figure 4-8. Original memorial to victims of Heath High School (HHS) shooting. Heath School Memorial Committee photo (2017). Digital image retrieved from <https://www.wpsdlocal6.com/2017/11/27/heath-high-school-shooting-memorial/>



Figure 4-9. New memorial to victims of HHS shooting, 2017. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October).



Figure 4-10. Dedication to students Nicole Hadley, Jessica James, and Kayce Steger. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October).



Figure 4-11. Painted rocks in memory of HHS victims. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October).



Figure 4-12. A close-up example of painted rock messages. Paris, B. J. (photographer), (2018, October)

The final image in the series shows the names of the survivors – Shelley Schaberg, Missy Jenkins Smith, Kelly Hard Alsip, Hollan Holm, and Craig Keene. Each survivor opted to stay and graduate from Heath High School. They each went on to higher education and most became educators. In a rare moment during interviews, Bill smiled and quipped “We lost one... he became a lawyer.” This particular story speaks to the power of Heath as a family. Hollan Holm had been shot in the head and had to have surgery. When he was in recovery with dozens of stitches across his skull, he told his family “I am the least hurt...I need to be the first back.” In adult life Hollan became an attorney and advocates for sensible gun regulation. His was the final additional stakeholder interview and is reflected later in the recommendations since it pertains to the larger issues of policy.

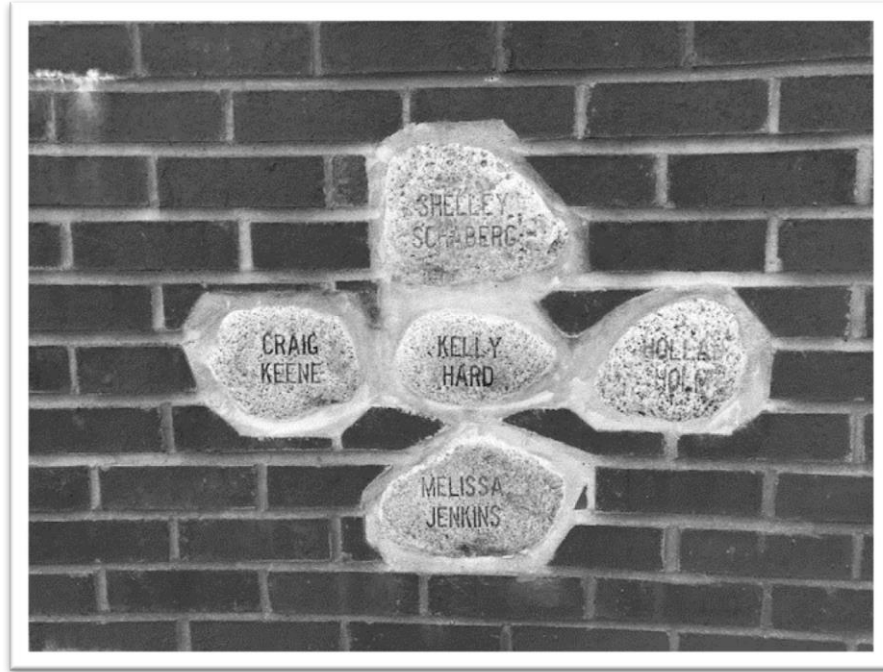


Figure 4-13. Memorial to injured survivors of Heath High School shooting. Paris, B. J. (photographer). (2018, October).

Theme 2: Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (PPR)

Subsequent to the shootings in the 1990s, agencies (both public and private) developed a wide range of protocols, guides, and recommendations to address prevention, preparedness, and recovery from school crises. The term ‘recovery’ is used sparingly in this study since we can only measure *response*, not actual *recovery*. These were introduced in the literature review and will be examined again in the recommendations in Chapter 5, but for the purpose of synthesizing data specific to our case, it is evident that prevention, preparedness, and response plans are essentially a product of the last decade. Nothing in the data is indicative of a purposefully designed prevention plan regarding the risk of a school shooting.

In interviews about crisis preparedness, the principal admitted “Any success we had up until that point was a question of chance not design”. Additional stakeholder interviews confirmed this description. Terri had to think for a moment before responding:

What had the school done prior to the shooting in the way of safety? Well, we just didn't worry about it much. Our school was a rural school that you had to drive to get to. We were a family. We knew our kids and their parents and many of them had gone to school at Heath. We never thought anything like this would have happened. (Terri)

Subsequent to the shooting however, very specific examples emerged. Immediately following the shooting (and in keeping with the need for change), the school implemented a policy of checking every backpack that came through the doors. This was not necessarily popular and some of the interview data suggested it was ‘intrusive’ and ‘annoying’ but the school leader stands by the decision.

Security is a vague mental state.... Marshall County [Benton High School Shooting] did the same....I know teachers hate all that....You have to change something, Notice my wording... I said we *checked* backpacks, not *searched* them...It was a time for staff to interact and engage with students...A greeting in a non-instructional environment... Greeting is positive. There was a need to build stronger relationships with kids and this was an immediate starting point. (Bill Bond)

Other measures were not so easily accepted. The school issued ID cards and stakeholders were unanimous in their disdain of this particular measure. The school board member admitted:

Some of the things we did were good... though I have to say I was not in favor of the ID badges. I argued myself blue in the face against it. The uselessness is proven by the fact that in this case, he [MC] would have legitimately been wearing one himself. He belonged there. That was just money wasted (Randy).

The staff member described the new measures:

They made the kids and faculty wear ID badges. The kids were not supposed to be in the hall without their badges. What? We knew the kids! Several of our students felt like they were forced to wear toe tags so they could be identified in another incident. They were very resentful. I was in charge of making the badges and I had an extra one for each kid if they forgot it. After so many times of forgetting it, they were supposed to be suspended! It was ridiculous. I don't think the other two high schools had such strong reactions but the kids I dealt with certainly did. Of course, these were the ones who *forgot* or were being defiant about wearing them but I totally got where they were coming from. (Terri)

On the subject of checking backpacks the employee seems ambivalent:

The best part about that was that we used that time to greet the kids and ask them how they were doing. I always felt like if someone wanted to bring in a weapon, however, all they had to do was stick it in their pants or socks so I wasn't sold on the idea that it was a safety measure. It just looked good to parents who didn't think it through. We did it for years...I think until the kids that were in 9th grade graduated. (Terri)

There were mixed responses to the erection of a perimeter fence. In support the board member explained:

One of the first things we did was to install a perimeter fence. The front office looks out into the front of the building so they would have a clear line of sight. We had it

to where you had to be buzzed in. People could not just walk up to any door and gain access. (Randy)

In contrast the librarian shared:

What changed afterward? Well, they went a little nuts, in my opinion. First, keep in mind, that this was one of our students who everyone knew and who was legitimately in the building. So what did they do? Put up fences around the school? What?? It wasn't someone who walked in off the street. (Terri)

Prevention: Culture as a proactive strategy. Bill believes from his experience that culture is a formidable ally in preventing school crises. If you teach compassion and practice compassion, then habits follow. Bullying for example, was introduced in the opening chapters as a cultural factor that could potentially be mitigated. The data are divided on the issue “MC behaved as all children do when they are in trouble – find someone or some external thing to blame” (Bill). In this instance, the perpetrator claimed he was bullied. In the very first interview, the principal stated “Once he had made the decision he wanted to appeal his sentence, he claimed he was bullied. When that was not successful, his next claim was he heard voices.” In the final data analysis it remains unclear as to what extent the situation was propelled by bullying. What does become evident however is that intentional and trusting connections with students will help develop a more inclusive climate, rendering the issue paramount to prevention. The principal shared that school shootings of this nature tend not to happen in highly populated urban areas. Students there have a variety of experiences and can generally find a person or an activity they can connect with. “This is more of a small town/rural phenomenon which we must recognize and work to mitigate. All kids need to feel accepted and connected regardless of where they go to school.” Additional stakeholder

interviews corroborated that the perpetrator in this case had many friends and while he may have been teased, he was *no more or less* bullied than any other child. The employee stated: “I’ve known lots of kids who were lots scarier, more violent...more apt to do crazy stuff. This kid was just not that way. He had lots of friends” (Terri). Interviews circled back to bullying organically as the stakeholders would reflect, but the conclusion validates that “School shootings are never the result of just one thing. If it were that simple, we would have made more progress by now.” In a follow up broadcast twenty years after the shooting, news stations reported

Investigators say [MC] had been bullied. After the shooting, he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. In 2012, [MC] attempted to withdraw his plea, saying he was mentally ill at the time he made it. A month later, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals denied his request.” (Barger, 2017)

The principal concluded: “Perhaps it was one tiny piece of a 1,000 different factors.” The school board member, Randy Wright has a slightly different perspective: “I do think he was picked on a lot looking back. I think people have their limits and are at different levels when they act out.”

All interviewees addressed the need for students to feel connected in some way to their school. The principal used Columbine as an example:

D and K felt persecuted. For them it was about inflicting pain where they felt as though they were outsiders. When you decide there is no place you fit in, you will likely engage with drugs, alcohol, deviant, or criminal behavior.... The news anchor, Brian Gumble, wanted to know why it seemed to be happening in suburban or rural areas. My thoughts are that urban society is made up of diverse groups. Heath was homogenous – a tribe of one if you will. In urban society you

will find acceptance when you walk outside the school gates - if not inside.” (Bill Bond)

Contagion: Breaking the code of silence. Conversely, a common theme is the need to break the code of silence which exists within many school cultures. When students behave inappropriately or in ways that might harm themselves or others, nobody report the event to an adult. Students are encultured early on to believe that telling is tattling and that protecting the peer group is more honorable than that of a collective group. This problem permeated every facet of the data in our case study. When I originally presented the concept to our school leader he was adamant that we should not talk in legal terms. He reminded me we are in the kid business and not the police business. In our past work together we have used the term ‘breaking the code of silence’ in our work to combat cyberbullying. It represents a similar urgent need here.

They did not tell me....They did not tell anyone... They had Thanksgiving dinner together with their families...do you see where I am going with this? They had been to church....They did not tell anyone....at least that I know of... I could have prevented the shooting if they had trusted me enough to tell. My enemy was silence. (Bill Bond)

He believes that in high school, loyalty to friends often trumps any other type of commitment. He compares it to a gang mentality. In the Bethel shooting in Alaska the same year as Heath, it was reported that more than a dozen students knew of the shooting ahead of time, taught the perpetrator to shoot, and actually encouraged his potential rise to notoriety. It was further reported than students brought cameras to school on the day of the shooting to record the event (Langman, 2009a). In prior research, Vossekeuil et al. (2004) advocates for increasing measures to detect information that was knowable prior

to the event as an essential element of threat assessment. In practitioner terms – the need to *break the code of silence*. In this study, the student body at Heath High School and the community of Paducah were clearly disturbed by the notion that the event was known about, but there was little that could be done after the fact. The four students accused of having known specifics were immediately represented by lawyers and nothing could be proven to the contrary.

I had no grounds to kick them out and they...all four of them... they chose to stay...It doesn't matter how I feel about it... it really doesn't.... I was pissed... but it was my job. I never thought their intent was to go along with it in the end anyway” (Bill Bond).

The parent interpreted the same circumstances a little differently “These boys were not part of the in crowd. There was talk of them planning to take over the school. I don't think these others took it seriously though” (Randy).

To summarize the data around prevention, preparedness and response, we can return to the way it was organized in Chapter 2. I proffered there were *interpersonal*, *logistical* and *psychological* components. Our data clearly supports this structure. There was definitely a lack of *interpersonal* connectedness since no leakage occurred and others knew of concerning behaviors prior to the event. In addition, no prior threat or interaction/conflict arose between the shooter and the victims. In a 2017 interview the shooter claimed he had no specific targets. This is in contrast to the data from the principal who gave a detailed account of how Nicole was intentionally and deliberately shot in the head during the 13 minute story. *Logistically*, there were no physical barriers in place and the perpetrator had a clear plan and access to weapons. *Psychologically*, later reports indicate the shooter became suicidal in prison, claims to have heard voices, and

felt victimized. The data neither support nor refute the theories represented in the literature review around emotionally vulnerable youth who enact their homicidal ideation in the safety of games (Kidd and Meyer, 2002). To that end, our data were unable to speak to the issues of threat assessment or risk factors prior to the shooting. However, they became an integral part of day to day functions after the event. The principal and staff became adept at environmental scanning (being acutely aware of situations outside the norm) and an awareness of the school climate through multiple avenues. They committed to the advisories, clubs, increased adult visibility, and continuous dialogue. The school board member however was extremely emphatic in his interview about the need for educators collectively, and leaders especially, to change their daily behaviors proactively. He firmly supports the idea of environmental scanning as a preventative strategy.

Please take note of this. We have to change the mindset of educators in schools... the principal, teachers...all the school personnel. Instead of starting each day assuming everything will be fine, begin each day knowing something could happen. If you see a kid behaving differently or looking troubled.... look into it. We cannot run schools thinking it's not going to happen here.and the biggest things – for me at least ... I really hope you never have to look back at this and say Randy Wright told me this would happen... the biggest thing is access to extra-curricular events. One day a shooting will occur there. Franky it angers me that anyone can just walk into schools off the street during school events. We would never let people just walk into the Whitehouse – they are checked out first. If it is good enough for the president it is good enough for our children. (Randy)

Preparedness: the Incident Command System (ICS). This term is now more widely understood in the education community and most crisis response protocols are based on this format. The system is defined by FEMA as “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.” The guiding principal is that all crises can be managed by this system regardless of severity, type, or location and that all responding personnel will function in a cohesive fashion. There is a distinct theory to practice dissonance here. Interview data clearly indicate the need for such plans to be practiced and are further supported in the literature as well as the most recent 2018 Federal Report on School Safety. This need is widely understood, however the logistical problems around school safety are not quite as closely aligned in the research. Our data contend many of the efforts are counterproductive.

Metal detectors imply guilt, at least in my experience they do..... I didn't... I did not want to send a message of mistrust. You will never feel better than before you went through one. In Jonesboro – he simply shot the security guard when the metal detector went off” (Bill).

The concept of hiring resource officers and security guards were also expressed as ineffective measures in this case. “The presence of armed guards doesn't make them feel safe – it makes them feel insecure. It is a constant reminder of potential trouble” (Bill).

The employee described it this way:

Another thing that was instituted was the hiring of school resource officers.

While I loved the men who served at the schools, their presence did not make me feel any safer. I am not sure that their roles were actually defined since they seem

to think they were only observers in the school. In fact, some of them never leave their offices. I would have had them patrolling the halls and being visible around the school. One of the guys, a retired city cop, did stand at the door at Heath and help check backpacks, greeted the kids, etc. The others that I've observed sit in their offices and watch the cameras around the school. Again, personally, several of these men became like brothers to me but I think they were a little lazy and not totally clear in their duties. Maybe because they were all retired policemen, their chain of command was different, but I heard, more than once, that a specific thing wasn't *their* job, it was the job of the assistant principal.” (Terri)

The literature review implied that such measures are not only ineffective but have the potential to harm the school environment (Phaneuf, 2009). There is little to no evidence to suggest value or efficacy in arming school leaders or teachers, though this does not appear to be the messaging underlying the 2018 Federal Report on School Safety. Many of the recommendations within the report allude to this as a cogent solution.

Theme 3: Organizational Theory

Trust or hierarchy? A much referenced quote in this study is “If you cannot trust, stick to hierarchy” (Powley & Nissan, 2012). This is the title of a Homeland Security article which explores different dynamics associated with threat assessment at the highest levels of national security, but it summarizes the findings in this study just as effectively. The data on leadership and community in Heath High School was prolific, but data on the role of the organization from a district standpoint was negligible. This lack of information could be interpreted as a form of data in and of itself in that participants rarely referenced anyone in the district other than those directly engaged with the campus. If we return to the four pillars of organizational theory (structure, hierarchy,

goals and culture), there was little in the data to suggest participants saw themselves as part of a larger structure. It was about the campus culture and their specific recovery goals with little credence to hierarchy. This could be attributed to the fact that organizational structure is a facet of secondary embedded mechanisms (Schein 2010) rather than primary, rendering them less compelling when describing a traumatic event. When the interviews were triangulated against artifacts, documents, media and the oral histories there was little mention of names other than that of the principal. The oral histories are part of an ongoing project of the Kentucky Historical Association through the library archives and may present different data when complete. Their goal, per their website, is to preserve living memory “of those directly affected by the 1997 Heath High School shooting regarding the shooting itself, its aftermath, and the way the incident was portrayed in local and national media.”

All data pointed to the school leader, the staff, and the community. In our case it was no secret that the relationship between the superintendent and the principal was tenuous at best. When asked where the superintendent was, he would say “Back in central office where he belongs”. He is described as indecisive, lacking empathy, unable to deal with the emotions of the community and being a bean counter. “...it was just about finance for him” (Bill). In an effort to exhibit tact, he added: “The board sensed the superintendent had difficulty connecting with the emotions of the moment.” He feels that worked out in the best interests of the whole school. He admitted :” I was not in the mood to take direction. There was no conflict per se.... He was just there as a support system”. He added his opinion that colleges of higher education are partially to blame “They train superintendents to sound as though they have no emotion and to share as little as possible. We talk a big game about transparency – but that is not the reality.” It was

interesting that Bill spoke of the need for transparency and yet hid his own vulnerability, sadness, and anger after the shooting. Both he and his wife said he never shed a tear outside the solitude of night, and away from his home and the community.

Despite a lack of obvious cohesion between the data and organizational theory, I posit the four sub themes of *culture*, *structure*, *goals*, and *context* have a direct relationship to, and impact on, the phenomenon of school shootings. In any circumstances, the organization needs to build a culture which is embedded unilaterally and not imposed in a hierarchical form. The concepts of *family* and *trust* appear repeatedly in the data on Heath High School. Both of these are systematically eroded where there is weak or sporadic communication. In organizational theory trust is built through strong communication and is based “on an underlying assumption of an implicit moral duty” (Hosmer, 1995, p. 379).

We often hear culture and climate used interchangeably but I posit they are not the same thing. Culture is something that can be crafted intentionally and the climate represents the outcome of that culture. It is the invisible sense of well-being and functionality that one senses, or does not sense, within minutes of being on a school campus. This has significant implications for a school in crisis. It is done with a strong commitment to clear communication. “Inadequate pre-crisis communication increases the probability that a crisis event will be surprising, that precautions will be inadequate, and that serious harm will occur to the organization” (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2001, p. 158). The climate therefore is the outcome of culture, not its equal. Culture is formed when we have enough shared experiences (Schein, 2010). I would modify that to say either *enough* shared experiences or a single highly *significant* one such as a school shooting.

The structure of an organization has a distinct impact on its resulting culture. If it is perceived as hierarchical then trust is challenged. In the case of Heath, Kentucky had a very specific site- based decision making format in place unlike any I have encountered elsewhere. It was more unilateral in that this committee had ultimate authority to hire and fire staff as well as modify, enact, or challenge policies. Since the data show wide support for the decisions of the school leader, there is a sense that the organizational culture was made far more visible through the collective behaviors of the campus community, than that of the school district. The community trusted the school principal rather than district leaders.

This was also evident in an examination of goals. Our data suggest an element of dissonance between the organization and the campus. The school and community were committed to education when that may or may not have been the focus of the superintendent. It does appear however that the organization was able to rise to the occasion and establish goals around safety (post-shooting) which were chosen collaboratively – notwithstanding the apparent ire at some of the logistical pieces examined earlier.

Context is the pillar of organizational theory which most greatly impacted our case study. The principal concurs: “When things are going well, it is OK to let things slide – but in a crisis – stick to policy.” The context in which the school found itself was contrary to everything the stakeholders understood.

We were used to things the way they were. We were stable... but after something like this, I firmly believe you have to get back to school as soon as possible... That will vary obviously.... You have to lean in – do you get what I’m saying?

...you cannot run away... you must go back and establish a new normal as a family. (Bill Bond).

Context here is everything. This shooting happened in 1997, before there were any established protocols for what to do. It is difficult to imagine that a school or school district would be given clearance to go back to normal operations the day after a shooting. In this case, the lobby of the school used by the prayer group was a relatively small area. The crime scene was contained. Law enforcement agencies released the facility back into the care of the district late the same evening. The staff worked tirelessly overnight to prepare the building for the next day. Whether this is predominantly a reflection of the investigation, the size of the community/organization, or simply the era of uncertainty as to next steps, is impossible to surmise twenty years later. The size of an organization is however a critical area of interest. School shootings have historically occurred in smaller communities. This speaks to the need for further study in Chapter 5. It appears somewhat counter intuitive. We might expect students in smaller schools to feel a greater sense of connectedness. Yet as the principal pointed out, larger communities offer more variety in terms of places to fit in. In conclusion the data clearly support the notion that organizational theory can enhance our “understanding of leadership and management in schools” (Bush 2015 pg. 36), even though we find ourselves with competing ideas on how that might be operationalized (Bolman and Deal, 1991). What is clear from the data is the necessity to build interdependency throughout the system.

Theme 4: External Factors

As the data were repeatedly synthesized it became abundantly clear the story does not belong exclusively to Heath High School, to Paducah, or to Bill Bond the

principal. It is part of a larger story still being written about an intractable problem. The literature review revealed many factors which are outside the direct control of school leaders that contribute to school shootings. This is supported in the data as represented in figure 4-2 and aligns with a widely supported belief that media is a strong influence on school shootings and how we perceive them.

The media. “You have to feed the Piranha. If you do not control the story, they will.” This statement by Bill Bond represents one of the most challenging aspects of the phenomenon. While my own professional experience supports the belief that media is a powerful and significant factor in public perception, I clearly underestimated the magnitude of how media can affect actual events. In addition to normal interaction with media as a school principal, my additional experiential knowledge comes from having engaged with the Education Writers Association (EWA). This organization describes its purpose as ‘improving the quality and quantity of education coverage to create a better-informed society’. Several years ago I was called to address the EWA on the impact media reporting has on cyberbullying and bullicide. I believed then, and still do, that media personnel have a job to do, one which is an essential function of a civilized society. I further believe however, that this function demands an ethical application. In short, a need to acknowledge the power their coverage has on outcomes. The employee told me “They invaded our private grief” (Terri). Several sections of the data described a sense of intrusion. On the day of the shooting, 150 media organizations showed up at the school. They were originally told they could not have access to the premises by the district superintendent, which is a common response. The principal however believed that restricting access completely simply leaves reporters to wander the streets and grocery stores looking for upset students and parents. Instead, he set up a base of operations for

them on the athletic field and updates provided regularly in cohort with the Sheriff and board members as applicable. The scope of this endeavor is shown in photo 4-11. At 8 a.m. daily, they held a press conference. “When you are sitting on a stage with a Sheriff and twelve microphones – it is a bad day.” When working with other school shootings the principal always reminded other leaders “You need to know what you are going to do with media an hour ago”.



Figure 4-14. Media staging area in response to Heath High School shooting. Mcdonogh, P, (Photographer) Copyright 1997 The Courier-Journal, Retrieved from <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/story-series/aftermath/2018/07/03/stays-you/721587002/>

Media and contagion (copycat). “If there had not been a Heath, there would not have been a Columbine” (Bill Bond). Synthesizing the results for this took several different angles because it tied inexorably to contagion/copycat, and also to a segment on regrets/mistakes. Not so much due to the frequencies of coded segments (31) or number of documents (16) but more in the puissance of the interviews. For the most part, the principal contained his emotions, much as I have known him to do when teaching others. However, when we spoke of the media exchanges, they were substantially longer and

visceral. He was particularly adamant that we take note of the following lessons learned: Never mention the perpetrator. “If I could have my time over, I would never have mentioned his name.” The media were tenacious about discussing the perpetrator. Efforts to divert the conversation to victims were rarely successful. Some reporters occasionally backed him into a corner. It was such a deliberate abuse of trust that he refers to Matt Lauer as an SOB in several exchanges. Matthew Todd Lauer was the co-host of NBC's Today show beginning the year of the shooting in 1997 but was fired by the network in 2017. During his tenure he hosted multiple stories on school shootings. The employee made the following observation about him: “Some people hate Matt Lauer to this day for something he said to Mr. Bond. I don't really remember what it was but I know people were ticked!” (Terri). There had been a written agreement that they would only speak about victims and the response process and not the shooter, but Lauer would constantly try to redirect with pointed questions about MC. Most other reporters were not as blatant but it was still a constant struggle.

I let MC be a person; I should have controlled that better. I was mad at Lauer and at myself. Six months later I was back in the studio with Lauer. It's an impossible situation. If you say no to the interview, they control the message. There had been other shootings. They see other kids on the news and people talking about them. They want to be them. I am sure there is a connection... there is always a connection.” (Bill Bond)

By synthesizing the data thematically rather than chronologically, it became increasingly evident this issue stems from the notion of copycat/contagion (as discussed in the literature review). When asked directly if he believed in the concept, the principal was emphatic. “Yes...absolutely. By showing photos of shooters, other teens will identify

with what they see before them and envy the attention. A need for recognition is always a theme.” In Chapter 2, we learned of the photo used at the Red Lake shooting. Bill told me MC *was a scary SOB* but portrayed as an innocent fourth grader. “That was intentional”. As if wanting to put his experiences with Matt Lauer aside, Bill spoke more softly to the time he spent with Bryant Gumbel. Gumbel was a television journalist and host of the NBC show *Today* – clearly the antithesis of his previous experiences. His interviews were conducted with grace and empathy for the victims and community. Some stakeholder responses supported this description contrary to the earlier quote describing the media as ‘assholes’. The school board member describes them as respectful and caring most of the time. He said it was not uncommon for reporters to become tearful as they heard stories from community members. The principal summarized it:

You cannot just assume the media are a nest of vipers all the time.....But hey – I can eat snakes if I am hungry enough. Without the media working with me I would not have survived. I would have had to move. The important question is always to know what you are selling. What residual message you need to remain when the interview is over... Print is long and in depth but TV is never more than two minutes – it is all twenty second soundbites. I see it this way.... I am a science teacher.... Nature abhors a vacuum. You need to be intentional about what fills that vacuum... I needed the public to know what the truth was as I perceived it... I guess I simply needed them to trust us with their children. If you mishandle it they will choose sides. (Bill Bond)

Pop culture as represented through video games. An additional theory introduced in the literature review centers around pop culture, which for the purposes of simplicity, we have focused on video gaming. Our data on this are inconclusive. The

proposition was introduced in the interviews that violent video games may result in an element of desensitization. The excerpts from the first interview show that the principal has clear opinions on shooting in general and how it applied in this case. “He shot like a kid playing video games” (Bill Bond). It was significant however that the principal described the shooting analogous to a video game. “He just looked at the screen and instinctively when something popped up in front of him When something got his attention and popped up in front of him, he shot” (Bill). There are claims that MC had never fired a gun before the shooting but that he hit eight people with 10 tries.

How did MC acquire this kind of killing ability? Simple: through practice. His simulators were point-and-shoot video games he played for hundreds of hours in video arcades and in the comfort of his own home. (Grossman & Degaetano, 1999, p. 4)

This study is unable to either corroborate or refute this claim. At the other end of this assertion, the court case was dismissed on the grounds that it is “simply too far a leap from shooting characters on a video screen to shooting people in the classroom” (Trager et al., 2014, p. 303). In the opening chapter, we discussed the concept of imminent critique within critical realism where there is a theory to theory dissonance. This serves as a reminder of how passionately researchers, practitioners, as well as communities will support one theory against another. At its most basic point of immanent critique, this represents a theory to *practice* inconsistency. Regardless of whether we accept or denounce a nexus between school shooters and violent video games, there is no denying that “At the tender age of fourteen he had practiced killing literally thousands of people” (Grossman & Degaetano, 1999, p. 4). The data in our study therefore aligns with the

findings in the literature review that violence in popular culture, notably in video games, has the potential to desensitize youth who may already be at risk for deviant behavior.

The power of community. This is a major theme within the data. The principal's spouse told the story of the day of the funeral. They had not eaten and stopped at a restaurant on the way to the service.

It was 3 p.m. I'm not sure why but we realized we hadn't eaten so we left home early and went to Cracker Barrel®. You know CB – noisy right? We walked in and it fell completely silent. You could hear the clanking of bowls. No one came near us. We sat there... Bill couldn't swallow... It was like that in a lot of places. People were being so respectful. Total strangers...As the funeral procession proceeded down Interstate 45, every single car stopped.” (Linda Bond)

The principal recalls how this went on for months. Then as the anniversary came around it would begin again, and the year after and every anniversary thereafter. As other shootings would occur and the collective memory of the community was reignited it would start again.

It is a no win situation because everybody wants things to be normal – the way they were, but everything is not normal. Everything is not normal... Meetings... ballgames.. doesn't matter. Walmart®... Couldn't even just to get toilet tissue.. people would come up and tell you what a good job you did. They would pat on you... You are trusted with the confidence of the community.” (Bill Bond)

Trust permeates the data throughout. Even in how the principal and community navigate outside agencies. “You cannot let police activity dictate education. How long does an investigation last? As long as they want it to... but understand it from our perspective, my job is kids... theirs is the investigation” (Bill Bond). The data showed that some

outside agencies supported the recovery and others almost derailed it at times. The disdain in the principal's voice for Focus on the Family®, Matt Lauer the journalist, and the counseling group was palpable. He advises schools to be very deliberate in who is permitted to come in and counsel students.

You need to have training for outside agencies and only those who have attended are allowed access in a crisis. I did not do that, but I know better now. Once you allow a group in...say the local Baptist Church... then the Methodist Church....now you have equal access laws to consider... I was lucky – what is some homemade devil worshipping nutcase group would have wanted in? That's why I say the school should offer a training session proactively...when there isn't a crisis... Are you with me? Then when one happens, you only allow access to those who came to your training. (Bill Bond)

Conversely, the school was able to elicit the help of the FranklinCovey® group. Originally two separate companies, Franklin Quest and Covey Leadership Center merged just a few months prior to the HHS shooting. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement indicative of the power of interdependency in a crisis. They came in at no cost and worked extensively with the students. "The beliefs became embedded in our culture and empowered us to support one another" (Bill Bond). What makes this liaison particularly interesting in terms of the research is how Covey decried a *personality ethic* in favor of a *character ethic*. He espoused the importance of strong values to guide intentional behavior. This again aligns more with an authentic approach to leadership than with any single theory identified in Figure 1-1.

The data show that external influences are difficult to manage but not impossible. We saw clearly how the community was embraced, listened to, supported, and engaged in

the response process. Data further supported the concept that as a leader, the principal did an exceptional job of containing the media.

Every time you sit down with the press, or go to a studio or do a phone interview, you have to remind yourself over and over why you are doing it. You have to carefully filter your responses through that. Know ahead of time the points you want to come through and make sure you say them – no matter what the question is. In that moment it is only about your community and your school – nothing else can creep in. (Bill Bond)

The notion of contagion/copycat was constantly at the forefront of the principal's thinking even when not directly referencing it as in the above quote. He was acutely aware of the need to steer the conversation away from the perpetrator. Other stakeholders however were frequently drawn to talk about him.

I don't think he had any intention of acting alone. They say he stole the gun but I don't believe that. I believe one of the others who was implicated got it for him. One of the four committed suicide a couple of years ago. He was a different kind of character. All of them were. The Sheriff was 99% sure they had planned it together but he couldn't prove anything. (Randy)

What is critical to note about this comment is that while we may know the basic facts of the Heath shooting and its victims, nobody ever mentions the additional students in the broader media domain. They were not allowed to gain notoriety outside the community.

Theme 5: Outliers

All of the data thus far are represented in depth through the literature review. A small number of themes evolved through the organic nature of the research which warrant further consideration simply because they bring new knowledge to the study.

Teachers are my heroes. In presenting excerpts of the initial interview, two subthemes emerged very early in the data gathering process, admiration for teachers in a crisis and the principals beliefs about the act of using a gun. The most poignant being everyone's respect and admiration for the staff at the school. When the principal stated 'teachers are my heroes' he clearly meant it. This sentiment is echoed throughout the data. Missy Jenkins who was paralyzed describes how teachers rushed toward the school lobby to help students who were shot.

[Mrs. Beckman] pushed her way against the wave of students in the hallway to reach the lobby. She came upon Kayce first who was lying just a few feet from me on the other side of the pillar. With two teachers already trying to help Kayce, I was the next one she spotted.... Mrs. Beckman knelt down and comforted me while trying to keep me awake. I gazed quietly at her and listened. Then I interrupted her. "Am I going to die?" I asked. "No, you are not going to die. You're going to be fine," she said... We both knew the truth. (Jenkins & Croyle, 2008, p 14)

Missy described the situation with Jessica. "The bullet hit one of her main arteries and she was bleeding internally. Coach Tommy Fletcher, my chemistry teacher, held her close" (Jenkins & Croyle, 2008, p. 15). Earlier quotes substantiate this compelling capacity for teachers and staff to rally in times of need and support the principal in his belief that teachers are heroes.

Changes to student performance data. When asked about student performance, Bill began with the statement: "A funny thing happened on the way to the data." This led to a line of inquiry which supports his unequivocal admiration for teachers. During that decade of the shooting, the school enrollment grew exponentially and scores on state tests improved drastically when others in the district were in decline.

After the shooting all PD was focused on a single theme – belonging. There were no sessions on curriculum, instruction, or assessment. “We changed one thing.... We put students’ emotional wellbeing at the top of our priorities. What happened to student achievement was unexpected. We went from being one of the poorer performing schools to the top third... pretty good for a country school...A year later we were in the top 10 percent academically.... The only variable was relationship building... We had a shared sense of belonging. (Bill Bond)

I asked for clarification around what that looked like in the immediate aftermath.

Keep in mind that even with semester exams right around the corner...it was Christmas...we were obligated to take exams...it was board policy.... but there were no specifics around format or type or length...of even weighted percentage of final grade...so everything was geared toward alleviating pressure. The philosophy was we are not going with tension....It’s funny looking back...the state tests were coming up in April. In the past we took those so seriously.... our lives and livelihood depended on it...people would lose their jobs over it....but this time we were simply going to take the exams...and you know what...we knocked the top off it! Instead of being curriculum driven and achievement focused, we became kid driven. (Bill Bond)

An equally unexpected outcome was around staffing. Reports show that on the day of the shooting there had been four subs on campus “but the next day we had 100% attendance...and every day after that.” While clearly outside the scope of this study to suggest causation, I would posit from these data that school performance is not simply a product of strong curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Other shootings. An unexpected portion of the data pertains to other shootings that the principal has dealt with. In interviews he references Pearl, Red Lake, Red Lion, Benton, Sandy Hook, and multiple others. His experience situates our participant in a unique aspect of the phenomenon which in itself adds validity to the findings. He is able to learn, share, and assist other schools to inch forward on their journey to safety. What he learned elsewhere is supported by our case study in multiple areas. One specific example was the need for trust. “Immediately following the shooting at *x High School*, the teachers there would have absolutely nothing to do with the board or central office. They allowed me to negotiate for them on what to do next.” Commonalities abound across multiple shootings when examined in the context of our study. While a single unit of analysis is not an adequate predictor of similar outcomes, the principal took what he knew from his experience to make recommendations, notably around the response phase. It was later in his career that he began to make connections to guide preventative practices. As he would remind me, “I am part of a small club you do not want to belong to”. Leaders who have experienced a shooting have worked both collaboratively with Bill and independently to share their hard fought wisdom. Frank DeAngelis, former principal of Columbine High School has recently published his book on the twentieth anniversary of the shooting that left 13 dead: *They Call me Mr. D: The Story of Columbine’s Heart, Resilience, and Recovery* was released in March of 2019. His was a different story from Heath in many ways, and yet disturbingly similar in others. Collectively, they build context around the phenomenon and add to our understanding.

The perpetrator. “I’ll never be able to forget the [M] I knew before this happened” (Jenkins & Croyle, 2010, p. 26).

It was not anticipated in the design of the interview protocol, nor the research questions to factor in a discussion of the perpetrator. However, it cannot be ignored that this occurred organically throughout the data gathering. Interviewees invariably brought up the subject of MC without prompting. Some reflections however, bear their own witness. Missy Jenkins who survived but is permanently paralyzed has a unique recollection of the individual she had once considered her friend:

- “[MC] believe it or not, was nice, funny, and generally pretty cool to hang around” (Jenkins & Croyle, 2008, p. 26).
- “He was so outgoing and funny” (p. 26).
- “I can’t say there was a whole lot out of the ordinary about him. He typically dressed in jeans and a tee shirt. [M] was always joking around. The class clown of the band” (p. 27).
- “When [M] was questioned by detectives after the shooting, he said he was mad because everybody made fun of him. Yes he was teased and bullied by some kids, but the irony is that he made fun of people all the time to get a laugh”. (p. 28)
- “What [M] did to us that day still doesn’t make sense. No matter how many different answers I get from court depositions, psychological evaluations, people who knew him, [M] himself, I don’t think I’ll ever fully understand it” (p. 25).

Since it is not a function of this study to determine causation, it is being acknowledged as a significant finding but not synthesized in depth. The risk in allowing the study to wander in this direction is that empathy for the perpetrator (a natural component of understanding) might cloud the data. Aspects of perpetrator risk factors are however introduced in the recommendations. The final words on the shooter belong to Missy Jenkins:

My sophomore year I was elected president of Future Homemakers of America (FHA), now known as Family Career & Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). I was looking forward to being part of Kaleidoscope that year, a class in which I would sing and dance in a choir production. My plan was to play soccer my junior year and continue in the band. But [M] ripped all of that away from me in a matter of seconds. (Jenkins & Croyle, 2010, p. 25)

Perception. The concept of reality as a social construction was introduced early in this study and one set of data points provide evidence. Each stakeholder had different recollections of the same event. The *Rashomon effect* was introduced in the literature review as the way in which participants may view the same event differently. In our data, multiple examples emerged wherein reality varied by participant. Missy Jenkins shares a very vivid picture of the event from her perspective:

What was strange was I didn't feel any pain. I wasn't crying at all. I still hadn't seen M with the gun, so I was unaware that I'd been shot. I honestly didn't know why I was on the ground. All I knew was I was conscious but couldn't feel anything." (Jenkins & Croyle, 2008, p. 11)

Two teachers attended to Missy as they waited for the ambulances to arrive: "I don't remember her ever being there with me. In fact it wasn't until nine years later that she and Mrs. Beckman told me that Mrs. Dummer was there, steadfastly holding my hand until the paramedics arrived." (p. 16).

Terri, the librarian, shared the following:

My weird story is that I went down stairs twice after the shooting. First to look for my son and the second time to take an injured student to the triage area. I do not remember one speck of blood. It is as clean as it was the day after, in my

mind. During counseling, I said something about that and one of the teachers, who I remember seeing giving CPR to one of the dying girls, said, "WHAT? Are you crazy?? I was covered in blood!" Umm, I guess the answer to that is, Yes, I was crazy at that time and still, to this day, do not remember any blood. This is why I do not believe in eye witnesses." (Terri)

Missy feels everyone's perspective about the timeline of events differed.

The ambulances finally arrived, I have no idea how long they took to get there. Some people said thirty minutes. Other said 15 minutes. Some said less than 10 minutes. Mr. Bond said it was 13 minutes. It's interesting how in a situation like that, time can fly by for some and stand still for others. (Jenkins & Croyle, 2010, p. 17)

When asked about how some versions of events differed, Bill summarized the concept: "Your reality is just your version of the truth."

The data confirms that this is indeed a complex phenomenon which illustrates why there is no consensus in the literature and no unified practice around the prevention of school shootings. The integration of theory, practice, and research will not be any the less messy or complex as we begin to examine the implications of these findings. As in all aspects of society 'there are many structures operating simultaneously, some reinforcing and some contradicting each other' (Porter, 1998: 173). We cannot imply causation from this study but what we have done is to identify specific underlying mechanisms and outcomes at play in this particular school shooting. The final chapter will explore what implications these interrelated components might have as we attempt rational changes in schools through more complete interpretations.

V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this case study was to explore a school shooting through the eyes and experiences of the principal. This chapter includes a discussion of how the themes converge with the theoretical framework and previous studies to answer the research questions. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations, areas for future research, and concluding remarks.

Key Findings: Tendential Predictions

Critical realism seeks the closest possible approximation to truth and therefore allows for tendential predictions to emerge from the data. The data from our study aligns with the following propositions which emanated from the literature:

Prevention, preparedness, and response protocols are plentiful but there is no unified application. This is consistently supported throughout the literature review and data analysis. This lack of congruence is addressed in the summary of implications for both practice and research.

Bullying is not necessarily a precursor to school shootings but is a significant consideration. The data in our study support the proposition that bullying cannot be deemed causative, but might certainly be a contributory factor which needs consideration in policy and practice.

Violent video games may result in an element of desensitization. The 2018 Federal Report on School Safety states: “It is estimated that depictions of violence are present in 90% of movies, 68% of video games, 60 % of television shows, and 15 % of music videos” (p. 63). Clearly a hotly debated theory, our data support the possibility that video gaming was potentially a contributing factor in the Heath High School shooting.

Pre-existing mental health issues are not definitively a precursor to school shootings. This case did not represent clear evidence of a preexisting mental health condition. The data show that such claims were made repeatedly during incarceration of the perpetrator. He received a range of mental health support services in prison but there is little to substantiate a claim of causation. Conversely, there is enough indication of a nexus in some school shootings and should not therefore be summarily dismissed.

School performance is not simply a product of strong curriculum and assessment. This case provided data to suggest that a caring staff who focus on student needs and relationships is every bit as important (if not more so) in student achievement as strong curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This would be an interesting subject for further study.

Data on school shootings are constantly blurred by lack of a unified definition. No two studies considered in the literature review identified the case using the same criteria. It was hoped the 2018 Federal Report on School Safety would provide clarity, but instead the report referred to school shootings as a ‘tragic chronology’ and used a random collection of school shooting examples (Table 1-3). A disclaimer was added: “The following list of school violence incidents is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to illustrate the breadth of the problem” (p.5). A recent study by the Naval Postgraduate Schools (NPS) Center for Homeland Defense Security Homeland Defense Security (CHDS, 2018) cites 82 shootings in the year 2018 with the highest number ever killed in school related incidents (51) with the highest fatalities occurring in California, Texas, and Florida (School Safety Magazine, 2018). Their study defines an incident as any time a gun is brandished or fired, regardless of the time or reason. They claim that since 1970 there have been 669 such incidents on school grounds and 588

inside the building of which 691 were current students. Some of the data are broken down according to circumstances as we did at the onset of the study, and yet once again the categories are different from those in both the extant literature and this study. This study is therefore a perfect example of how there is no agreed upon definition of a school shooting. What this creates is a clear disparity in the unit of analysis under study.

Media is a strong influence on how we perceive school shootings. This has been a very strong theme throughout the study and has significant implications for research and practice. “The American Psychological Association released a study in 2016 that concluded that “the prevalence of mass shootings has risen in relation to the mass media coverage of them and the proliferation of social media sites that tend to glorify the shooters and downplay the victims” (2018 Federal Report on School Safety, p. 53). Both of these claims were clearly supported through the data. The principal was fastidious in his efforts to minimize media coverage of the perpetrator, and to maximize focus onto the victims. “Media is filtered not through truth but through perception. Your reality is just your version of the truth” (Bill).

Much of the literature available on school shootings comes with definite bias. This was explored in detail in the literature review so as not to allow a single theory to shape the data gathering or analysis. By way of further evidence of such bias, the federal government recently published a report on school safety (Federal Report, 2018) in response to the shooting at Marjory Douglas High School. Since this is the most recent government initiated report, it bears mention relative to this study. The report comprises 180 pages with 83 recommendations under the sub headings Prevention, Protect and Mitigate, and Respond and Recover. These correspond broadly to the themes in this study of prevention, preparedness, and response as shown in Figure 5-1.

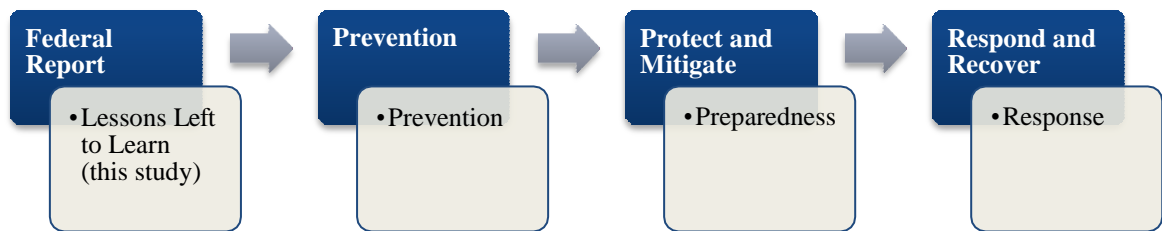


Fig 5-1. Alignment of federal report terminology used in this study.

In the federal findings around *prevention*, the recommendations are largely associated with character education, school climate, and mitigation of cyberbullying. In the *protect and mitigate* category, most of the report attends to increased training, arming staff, and standard safety measures such as secure entry to premises, buildings, and classrooms. The final section again recommends training and active shooter drills. Disappointingly, there are a number of biases which negate much of the value of the report from an empirical standpoint. While an entire study might be dedicated to a scrutiny of the report, we shall limit observations here to those that reflect our findings:

1. The commission dedicated an entire chapter of the report denouncing the Obama administration's Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) on school discipline. The logic used to substantiate rescinding the letter is tenuous at best. The report suggests in part that by carefully attending to discipline for minorities we somehow put schools at increased risk of shootings – which makes no rational sense when you recognize that school shooters are not historically of color, and that shootings have thus far occurred in predominantly white, rural, and suburban areas.
2. In seeking to identify tangible implications for both policy and practice it is very evident that the report depends extremely heavily on school personnel to

implement unfunded mandates and recommendations. The report is full of statements such as “Given the amount of time children spend there, schools are a natural environment in which to provide these services” (p. 37). In addition, there is no force of law behind these recommendations. This will further fragment practice because there is no unified application of prevention, preparedness, and response protocols.

3. The commission heard from a number of experts, many with a very specific agenda. Panels included mental health professionals, student records personnel, confidentiality advocates, as well as sections intended to inform the media, video game companies, and pharmaceutical companies who manufacture psychotropic drugs. There is little to no indication in the report that discrepant cases or data were considered. This suggests not so much undue influence, but an imbalance of influence.
4. The report includes reference to more than two dozen programs, products, and protocols which have little to no research data to attest to their efficacy. If such examples are going to be considered worthy of recommendation by the federal government, one might anticipate that they have their roots in research. The examples have potential to be of value but are anecdotal at best.
5. A great deal of focus in the section on mental health was dedicated to those in adjudicated settings. The reports states that less than half of all children with a mental disorder receive treatment and of those 24% are in school settings. The report states “The prevalence of mental disorders among justice involved youth ranges from 50 to 75 percent, with about 25 percent having significant impairment” (p. 37). Only a very small fraction of the school shooters were in

adjudicated settings or had any dealing with law enforcement prior to the event which I posit renders the focus misguided.

6. The most obvious bias in the report is the cursory attention given to gun control. It is mentioned in the shortest chapter in the entire report. It is less than three pages of the 180 page document and simply speaks to how people of legal age procure a weapon. There is negligible consideration for the fact that school shooters do not historically seek their weapons legally.

This is in no way intended to be a detailed analysis of the federal report. The report is in effect an amalgamation of widely known propositions with very few surprises. Given the source however, it is included here as yet another example of potential bias in school safety reporting which is evident at even the highest levels of government and therefore has the capacity to influence policy and practice. This concerns me greatly as both a researcher and educator. Prior to the data collection, I acknowledged my researcher bias regarding gun control, but admit my technical knowledge of weapons to be negligible. On contrast, I now believe strongly in the concept of what Hollan Holmes calls *sensible gun control*. This is discussed further in the concluding section on implications for policy.

Convergence of Data and Research Questions

The major themes from the data converged to answer the research questions (RQ) which are repeated here for convenience:

1. What is the role of a school leader in the midst of a school shooting and its aftermath?
 - (a) What leadership skills and attributes are most useful in prevention, preparedness, and response to crisis?

(b) How does a leader's experience shape decision-making in a school shooting situation?

2. What impact does a school shooting have on the organizational culture of a school and vice versa?

(a) What roles do the media, community, and politics play in school shootings?

(b) What is the role of assessing risk factors and threat in the organizational structure of schools?

Figures 5-2, 5-3, 5-4, 5-5, and 5-6 identify the specific research question or questions to which each theme applies. A summary statement follows each theme.



Fig 5-2. Leadership and the corresponding research questions.

Leadership is a pervasive theme in responding to nearly every research question. The ability to be flexible, authentic and ethical, are just small examples of the larger impact strong leadership has on every facet of school, both in and out of crisis. Communication skills will be a primary determinant of how well an institution has the trust and support of community before, during, and after a crisis. This is both local community and society at large. The degree to which experience impacts crisis is highly significant. Training programs in higher education must factor in lack of experience when preparing school leaders. They will need purposefully designed curriculum which replicates the greatest possible proximation of experience through scenarios and case studies. A leader must be able to put themselves in the shoes of those who have been there.

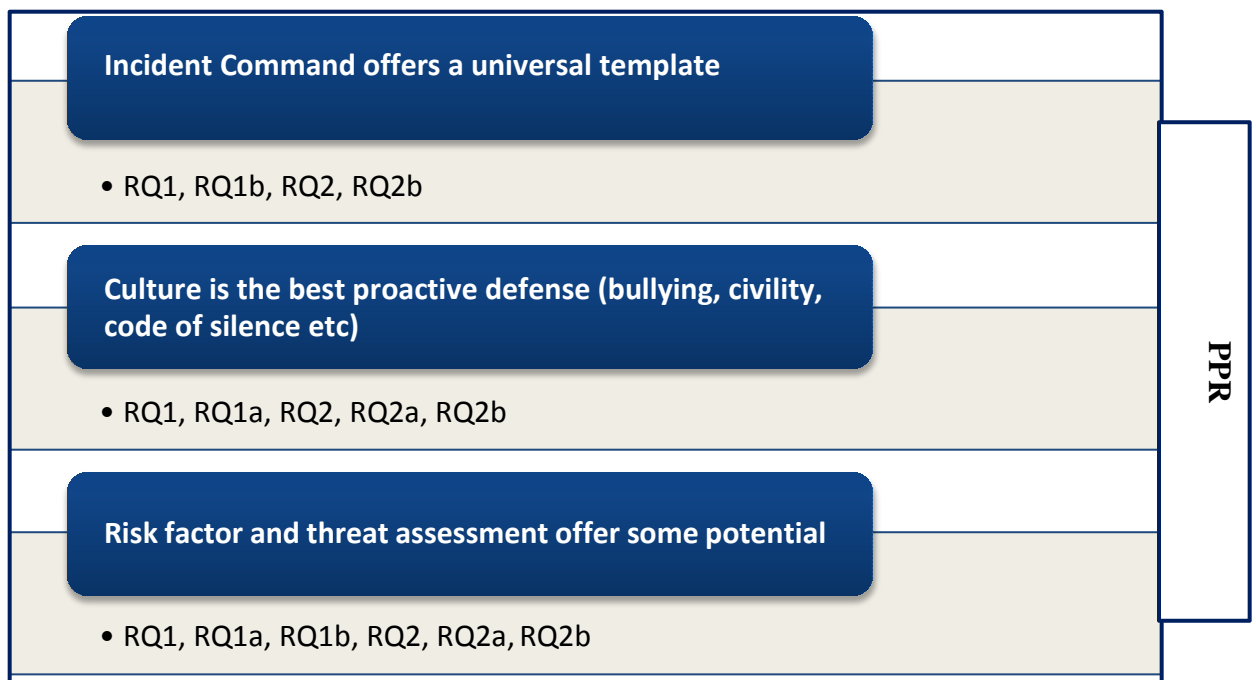


Fig 5-3. Prevention, preparedness, and response and corresponding research questions.

Prevention, preparedness, and response is the proverbial three legged stool of school safety. Prevention depends heavily on a healthy culture which creates a non-violence affirming community with an inclusive climate. Even with those factors in place, a school would be remiss in not having a comprehensive crisis plan which is well established and practiced with fidelity. Given what we know and continue to learn about factors affecting behavior – every school would benefit from a clear appreciation of their own context, risk factors, and potential threats.



Fig 5-4. Organizational theory and the corresponding research questions.

It is interesting to see from the data how little organizational culture comes to the forefront when conducting interviews, exploring artifacts, and triangulating the data, and yet as a secondary embedded mechanism (Schein, 2010) it is the foundation upon which all other components stand. It only seemed to surface where there were fractious examples: a disengaged superintendent or in the case of a different shooting, the need for someone to mediate between the staff and the organizational leaders. Organizational

culture becomes focused when it is broken rather than functioning as it should. This has huge implications for those in charge because it would be easy to ignore. It must therefore be attended to intentionally in terms of well-defined goals bound by a collaborative structure, and supported by a trusting culture.



Fig 5-5. External factors and the corresponding research questions.

External factors are significant components of all the research questions which creates a whole layer of complexity for school leaders. The complexity comes from them being situated outside the school leader or organizations' control. Clearly they are within a school leader's circle of *concern* and in some instances their circle of *influence*, but *control* is far more elusive. It was disheartening to see that external factors outnumbered internal control factors since schools are having to take on more and more responsibility for mental health, poverty, and now it seems arming staff. This has massive implications for policy and how resources are to be allocated.

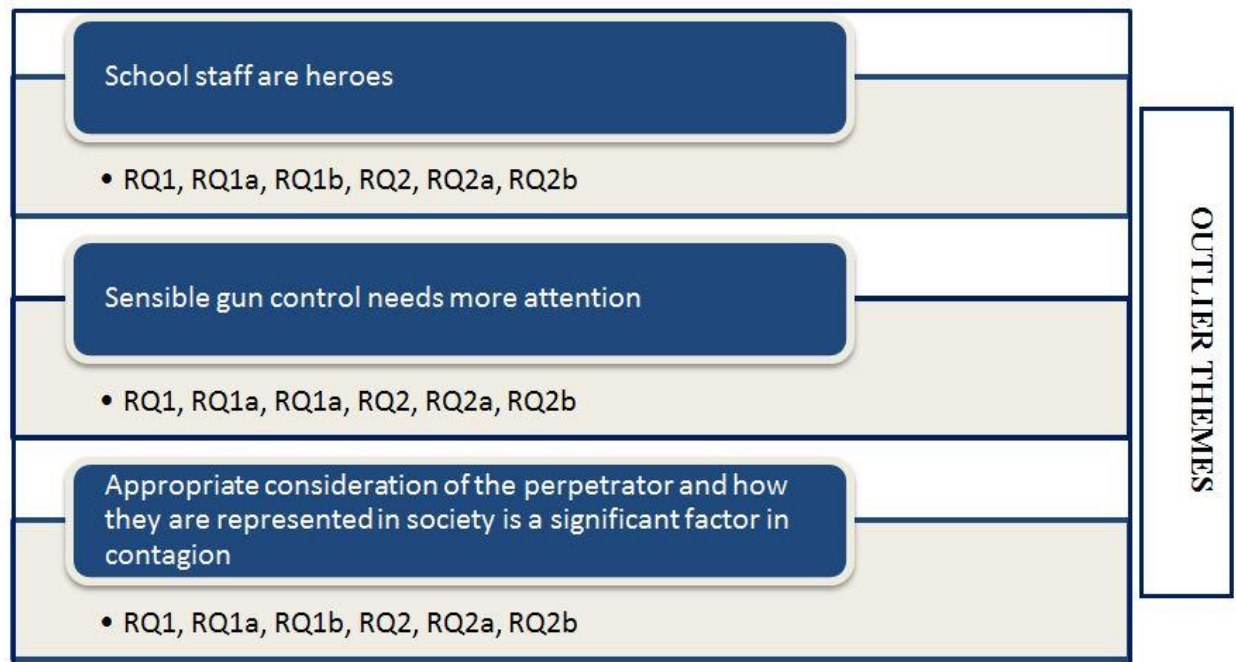


Fig 5-6. Outlier themes and the corresponding research questions.

These perpetrators murder innocent people and shatter the fabric of one of the safest places in society—schools. Every one of them is different. There is no profile of a school shooter. In a civilized society we always seek to understand and this is what sets us apart from animals, so we must continue to study them in detail until we can have enough knowledge to be able to introduce disruptors along the way designed to alter the course of their behavior. I posit however, that until we reach a point where we can recall the names of Kayce, Jessica, and Nicole before we recognize the names of perpetrators, we are part of the problem and not part of the solution. I believe that solutions come every day, come from the most unsung heroes in education, teachers. They create safe spaces and connections that we never know about, and thereby mitigate a hundred potential crises every single day.

These figures demonstrate the interconnectedness of the research questions and how each theme is interwoven into our collective understanding of a school shooting. This brings some clarity to why much of the research carries elements of bias. By viewing the phenomenon only through the lens of behavioral science, we tend to examine those behaviors which are responses to stimuli. A psychological lens seeks predominantly those traits we deem inherent to the individual. While each brings value to our deeper understanding, the richness is lost. Using a critical realist lens to examine the case study data, we can address the questions from a scholarly perspective while simultaneously attending to the very real needs of the practitioner.

1) What is the role of a school leader in the midst of a school shooting and its aftermath?

The role of the school leader is embedded in the need to protect students and staff. This was supported throughout the data and was clearly the primary objective of the principal. He was clearly willing to walk into the line of fire to mitigate the loss of life for which he felt so entirely responsible.

a) What leadership skills and attributes are most useful in prevention, preparedness, and response to crisis?

The data support a cognitive resource theory of leadership that in the moment of crisis, experience is of higher value than intelligence. It is also significant however that prevention is a function of organization in the commitment to build a strong crisis plan.

b) How does a leaders experience shape his/her decision-making in a school shooting situation?

An interesting finding in the data is that while the school principal had never experienced a school shooting prior to this event, he remains steadfast in the belief that

experience – albeit – hypothetical is of more benefit than intelligence. Obviously this has implications for how we train new leaders to the field and ensure that they have the ‘mental script’ and opportunity to practice.

Some of the data were self-effacing but through triangulation it became evident the leader used a great deal of fluid intelligence to determine what to do when. Having the school reconvene the next day, allowing informal opportunities to grieve followed by structured intervention, having a very controlled messaging protocol with the media, ensuring frequent communication with the community, and putting the needs of students ahead of academic pressures are all decisions that were made based on more than just experience. At the onset of the shooting announcement, media were uncontained. His decision to contain them on the football field allowed the messaging to be controlled. This leader displayed a steadfast ethic of caring and an authentic leadership style under the worst of circumstances. While the intent is not to generalize beyond the case, one cannot surmise that not all school leaders would behave in a like fashion even with experience.

2) *What impact does a school shooting have on the organizational culture of a school and vice versa?*

School is generally a subset of a larger organization whether a district, county, cooperative, parish, township or some other form of governance. As such, the organization both shapes and is shaped by the schools it serves. This is true both in and out of a crisis situation. The degree to which the people within the organization are engaged will certainly ebb and flow depending on context, but certain tenets of the relationship are shaped long before a crisis occurs. The allocation of resources is a standard function of the four pillars presented in organizational theory which require a

culture which is inclusive, transparent, and trustworthy. The organization must intentionally build a *structure* which is horizontal in that it is collaborative or distributive in times of calm but allows for elements of hierarchy in crisis where immediate decision making is needed. Distributive leadership uses influence rather than authority, but hierarchy (while not always popular) is not redundant either (Gronn 2010). The *goals* of the organization must reflect a commitment to safety and be constantly revisited in both daily operations as well as strategic planning. They must be forward thinking, clearly articulated, and systemically understood. It is apparent from the data that *context* will have a huge impact on the strength and challenges of school culture. Our study is situated in a small rural community with a very clear sense of family and trust in the school principal. This was not as evident with regard the organization as a whole, though I would posit this is true the further away from the epicenter one gets in any organization. One of the most insightful pieces of datum comes more in the form of an unintended consequence. By shifting the emphasis from quantitative performance data and attending intentionally to the relationships in the building, the academic performance of students improved exponentially. People were drawn to the school rather than repelled by the shooting. “Which principal would rather have if you were looking? One who takes care of data or one who takes care of kids?” (Bill Bond).

a) What roles do the media, community, and politics play in school shootings?

The data clearly showed a nexus between messaging and recovery with regard the media. The preponderance of the literature review, the 2018 Federal Report, as well as evidence from the other 15 school shooting incidents Bill Bond has worked with support this contention. The media clearly has a great deal of power. The issue of whether media coverage contributes to copycat shootings is not definitive, but certainly an issue of

concern and one which an ethical media industry needs to consider above profit. The community in our study bears a heavy burden that the code of silence trumped connectedness. Students who knew about the potential shooting opted to say nothing. This lesson has guided much of the school principal's work in the 20 years since the shooting. A more positive attribute to the role of community centers on recovery. This appears to play out similarly in every school shooting case whereby the community reaches out to aid with every available resource and support system at their disposal. The larger community of humanity cannot be ignored either. People from all around the world reached out to Heath after the school shooting.

The question of politics is entirely different and my researcher bias looms large on this subject. If we view politics as how society should be structured and how one should **act** within a society, then clearly there is a huge responsibility for government to mitigate shootings through gun legislation and allocation of resources. If conversely one settles for the pedestrian definition as being about the acquisition of power then the discussion will ring hollow. Power is strongly influenced by money and in the current political climate changes will not come without a great deal of constituent pressure. Following the Dunblane shooting in Scotland where our study began, the British public put pressure on the government and handguns were outlawed. In the words of a Dunblane survivor who watched her teacher and 16 friends massacred: "I don't think people's right to bear arms should be stronger than the people's right to have an education, to feel safe, and the right to have a life." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EvRitHdCHM> PBS Newshour feb 21 2018)

b) What is the role of assessing risk factors and threat in the organizational structure of schools?

The data in our study do not directly further our understanding of risk factors and threat assessment. As one piece of a larger story however, it supports the need for both. One risk factor which emerged was the perception of the perpetrator as both ‘an outsider’ and at the same time ‘having lots of friends’. If we consider just a random selection of markers from throughout this study we are actually no closer to a portrait of our perpetrator than when we began. There was no prior evidence of: anxiety, fixations, desire to be memorialized, pride, narcissism, martyrdom, inability to contain emotions, lack of resilience, untenable expectations, lack of belonging, marginalized, masculine identity, inequitable discipline, tolerance of bullying, need for domination, inflexible culture, unsupervised electronics, poor coping skills, injustice collector, depression, untenable societal expectations, (strain theory), fascination with guns, strange humor, externalizes blame, entitlement, lack of empathy, superiority, or poor family structure. In this case many of these markers were contrary evidence. The perpetrator came from a stable family with an attorney for a father and a stay home mother. Of course, post shooting, one might surmise some of these factors to have been in play but the purpose of risk factors and threat assessment is prediction. To that end there is no tangible data to suggest an organizational protocol for assessment would have been of benefit. The dichotomy here is whether we can say that identifying risks is one tool in the toolbox of preventative measures or whether over identification brings too many risks of its own. Only further study will bring us closer to a true interpretation. It is my belief that while threat assessment may be of some value at the systems level, it cannot replace the tangible relationships built between school personnel and students on a daily basis. It is here that trust is built and where students have the greatest opportunity to develop a commitment to the larger unit of school community.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research

Implications for practice. The problem solving has to transfer to your own world. When I train others I am hoping they will look and say “If he can do it with all his limitations, I can too.” My objective is you will possess the confidence to handle the situation if you have to. I believe for prevention to be real in our schools, school leaders have to first internalize the hurt.... Really, the same applies to bullying. There is dehumanization going on when someone bullies or decides to shoot up a school.... Students and staff must be able to connect emotionally with the potential outcomes.... I have zero ability to prevent another shooting...I can only share what I have experienced in the hope that others won’t have to. (Bill Bond, during member checking discussion).

The evidence shows unequivocally that school staff are key players in every facet of prevention, preparedness, and recovery. Not just teacher but all staff. “The custodians... they were incredible...they helped take care of scared kids and they cleaned up all the blood so we could come back to school the next day” (Terri). In its simplest form, prevention requires support from outside agencies experienced in mental health and risk assessment, constant environmental scanning supported by strong caring relationships. Schools have a role to play in creating a setting which is non-violence affirming. Empathy can and must be both taught and modeled, for where there is no empathy there will be no cultural boundaries. As a principal, I always maintained that our culture was *the agreed upon behaviors while we were together*. A trivial example might be the one every educator has heard at one time or another “I tell my child not to hit first but if someone hits him/her, to whoop ‘em”. This does not work where large groups are gathered, so it must be embedded in the culture of the school that self-defense is the least

thing we can to prevent ourselves from further harm. We hope that eventually the lessons we share in school will transfer to how we choose to exist in the larger community.

Preparedness requires a fully functional crisis plan which is practiced regularly with 100% fidelity. One of our interviewees made a passing comment which is critical when we consider this piece of preparedness: “I have worked at other schools since...they do all the safety stuff too... ..they see it more of an inconvenience... I don’t think they took it seriously...I guess they didn’t feel the need the way we did” (Terri).

Response is a carefully crafted plan which depends very heavily on the leadership capacity of the school principal to navigate the predictable as well as the unknown with an unwavering sense of confidence and calm. This outward façade must be built on an ethics of genuine caring. The principal’s response to crisis was identified as a primary mechanism of leadership (Schein, 2010). This has huge implications for how we train novice leaders because it is not a single model but “represents modes of responsiveness which require effective diagnosis followed by careful selection of the most appropriate leadership style. Fully rounded leaders have a full repertoire of practices which are deployed as required to address the issues and problems they face” (Bush, 2014, p. 45).

Clearly there is no single model to guide crisis planning and many resources are readily available to assist in the process. One of the most comprehensive of these is housed at the Texas State University School Safety Center. Most methodologies for futures planning (such as Theories of Action, Futures Thinking, Strategy Maps, Balanced Scorecard and generic school improvement planning) contain similar elements synthesized in Figure 5-7.

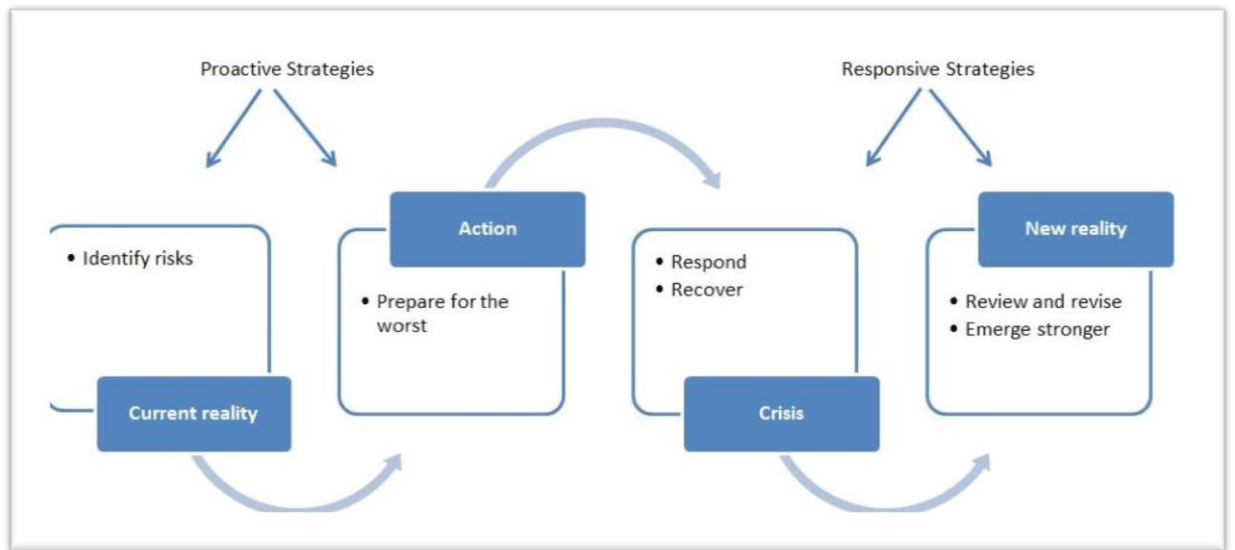


Fig 5-7. School crisis theory of action.

The efficacy however is not a question of which method is chosen but the implementation. Covey’s eighth habit reminds us that nine out of ten entities fail to execute strategy. “Reading a crisis plan is useless. Knowledge is useless. The application of knowledge is experience and that alone is invaluable” (Bill Bond).

Implications for policy. “On gun control, there’s nothing and everything left to say” (Hollan Holm – victim who was shot in the head at Heath High School).

Nowhere in this study do the data suggest that handguns should be banned. What does emerge is that magazine capacity matters. The victim quoted above felt he was the least injured and therefore “needed to be the first to return to school.” Hollan is an attorney who has dedicated time and resources to lobby for sensible gun control. “I believe in God and I believe in the power of prayer, but I also believe in political power,” he says. “As a person who was shot in a prayer group, I think it’s an absolute cop out to say that’s your solution”.

Multiple studies exist on gun control and the definition of what constitutes ‘sensible’ is hotly debated. Since the purpose of this section is to delineated implications for policy and not dictate legislation, it is interesting to note that a New York Times survey in 2017 produced the following information regarding support or lack thereof for a variety of measures. Figure 5-8 shows the primary data extracted from a scatter plot graph published by the New York Times from a survey on gun control measures. The survey used Cartesian coordinates to see alignment or disparity between what experts deemed effective gun control measures and which ones might garner public support. The measures identified in the upper right quadrant identified as effective and supported may well offer an acceptable point of departure in sensible gun control legislation. While very few of the measures are specific to school shootings, they would at least begin a cultural shift toward a more non-violence affirming culture.

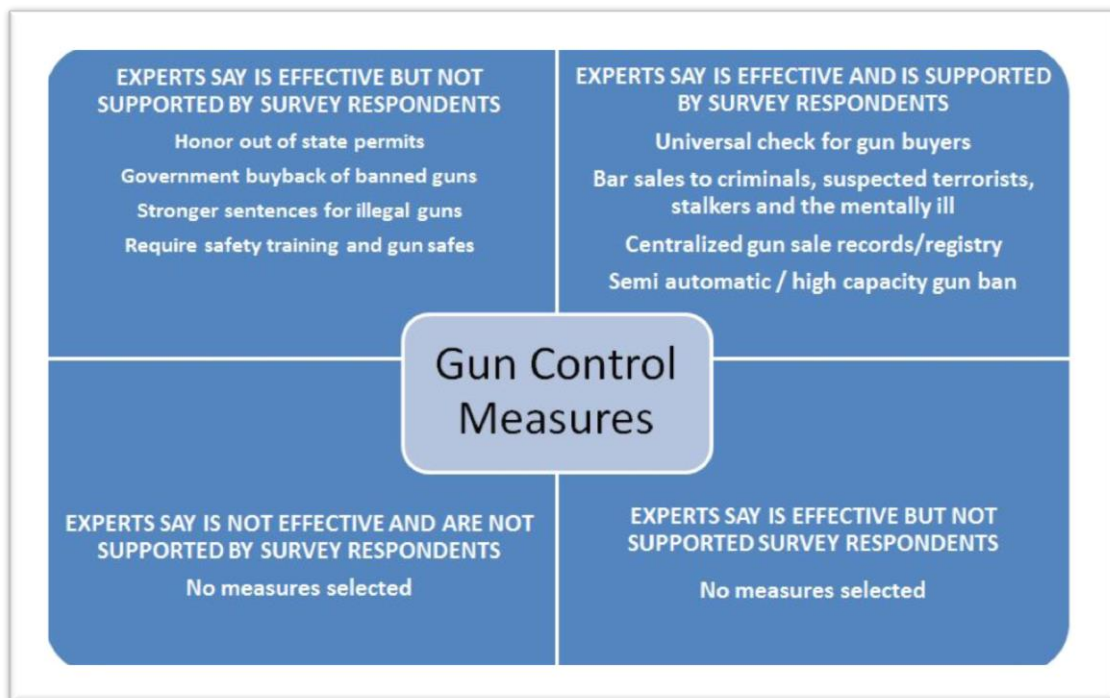


Fig 5-8. Data extracted from New York Times survey on gun control measures. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/05/upshot/how-to-reduce-mass-shooting-deaths-experts-say-these-gun-laws-could-help.html>

Returning to the previous discussion on the object of politics, if we agree that it is attributable to how a society should be set up and how one should act within it, this is evidence of a need for further consideration in guiding policy. It speaks to the very core of this study that we have so many lessons left to learn. When asked how he was doing twenty years after the shooting, Hollan Holmes responded:

I am not OK, and the truth is I don't ever want to be OK. I want to keep that school lobby in my heart and mind as a reminder. I want the memory of that day to continue to be as raw and as brutal as it was on Dec. 1, 1997, until none of our children has to experience it for themselves. (Hollan)

Our primary participant in this study is an avid hunter and own several guns, yet he shared repeatedly his belief that magazine capacity is a highly significant factor. "The higher the capacity of the gun, the greater the risk of harm". He does not believe there is any legitimate rationale for the average citizen to own a high capacity weapon. This requires further research.

Beyond the issue of gun control, policy at the state and local level must attend to what, if anything, schools must be required to do beyond basic crisis planning. If (as the Federal Report implies) all manner of interventions are the role of the school itself, then resources must be allocated accordingly. I would caution however that the expectations for schools have become exponentially untenable in the past twenty years. Even if there were unlimited funds, money cannot buy 'time', and this is the most precious asset being incrementally eroded from local control. "School administrators in concert with their students and staff need to take back control and define for themselves the local issues that are causing fear and anxiety on the part of students and staff" (Blaubelt, 1996, p. 1).

Implications for research. The literature review which guided the study is rife with contradictory theories around school shootings. What this study does provide are some tendential data with implications for further research. Fleetwood (2013) explains that within CR, tendential predictions are made in the full recognition that the systems under investigation are open, perhaps imprecise, but that they are not spurious. John Maynard Keynes, the British economist (1883-1946) is famous for the statement: *It is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong.*

For Keynes the world in which we live is inherently uncertain and quantifiable probabilities are the exception rather than the rule. To every statement about it is attached a “weight of argument” that makes it impossible to reduce our beliefs and expectations to a one-dimensional stochastic probability distribution.

(Corvellec, 2013)

The ‘weight of the argument’ might therefore be improved with further research around the five themes identified in our data.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research to be relevant in practice it must challenge old assumptions.

Nine potential areas emerged from this study:

1. The integration of social media into daily life means there is a strong opportunity for further research into text analysis through identification of vectorial semantics (such as that of Cohen, & Knoll, 2015) introduced earlier in the study. This would certainly be of benefit in being able to more accurately identify risk factors.

2. A process of applied interventions at specific key points would be a potential means of preventing the completion of school shooting. The concept was introduced earlier from studies by the U.S. Secret Service. If the pathway behaviors are predictable then there is opportunity to interject solutions somewhere between *ideation*, *planning*, *preparation*, and *implementation*. A study of school shootings and whether any of these opportunities existed might help inform more targeted preventative measures.
3. One of the delimiters was not to ask why the shooter did what he did simply because it was beyond the scope of this particular study. It is still however an important question and one worthy of further research as more data becomes available on school shooters. Certainly the school shootings of 2018 have provided more information.
4. A study of how school leaders are taught to manage firearms in schools holds a great deal of potential to inform others. One discussion that occurred in this study addressed if or how an administrator should conduct a search when a report comes in of a weapon on campus. Bill Bond shared the chilling story of another campus where he was engaged in the response process:

It was reported this student had a gun....The principal had the student escorted to his office to discuss tardies or something equally innocuous as a cover....As the boy walked into the principal's office, he touched his pocket...The principal said "Let me check that pocket." In the next second the student said 'I never liked you anyway'he pulled the gun from his pocket and shot him. (Bill Bond)

I wanted to know a better procedure and asked how he would handle that scenario knowing what he knows now. He explained that he would ensure an armed guard was behind the student. He would instruct the guard to focus only on the student's hands. He would instruct the student to put his hands on his head. In the event that the student moved to reach anywhere on his body the guard is to *spread his legs* and cuff him." If you allow the student to do anything other than instructed, you have to assume he has a weapon" (Bill Bond). Information such as this is vital in the training of school leaders.

5. A more extensive study of lessons learned from a broader range of school shootings would add another layer of depth to this study. The lessons learned from Heath High School are sadly only a small portion of the larger landscape. Bill lamented often "Frank [DeAngelis of Columbine High School] and I are members of a small club you do not want to belong to".
6. Research into schools that have been able to thwart a shooting would be highly beneficial. Occasionally such stories make the news but fade very quickly from view. This adds credence to the notion that *if it bleeds it leads*. The data from this study suggest that breaking the code of silence is a critical preemptive strategy. It would behoove researchers to gather data to that effect.
7. In keeping with Bill Bond's theme 'teachers are my heroes', there is room for studies which exemplify the actions of employees who aid in both the prevention and the recovery process. In interviews around other school shootings we learned of the custodian who rushed to disarm a student with a gun in Weston, Wisconsin. At Heath, it was the custodians who cleaned the blood, put up the backpacks and coats, painted walls, and patched the bullet holes. In this climate of constant attacks on schools, such research might go a long way to restore faith in a system

constantly under attack, and of which the Federal Report is expecting so much more.

8. A similar case study of another principal in more recent years would bring greater depth to our understanding of school shootings. The degree of organizational preparedness, the role played by external factors, and the leader's skill and strategies for response and response would be of great value. Specifically, it would stimulate discussion around ways in which we have and have not progressed.
9. Many states already permit educators to carry guns on K-12 campuses with more under consideration. Different forms of the provision have been developed. Texas for example, has two programs known as the Marshal Program and the Guardian Program. The former is government funded, and requires both a lock box and marshal training. The latter removes these requirements to where employees may carry weapons beyond the provisions of the Marshal Program. In April 2019, the Texas Senate voted 28-3 to change the laws to allow Texas educators to carry a licensed gun, at the district's discretion. I have already engaged with several principals employed at campuses where the Marshal protocol is in place. I perceived those I spoke with to be anxious about the expectations. A study of the trauma educators may incur by engaging in this type of mandated training and/or carrying of a firearm on their campus would bring new and valuable insight to the discussion of safe schools.

Discussion and Conclusion

The above data are evidence yet again of the disparity between various studies on school shootings. This study is no exception. Yin (2018) cautions researchers to

consider potential threats to the validity of all qualitative studies. This assures the reader that possible rival explanations do not negate the value of the study. To that end, this study is limited by lack of generalizability as a single case which explores a low incidence phenomenon. There is also no attempt to suggest causation in a field of study so desperate to establish one. Conversely, there is no rival threat to the validity of the study (*direct* or *commingled*) for the same reason – no causation is implied. There is no potential for an *implementation rival* because there is no intervention injected into the study. No examples of a *super rival* were detected in that there does not appear to be a similar study which mirrors the same research design. The greatest threat to validity in this study continues to be a '*societal rival*'. This occurs when “societal trends, not any particular force or intervention account for the results. *The times they are a changin’*” (Yin, 2018, p. 113). Times are definitely changing with regard school shootings. School leaders are certainly more aware than they were twenty years ago and are generally required by the organizations that employ them to have a crisis plan. Yet shootings continue. There is little empirical evidence to suggest we are truly any more equipped politically or organizationally to mitigate the problem. The question to ask of the study is therefore: “Is it new, it is true and is it relevant?” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018)

This study is *new* in that it is the only one wherein the data are first order and reflects the experiences of a school leader who has navigated a school shooting. It is *true* in that the data show us not only how the leader experienced the event, but is supported by extensive triangulation and member checking throughout the process. It is further true in that the research design allowed for flexibility so as to arrive at the closest proximation of the truth. It is *relevant* because it provides additional evidence of the how the phenomenon is situated in modern society and recommendations for policy practice and

specific areas of further research. In conclusion, the study brings new knowledge to the field. We learned in the opening chapters from critical realist Bhaskar “the world cannot be changed rationally unless it is interpreted adequately” (Corson, 1991, p. 223). My intent is to add to the body of knowledge which allows us to come closer to an adequate interpretation of school shootings. As Billy Jack Bond would say: “I don’t know if it will do any good, but it will not do any harm”.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT – SCHOOL LEADER



INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Lessons Left to Learn: A School Shooting Case Study

Principal Investigator: Barbara-Jane Paris

Email: b_p77@txstate.edu

Phone: 512.653.7246

Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Melissa Martinez

Email: mm224@txstate.edu

Phone: 512.245.4587

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about your experiences with the school shooting which occurred at Heath High School on December 1, 1997. The purpose of the study is to help school leaders learn from your experiences so they may better prepare, prevent, and react to a school shooting. You are being asked to participate because the study is predicated on the inclusion of first order data. You were a stakeholder at the time of the shooting and your story will therefore be of significant value to our understanding of the phenomenon.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in up to 9 interviews.

Each interview will last approximately 1-2 hours and will take place in Kentucky at a location of your choice. During the interviews, you will be asked to respond to questions which have been developed in a semi-structured format to allow you to respond and discuss information you feel will add to our understanding of your experiences. This may include your specific role as a stakeholder at Heath High School, and your experiences prior to, during, and after the shooting. The interview will be audio-recorded and the researcher may take notes as well.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Due to the specific nature of school shootings with regard location, timelines, and being a relatively low incident phenomenon, the combined answers to these questions may make an individual person identifiable. We will make every effort to protect participants' confidentiality.

In the event that some of the interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time. Should you feel discomfort after participating, I advise that you seek counseling services. A current list of qualified professionals in your area can be found at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/ky/paducah>

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide is intended to help decision makers learn more about school leaders in crisis situations.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw from it at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator or Co-investigator/faculty advisor whose contact information appear at the top of this form.

This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on [date]. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-245-8351 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 - (meg201@txstate.edu).

DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

Printed Name of Study Participant

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT – ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER



INFORMED CONSENT



Study Title: Lessons Left to Learn: A School Shooting Case Study

Principal Investigator: Barbara-Jane Paris

Email: b_p77@txstate.edu

Phone: 512.653.7246

Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Melissa Martinez

Email: mm224@txstate.edu

Phone: 512.245.4587

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about your experiences with the school shooting which occurred at Heath High School on December 1, 1997. The purpose of the study is to help school leaders learn from your experiences so they may better prepare, prevent, and react to a school shooting. You are being asked to participate because the study is predicated on the inclusion of first order data. You were a stakeholder at the time of the shooting and your story will therefore be of significant value to our understanding of the phenomenon.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in up to 2 interviews. Each interview will last approximately 1-2 hours and will take place in Kentucky at a location of your choice. During the interviews, you will be asked to respond to questions which have been developed in a semi-structured format to allow you to respond and discuss information you feel will add to our understanding of your experiences. This may include your specific role as a stakeholder at Heath High School, and your experiences prior to, during, and after the shooting. The interview will be audio-recorded and the researcher may take notes as well.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Due to the specific nature of school shootings with regard location, timelines, and being a relatively low incident phenomenon, the combined answers to these questions may make an individual person identifiable. We will make every effort to protect participants' confidentiality.

In the event that some of the interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time. Should you feel discomfort after participating, I advise that you seek counseling services. A current list of qualified professionals in your area can be found at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/ky/paducah>

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide is intended to help decision makers learn more about school leaders in crisis situations.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The members of the research team and the Texas State University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) may access the data. The ORC monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY

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QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Principal Investigator or Co-investigator/faculty advisor whose contact information appear at the top of this form.

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DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT

I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible risks have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand I can withdraw at any time.

Printed Name of Study Participant

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL CHECKLIST

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

DATE/TIME/NAMES OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

TIME

<input type="checkbox"/>	Did the interview start on time?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What if of an appropriate length?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the time of day OK for the subject?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the equipment working and ready?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I clarify / update timelines for the study?

LOGISTICS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the location comfortable?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quiet?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I provide refreshments?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Were the breaks adequate?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the location easy to find?

QUESTIONS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Were the questions all covered?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Were some too closed/or needed clarifying?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Was the subject comfortable responding?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did the questions elicit depth of response?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I ask for elaboration? / withhold judgement? Listen more than speak?

NOTES

<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I take appropriate notes?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I take any necessary artifacts/photos etc. pertaining to the questions?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I have my informed consent?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I note where we left off and write down plans for next interview?
<input type="checkbox"/>	

CLOSURE

<input type="checkbox"/>	Did I remember to thank the participant?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did we clarify next steps?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Did the subject appear as though it was an appropriate interview?
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

NOTES:

□

Idea for
checklist
compiled
from
Creswell, 5th Ed. Research, p1

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 1 GRAND TOUR

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #1: GRAND TOUR

SCHOOL LEADER

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP

Let's catch up on family.

Careers

Plans, hopes and dreams

Purpose of the study

Go over my research questions and see if he feels they need adjusting

LOGISTICS

Discuss how this process will work (Consent, format, these protocols, recording etc)

Plan suitable calendar, location, timeline etc

Go over any questions he has regarding what he has read so far

SEGUE QUESTIONS

Tell me your career history and how you came to be at Heath High School (HHS)

Tell me about your career after HHS

Tell me about current plans with regard career (or full retirement)

THE BACK STORY

Describe the culture of the school and district when you arrived

Describe your goals for both

CLOSURE

Questions so far for me?

How do you feel about this process moving forward?

Describe any fears you have and anything you feel needs changing.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 2 THE STORY

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW # 2

SCHOOL LEADER: THE STORY

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timelines etc., as needed.

QUESTIONS

Please share the events of December 1 1997

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 3 LEADERSHIP

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #3: LEADERSHIP SKILLS

SCHOOL LEADER

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timelines etc., as needed.

QUESTIONS

What leadership skills are useful in the *prevention* of a shooting?

Are they any different in a crisis situation? Do you have them?

Are there skills you feel you lacked?

What leadership skills are useful in *preparedness*?

Are they different in a crisis situation?

What leadership skills and attributes were most useful *in the moment*?

Are they different?

Are they skills you had/lacked?

What leadership skills and attributes were most useful *in the recovery*?

Are they different in a crisis situation?

Are they skills you had/lacked?

How did experience shape your decision-making in the moment if at all?

How did intelligence shape your decision-making?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 4 ORGANIZATION

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #4: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

SCHOOL LEADERS INTERVIEW

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions on the transcripts you have seen so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timelines etc. as needed.

QUESTIONS

What changes if any did you see in the organizational culture?

Did students stay/leave?

Did parents engage more/less?

Was staffing changed in any way?

Were there any changes to curriculum?

Scheduling?

Course offerings?

Assessments?

Achievement?

Quality of instruction?

Quality/number of interactions?

Referrals for outside intervention?

Discipline?

Student organizations?

Physical plant structure?

Budget, resources?

Policies and procedures?

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 5 EXTERNAL FACTORS

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #5: MEDIA, POLITICS, POP CULTURE

SCHOOL LEADER

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timeline etc. as needed.

QUESTIONS

Can you describe your experiences with the media during and after?

Can you describe your experiences with politicians?

Can you describe your experiences with any others 'groups'?

Can you describe your experiences with first responders?

What are your thoughts/experiences around moral panic?

Can you describe your experiences with law enforcement after?

Can you tell me how you think/feel about the focus on pop culture?

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 6 RISK FACTORS/ THREAT ASSESSMENT

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #6: RISK FACTORS / THREAT ASSESSMENT

SCHOOL LEADER

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timelines etc., as needed.

QUESTIONS

Based on your experience in all the shootings – talk to me about risk factors?

Leakage –(where the perpetrator tells someone first)?

Contagion? (copycat crimes)

Identity? (the concept that males are struggling with their societal roles)

Do you see a value in leaders training on these areas?

What would that look like?

Can you describe any experiences you have developing material around Any of these with outside agencies?

Do see any risks with this kind of practice?

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 7 PREVENTION (PPR)

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #7: PREVENTION (PPR)

SCHOOL LEADER

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timelines etc., as needed.

QUESTIONS

What are your thoughts and feelings around policies that relate to school shootings?

Eg: zero tolerance

License to carry

Marshalls

SROs School resource officers

What are thoughts feelings around concrete safety measures?

Eg: controlled access

Metal detectors

Are there other relevant policies/measures we should consider?

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 8 ARTIFACTS

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #8: ARTIFACTS

SCHOOL LEADER

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Any questions on the transcripts you have seen so far?

Review process and plans, locations, timelines etc., as needed/

ARTIFACT QUESTIONS

Have you kept any artifacts of the school shooting?

Why/why not?

What can you tell me about them?

What were your thoughts and feeling at the time of images you saw on the TV, News etc?

What were your thoughts and feelings in the span of time after the event?

May I share some artifacts with you and gain your insight?

APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL # 9 BILL BOND THE PERSON

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide is intended to help decision makers learn more about school leaders in crisis situations.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

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Data will be kept for three years (per federal regulations) after the study is completed and then destroyed.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION

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PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY

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QUESTIONS

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This project was approved by the Texas State IRB on [date]. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB Chair, Dr. Denise Gobert 512-245-8351 – (dgobert@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 – (meg201@txstate.edu).

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: PERCEPTIONS OF OTHER ADULT STAKEHOLDERS

DATE/TIME/NAME OF SUBJECT/LOCATION

WARM UP & LOGISTICS

Tell the participant about self and the progress of the study

Discuss how this process will work

Tell me a little about yourself and your connection to the school and principal
at the time of the shooting

QUESTIONS

Tell me about where you were/what you were doing during the shooting and
afterwards

What can you tell me about your recollections?

What did the school leader do during shooting and in the months after?

What did the school district leaders do?

Tell me how you feel about the school leader's response?

What had the school done prior to the shooting in the way of safety?

What changed afterward?

(physically to the campus, personnel, curriculum, transportation, culture,
Counseling etc)

How did the media conduct themselves during and after the incident?

What are your thoughts about what schools and school leaders should
be doing to ensure safety at school?

APPENDIX N: AUDIT TRAIL

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1							
2		Audit Trail & Artifact Bibliography					2016-2019
3		Timeline	Phase	Activity	Bibliography	Artifacts when	Location
8	2017 Mar			Site/subject selection			APPENDIX ?
9	2017 July	Initiation		Contact with subject			
10				Refinement of research question			MAXQDA18
11	2017 Sept	Instrument development				Checklist	
12	2018 Jan/Mar	Chapter 1		Ontological, epist, theoretical framework			
13	2018 April/May	Chapter 2		Literature Review			
14	2018 July	Chapter 3		Methodology		Protocols	
15	2018 Sept	Proposal Defense					
16	2018 Sept	IRB		IRB submission			
17	2018 Oct			IRB approval			
18	2018 Sept/Nov	research		software training		MAXQDA18	MAXQDA18
19	2018 Oct/Nov	raw data accumulation		Interview w/ BB	iphone app		
20	2018 Oct				field notes	notes	MAXQDA18
21	2018 Oct				theme journaling	notes	MAXQDA18
22	2018 Sept				Interview checklist	document	APPENDIX ?
23	2018 Oct				revisions protocols		
24	2018 Oct			Contact spouse			
25	2018 Oct			Spouse Consent			APPENDIX ?
26	2018 Oct			Spouse Interview			MAXQDA18
27	2018 Oct			Impromptu contact	hand written notes	notes	MAXQDA18
28	2018 Oct			Consent/ inter w grandr			MAXQDA18
29	2018 Sept/Dec			Artifacts search	Photos	photos	MAXQDA18
30	2018 Nov				Paducah library oral hist		
31	2018 Oct			Site visits	Heath High	photos	MAXQDA18
32					Paducah community	photos	MAXQDA18
33					Original memorial site	photos	MAXQDA18
34					Relocated memorial site	photos	MAXQDA18
35					Benton community	photos	MAXQDA18
36					Surrounding communities	photos	MAXQDA18
37					Marshall County HS	photos	MAXQDA18
38	2018 Nov/Dec			Document gathering	media articles	artifacts	MAXQDA18
39					media Heath	artifacts	MAXQDA18
40					school data	artifacts	
41					arch'd nat news int	online	
42				Transcription	raw data		
43	2018 Nov	Triangulation		Contact additional stakeholder (staff member)			
44					Sent interview questions		MAXQDA18
45				Interview w staff member			MAXQDA18
46				Contact additional stakeholder (school parent)		Phone	
47				Interview w stakeholder	Sent interview questions	Outlook	
48				Transcript			MAXQDA18
49				Contact additional stakeholdr	Sent interview questions		
50	2018 Nov			Data Analysis			
51	2018 Nov	Chapter 4		Findings			
52							
53				Contact additional stakeholder (student)			
54	2018 Nov	Analysis			notes		MAXQDA18
55					coding charts		MAXQDA18
56					axial charts		MAXQDA18
57	2018 Dec	Synthesis/reconstruction					
58				Themes			
59				Theoretical notes			
60				Definitions			
61				Relationships			
62				Connect existing lit			
63		Process validation		Trustworthiness	and Guba 1985, p. 319-310		
64				Dependability	(Lincoln and Guba 1985)		
65				Confirmability			
66				Credibility			
67							
68	2018 Dec	Reflection		Member checking		Phonecalls/emails	
69				Theory discussion w s'holders			
70	2018 Dec	Chapter 5					
71	2019 Jan			Revisions			
72	2019 Feb	Defense					Campus
73							

APPENDIX O: SAMPLE JOURNAL NOTES

He touched side of pocket. bladder exploded 1" from heart #41
 police I never liked you anyway. Gut shot.

Only is a guard - armed, Behind not touching focus on his hands. Principal - put your hand on your head - I'm using the back of the hands. @ that point - the officer, spread + cuffed. If you allow me to put hand in pocket

@ Red Lake - its obvious shotgun a 40c and a 22. Metal detector goes off + he immediately shoots the guard. He steps over the guard + fires off 100 rounds to scare the students + shoot PP.

Marshall County going full metal + 3 reserve officers. That to instill a sense of security but its for parents. Kids just think - damn I hope that doesn't go off. They get used to it.

I'm a big believer in Gray - 1st priority overlapping context - K - need to feel cared for + have a personal connection w/ the school. All decisions filter through that. They talk it but don't actually enact it. They wanted armed folks but he wouldn't have that. You will be on the perimeter - this is not a crime scene anymore. I'm back to making the decisions. Presence of armed guards make the kids feel insecure. PP didn't understand why Obama (B.N.) stopped giving military weapons/shirt - hes not a politician he is a paramilitary - makes you insecure - esp in a Black area feel suppressed.

#37 Get the info. A month later there was a
van Paducah Ford donated - I wasn't there I
dant get around the money. These kids all went
to college + graduated - lots of contacts @ Murray
College - with contacts - scholarships. Stetson
had a full scholarship to Morehead + honored
the school. Even if she never plays she is the kind
of student athlete in our program. She can be
a goalie. Holland was a valedictorian - She'd
been on Oprah. The whole word - just who is
going to get her. She is ready to come home -
they live in a wheelchair - we need to get things
done. Door width.
I called construction assoc. of Paducah, called plumbers
+ electricians - Missy came home -
Thank you you know what I had to do? Nothing
Project manager.
You've got to let ppl help you.. you don't have to beg
How can I help.
I need the house to be handicapped accessible then
I'm out of it. Yes a parent of manager... if you
never get into the how much. Money corrupts you. I don't
like it + don't deal w/it.
Haddy's got \$9254 with no accountability. There
was a fund set up with the board. Once they filed a
suit we sort cut off funding stream. Still good
friends with Christine sister - set up the memorial
saw them at the memorial. One is a hogger - parents
got divorced. The James are reserved ppl - we talk soft
about to cry. Still in Paducah. We talk grandkids -
They thought the lawsuit would change the way I responded
to them. It had no effect on me. I don't care if
you don't like me. I don't want to take that
on. After the suit was dismissed - none
wkd w/ w/ We smile + talk about grandkids

APPENDIX P: ARTIFACTS

No.	Document	Author
1	Kayce's grave	photo
2	Nicole's grave	photo
3	Memorial 1	photo
4	Memorial 2	photo
5	Memorial 3	photo
6	nicole	bjparis
7	missy	email
8	Missy_jenkins_smith01_l	webpage
9	lexington school	article
10	kayci michelle stager	webpage
11	School HHS	photo
12	School	photo
13	Paducah	photo
14	Benton	article
15	Benton HS	photo
16	Marshal Strong	photo
17	Bank marquee	photo
18	Bill Bond	photo
19	Hearing	testimony
20	Consent TG	form
21	Consent BB	form
22	Consent SB	form
23	Consent MJ	form
24	Consent AW	form
25	Consent JW	form
26	IRB revisions	bjparis
27	Coded segments extracted	Word doc

28	LEADER INT #9	protocol
29	Interview notes 1	Field notes
30	Interview notes 2	Field notes
31	Interview notes 3	Field notes
32	Interview notes 4	Field notes
33	Interview notes 5	Field notes
34	Interview notes 6	Field notes
35	Interview notes 7	Field notes
36	Interview notes 8	Field notes
37	Interview notes 9	Field notes
38	Interview notes 10	Field notes
39	Interview notes 11	Field notes
40	Interview notes 13	Field notes
41	Interview notes 15	Field notes
42	Interview notes 16	Field notes
43	Interview notes 17	Field notes
44	Interview notes 18	Field notes
45	Interview notes 19	Field notes
46	Interview notes 20	Field notes
47	Interview notes 21	Field notes
48	Interview notes 22	Field notes
49	Interview notes 23	Field notes
50	Interview notes 24	Field notes
51	Interview notes 25	Field notes
52	Interview notes 26	Field notes
53	Interview notes 27	Field notes
54	Interview notes 28	Field notes
55	Interview notes 29	Field notes

56	Interview notes 30	Field notes
57	Interview notes 31	Field notes
58	Interview notes 32	Field notes
59	Interview notes 33	Field notes
60	Interview notes 34	Field notes
61	Interview notes 35	Field notes
62	Interview notes 36	Field notes
63	Interview notes 37	Field notes
64	Interview notes 38	Field notes
65	Interview notes 39	Field notes
66	interview notes 40	Field notes
67	Interview notes 41	Field notes
68	Interview notes 42	Field notes
69	Interview notes 43	Field notes
70	Interview notes 44	Field notes
71	Interview notes 45	Field notes
72	Interview notes 46	Field notes
73	Interview notes 47	Field notes
74	Interview notes 48	Field notes
75	Interview notes 49	Field notes
76	Interview notes 50	Field notes
77	School safety ads	Media
78	Transcripts TG	transcript
79	Transcripts BB	Transcripts (multiple)
80		bjparis
81	Notes and quotes	spreadsheet
82	On December 1	narrative
83	nicole	

84	email to missy	bjparis
85	Missy_jenkins_smith01_l	bjparis
86	lexington school	bjparis
87	kayci michelle stager	bjparis
88	Kayce	bjparis
89	jessica	bjparis
90	campus carry	article
91	APPENDIX A CHECKLIST	protocol
92	PARIS DISSERTATION PROPOSAL FINAL	Word doc
93	PARIScitiCompletionReport4692493	certificate
94	CONSENT-SCHOOL LEADER	form
95	ADDITIONAL CONSENT ADULT STAKEHOLDER	form
96	ADDITIONAL ADULT STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW	protocol
97	LEADER INT #1	protocol
98	LEADER INT #2	protocol
99	LEADER INT #3	protocol
100	LEADER INT # 4	protocol
101	LEADER INT #5	protocol
102	LEADER INT #6	protocol
103	LEADER INT #7	protocol
104	LEADER INT # 8	protocol
105	LEADER INT #9	protocol

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