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The Study of Crisis Narratives Over Time: Mayfield, KY in the Aftermath of the 2021 Tornadoes

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THE STUDY OF CRISIS NARRATIVES OVER TIME: MAYFIELD, KY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DECEMBER 2021 TORNADOES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was a year-long longitudinal qualitative research project using the case study of Mayfield, KY after the catastrophic tornado event that impacted their community on December 10, 2021. Oral histories were collected from 18 participants who lived in or were closely connected to Mayfield at the six month and 1.5 year marks after the disaster. Later, after the oral histories were archived and made available to the public, the transcripts were used to extract the crisis narratives from the oral histories and the data was thematically analyzed using the existing theory and theoretical framework of Narratives of Crisis: Telling Stories of Ruin and Renewal by Seeger and Sellnow (2016). The themes were analyzed to better understand how crisis narratives change over time and to determine if there were differences between the leadership of Mayfield and their stakeholders, the public. A major finding in this area was the intertwining of one of more themes within the same passage of narrative, including the intertwining of traditionally competing themes. This extends the theory of Narratives of Crisis. The Discourse of Renewal by Ulmer and Sellnow (2002) was also used to analyze how narratives may differ between those in the community who are considered leaders, and those who represent a general cross-section of the community. The major finding in this analysis was the lack of up-to-date information between leaders and the public. By not creating a bridge of communication, many of the successful steps taken by leaders may not have reached their intended audience. One of the components of the Discourse of Renewal, organizational learning, was specifically used to find lessons learned discussed by community leaders in Mayfield, and to explore how these learned lessons can be applied for practitioners to better understand disaster recovery and renewal in the future.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL- Community Leader

CDBG- Community Development Block Grant

CFO- Chief Financial Officer

CST- Central Standard Time

DOT- Department of Transportation

EM- Emergency Management

EMT- Emergency Medical Technician

FEMA- Federal Emergency Management Agency

HUD- Housing and Urban Development

KY- Kentucky

KOHC- Kentucky Oral History Commission

LTRG- Long Term Recovery Group

NCL- Non-Community Leader

NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

WPSD- regional TV station of Western KY, PSD stands for Paducah-Sun Democrat

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters are a unique type of crisis in that an entire community or geographical area can be negatively impacted with little warning or time to prepare. When small communities that are already facing challenges such as a lack of population growth and poverty are faced with the destruction of a vast part of their city by a natural disaster, the recovery and rebuilding efforts can seem overwhelming. The aftermath of large-scale natural disasters often leaves small communities ill-prepared to handle the years of recovery and rebuilding that are required after a major weather event. The long-term recovery of a community creates both an initial crisis event of the natural disaster and then a prolonged secondary crisis of the years of recovery and rebuilding. Though many towns have experienced natural disasters and have worked through the steps of rebuilding, little work has been accomplished in the academic realm to study how a cross section of a community processes the events of the disaster and moves toward or away from renewal over time. The idea of following a cross-section of residents after a natural disaster through a longitudinal study offers many new insights into the way communities navigate through narrative after a tragedy and move toward or away from renewal.

The frequency of natural disasters that incur a billion dollars or more in damages are significantly increasing in the United States, as well as the death toll associated with each natural disaster event. The National Center for Environmental Information keeps a record of natural weather and climate disasters whose costs totaled more than a billion dollars since 1980, making needed adjustments for the changes in inflation (usafacts.org, 2022). The number of natural disasters that cost over a billion dollars jumped from an average of three per year in the 1980s to 13 per year during the 2010s. Large scale natural disasters with huge financial impacts also

create significant crises within the communities they impact. The residents of towns and cities decimated by disasters are left to pick up the pieces, both literally and figuratively. Uncertainty looms as communities navigate the complex web of receiving aid from non-profit and government agencies, rebuilding relationships, securing housing, finding employment if there is a loss of work, and attempting to regain a sense of normalcy. How residents process the events in the aftermath of a disaster can be of immense value in understanding how to best help communities rebuild and move toward renewal in future scenarios. The path toward renewal after a major disaster is not often one that can be counted in days or months but can take many years to obtain. Following a community over time as the efforts to rebuild continue has not often been researched, especially as it relates to narrative and renewal.

The benefit of sharing narratives in the aftermath of disasters has been explored for many years within the field of communication and has been found to allow individuals to make sense of events within the larger scope of their life story (Weick, 1993, 1995; Abrams, 2010), for communities to co-construct meaning and move toward renewal (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016; Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2022) and as a tool for learning and application in future crisis situations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017).

Though many towns and cities are impacted by natural disasters every year, and many were impacted on the date of December 10, 2021 alone, Mayfield, KY came to the forefront of the news coverage of the event because of the unique devastation their small community faced. For this reason, the city of Mayfield, KY was chosen as the focus of a case study to represent the larger crisis event in this study.

Events of December 10, 2021, in Mayfield, KY

During the late evening hours of Friday, December 10, 2021, and into the early hours of December 11, 2021, a long-track supercell thunderstorm produced a family of strong tornadoes that traveled across four Mid-South states. A total of 71 tornadoes were reported with the outbreak, the most significant being a long-track tornado that initially formed Arkansas and reorganized in northwestern Tennessee that moved across Western Kentucky, producing catastrophic damage to many towns, including the small city of Mayfield, KY (NOAA, 2021).

The National Weather Service issued a tornado watch at 3:00 p.m. CST for the Western Kentucky region, then a warning for Mayfield slightly after 9:00 p.m. CST, then a rare tornado emergency warning was issued as a treacherous tornado barreled toward the town from the southwest at 9:26 p.m. CST. The tornado lasted only four minutes in the small city of Mayfield, KY at a high-end EF4 intensity, damaging and destroying countless homes, churches, and businesses in its path, and leveling many to their foundations. Since many of the homes in Mayfield are without basements or storm cellars, most residents took shelter in the safest interior locations of their homes. Another group of residents did not take the storm seriously. Many other tornado warnings had been issued throughout the day because of radar indicated rotations, small tornado touchdowns, or visual sightings of funnel clouds. Each of these earlier warnings were broadcast through the activation of the town's tornado sirens. Because of what some people considered several earlier "false alarms" they went on with their daily routines as the massive wedge tornado, over a mile wide, approached their town and they did not realize the magnitude of the threat.

As the storm passed and survivors emerged to assess the damage, they discovered trees were uprooted, cars were tossed like toys, and both traditional and mobile homes were completely missing. Most of the historic downtown area of Mayfield was destroyed. This destruction included the courthouse, a major bank, most of the infrastructure of the city government and emergency management, a nursing home, several modern and historic buildings and churches, including two black churches built shortly after the Civil War, along with several residential areas that were a combination of owned and rented properties. The power grid was heavily damaged throughout the city, the city's water tower collapsed, and natural gas began to leak in many areas of the city. Additional reported hazards after the most significant tornado passed were the risk of additional tornadoes as the night continued, and a blanket of glass that covered the whole city. There were many reported injuries to the feet of victims as they left the remains of their homes to seek shelter or check on neighbors, and had sheltered the storm without shoes, or with house shoes that were not suitable for walking outdoors.

The EF4 tornado damage also heavily impacted Mayfield Consumer Products, a candle factory where approximately 110 employees were working that evening. The metal-framed warehouse collapsed, trapping many employees, and resulted in eight deaths and numerous injuries (Brinkman, 2021). The recovery effort was slow as those who were trapped under all the beams and rubble were afraid to move the debris for fear of further collapse. There were also many chemicals used in the machinery and the production of the candles that posed a risk to workers. The site of the candle factory became a major point of rescue and recovery, and everyday residents worked alongside emergency personnel to aid in the rescue and recovery efforts. Some workers would later report that their jobs were threatened if they left the factory

after a first tornado warning was issued at 5:30 p.m. CST and then again after a second tornado warning was issued close to 9:00 p.m. CST (NBC, 2021). At the writing of this dissertation, many of the survivors and families of those who passed away in the candle factory are engaged in litigation against the owners of the factory.

In total, the tornado crossed through eleven counties of the Jackson Purchase and Western Coal Field regions during its path of destruction of over 165 miles. It was the deadliest tornado outbreak to ever occur in the United States during the month of December. By the conclusion of the storm, the tornado outbreak caused 89 fatalities, injured 672 people, and caused 3.9 billion dollars in damage. In Kentucky alone, 74 people were killed by three separate tornadoes, with over 20 victims being from Graves County, where Mayfield is located. (NOAA, 2021).

Brief History of Mayfield, Kentucky

Mayfield, KY was established in 1818 as a central location within the Jackson Purchase. The New Orleans and Ohio Railroad arrived in 1854, boosting Mayfield's ability to transport goods more easily and expanded their industries. Beginning with the Mayfield Woolen Mills' founding in 1860, textiles production became the main industry in Mayfield for many generations. The town also became a major loose-leaf tobacco producer, including Dark Fired Tobacco. The naturally occurring clay deposits in the region were used for ceramics. Other manufacturers as time went on included telecommunications towers, tires, and air compressors.

The city currently has a population of just over 10,000 residents, as of the 2020 census, and serves as the county seat for Graves County, KY. Mayfield is tucked away near the southwestern point of Kentucky and shares a border with Tennessee. Like many small towns in

America, Mayfield has remained stagnant or decreased in population each year over the last 30 years (census.gov, 2020). The community has experienced economic setbacks as they lost many of their main industries, including tobacco and textiles over the past few decades, providing fewer opportunities for employment.

Mayfield is currently comprised of a population of 71.7 percent white (non-Hispanic), 13.5 percent Hispanic or Latino, 12.2 percent black, 5.4 percent of two or more races, 0.5 percent Asian, and 0.4 percent Hawaiian of Pacific Islander (census.gov, 2020). Home ownership and renters are at 51.5 percent and 48.5 percent respectively, with the average mortgage being $928 per month and the average rent being $588. Eighty four percent of adults have a high school education, with 18.5 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Twenty percent of residents receive disability benefits, compared to 12.9 percent statewide. The 2016-2020 census of Mayfield revealed that 36 percent of residents were living in poverty, compared to 16.5 percent statewide.

The Importance of Narrative in the Aftermath of Disasters

The use of narrative, or storytelling, to process important life events and to retell stories to pass down memories for future generations is an ancient tradition that transcends many cultures and ethnicities. With the advent of oral history technologies, such as recording devices, oral historians had the ability to collect the stories of others for a variety of purposes: to add to the historical record, to allow access of oral histories to the public and/or other researchers, or to analyze the materials for research purposes. In more recent history, oral histories are typically stored in digital repositories of libraries, museums, oral history centers, and universities. The

repositories provide a higher ease of access and allow the archived interviews a much greater reach and audience to be appreciated by laymen and researchers alike.

In the field of crisis communication, narrative is an essential part of studying and improving the field. Understanding how individuals, communities, and organizations make sense of crisis events and construct reality is an invaluable source of data to create a clear understanding in virtually all areas of research. Narratives can be collected in a variety of ways: interviews, content analysis, focus groups, and surveys, among others.

In this study, oral histories were chosen with several factors in mind. First, residents of the town of Mayfield had already spoken to countless reporters in the six months before the first oral history interviews were conducted. There was a risk that if traditional interviews were requested, residents would see the project as just another journalist or reporter who wanted to ask pointed questions. Second, the culture of Mayfield is steeped in storytelling and multi-generational history, so it could be surmised that the idea of oral history or storytelling would bring a level of comfort and familiarity that traditional interviews would not. Third, the historical downtown area of Mayfield, which was largely destroyed during the tornado event, was of great importance to the residents of Mayfield, especially to those who grew up in the area and had many memories attached to the buildings. The ability to record the memories attached to the destroyed buildings would likely be of interest to many of the residents to memorialize both the event of the tornado, and also the history of the town. Fourth, and lastly, creating a collaboration with the University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Oral History Center would hold a level of significance for the community. Not only is the oral history center at the University of Kentucky internationally recognized, the residents of Mayfield by in large have a great deal of respect for

the university, trust the institution, and would feel pride to have their stories stored and shared there.

For the sake of this study, the crisis narratives, or the stories of the day of the tornado and its aftermath, were extracted from the oral histories. The complete oral histories were conducted as a service project for the community and contained much more information than is relevant for the scope of this study. A cross section of the community was carefully and purposefully chosen as a stratified sample to create a representative spectrum of points of view. The oral history interviews asked a series of very open-ended questions to allow respondents the freedom to tell their crisis narratives in an unincumbered way, with no interruptions or limits on how long they talked, or what direction the stories went. Follow-up questions were only asked if clarification was needed, or if a respondent needed gentle prompting to continue their narrative. In this way, the best attempt possible was made to obtain unbiased accounts of the respondent's own telling of the events of December 10, 2021.

Though many oral history projects have been completed after crisis events, it is less common to see longitudinal studies after crisis events. It can be logistically difficult to recruit participants who are willing to meet over a period of time, and often researchers want to analyze and publish work while the events they are evaluating still seem relevant and timely. In the case of this study, less concern is placed on the timeliness of the study in relation to the initial events, and more concern is placed on the ability, or inability, of a community to move toward renewal after a crisis event. The creation of a longitudinal study is imperative in this case to evaluate and examine the narratives of the same group of individuals, a cross section of the community, to ascertain the change of their crisis narratives over time. The transcripts of the extracted crisis

narratives were examined through thematic analysis using the five themes as presented in the theory of Narratives of Crisis by Seeger and Sellnow (2016). The book presents a theoretical framework of crisis narratives: accounts of blame, stories of renewal, victim narratives, heroic tales, and memorials. The transcripts were analyzed using the themes of Narratives of Crisis through thematic analysis and were prioritized by the emergent or major theme of each narrative and any notable sub-themes that emerged. This process was repeated with the second set of transcripts and the themes of the 18 participants who agreed to both first and second interviews were compared at the 6 month and 1.5 years mark to see if a change occurred, and if so, if the change was toward or away from renewal.

Another area of interest in this study is the possibility of leadership status within the community being linked to the ability to move toward or away from renewal after a crisis. It could be asserted that those who are in leadership roles and have ample access to information, and therefore resources, would find it easier to move toward a positive direction of renewal versus those in the community who are without a higher status and who are without access to information and resources. Community leaders potentially have a vast amount of power (Sellnow et al, 2002) to leverage their connections with the community and their access to real-time information. They also have the ability to provide vision (Ulmer et al, 2014) to guide residents toward renewal after a crisis.

Though community leaders often have access to the most up-to-date information in the aftermath of a natural disaster, they are also thrust into a new set of emergency roles. The overwhelming role of community leaders during the post-crisis stage can result in a lack of communication between leaders and the public if those in leadership are not mindful to create

and maintain continued connections with the public. In addition to evaluating a possible divide within the community, an examination through a thematic analysis was also conducted to see if there was an existing bridge of information between those in government leadership positions and the general public at the 6-month mark of the first round of oral history interviews, as well as the second round of interviews at the 1.5 years mark.

For the sake of this study, community leaders were defined as those within the community who work in administrative positions within a government agency or non-profit or were a member of the FEMA initiated Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG). Within this definition, first responders would not be considered community leaders. Even though first responders play a vital role as the first point of contact after disasters, and are employed by the local government, they typically do not work in a role in which they have an audience to provide a prospective vision and/or disseminate information. In a similar way, a principal or superintendent of a school would be a community leader, but a teacher or other non-administrative employee of the school district would not be considered a community leader. This decision was made because teachers and non-administrative employees of a school district would not have the same access and connection to information as higher-level administrators.

The theory of Discourse of Renewal, as theorized by Ulmer and Sellnow (2002) was used to support this portion of the analysis. In short, the theory asserts that four steps can be used by organizational leadership to help an organization or community move through a crisis and toward renewal. These steps include: 1) learning from the crisis, 2) ethical communication, 3) communication that is prospective in nature, and 4) effective organizational rhetoric. A thematic analysis with be used with the four steps of the Discourse of Renewal to examine the narratives

of both those in leadership roles and those not in leadership roles. In both groups, the narratives were examined through thematic analysis to determine if the steps of Discourse of Renewal were noted in a positive or negative expression by those interviewed. It was also noted if any change in results occurred between the first and second stages of the longitudinal study.

Research Questions and Significance of the Study

The current study proposes the following three questions:

R1: How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?

R2: What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?

R3: At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?

The story of Mayfield, KY leading up to and in the aftermath of the 2021 tornadoes through the collection of oral histories will have significance to the community, as it will add to the historical record. Researching the narratives that emerge after a disaster using a cross-section of a community, and then comparing the narratives against follow up narratives a year later has not been researched using the theoretical framework of Seeger and Sellnow's Narratives of Crisis. In this way, the research conducted will contribute to an extension of the theory of Narratives of Crisis (2016).

In addition to the use of Narratives of Crisis, the Discourse of Renewal (2002) was used in this research to evaluate the participants among those in the sample who held positions of leadership within the community. Learning more about how leaders frame crisis narratives, and

how their discourse impacts others' framing of events in the community can be a significant finding to gain understanding. This understanding can help those in positions of leadership to be better positioned to respond quickly and effectively in times of crisis. Also, the failure by leadership to communicate properly and provide information to the public in the aftermath of a natural disaster could have serious implications in a community's ability to collectively move forward toward renewal.

The findings of the changes that occur in how individuals and communities frame crisis events and how their narratives change over time can significantly impact disaster and recovery management communication strategies. This research also will contribute to the fields of strategic communication, and its subfield of risk and crisis communication by having the potential to be a tool that can be applied to future crisis scenarios.

Also, the analysis and results of this dissertation, if beneficial, could be shared with Mayfield's community leaders to help accelerate their path to rebuilding and renewal.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Strategic Communication and Crisis Communication

Strategic communication historically was first introduced as a government initiative to increase clarity internally and between stakeholders both domestic and abroad. During the administrations of Eisenhower and Roosevelt it became more apparent that international relations were changing, and that the government needed to change with the times. Academically, the field of strategic communication came later, primarily with a focus on organizational communication. Strategic communication is broadly defined as communicating purposefully to advance the goals or mission of an organization. The definition has been expanded and clarified over the years as the field advances and as its theories are applied in a variety of interdisciplinary areas. Grunig (1989, 1997) asserted that there was a lack of adequate discourse in the public sphere and recommended a two-way symmetrical model of discourse. An interdependence between organizations and the public began to emerge as the ideal. Habermas (1993) reinvigorated the role of public dialogue through envisioning a critically thinking public with access to clear reporting of the press and stakeholders who were engaged in a mutually beneficial clash of arguments.

The field of crisis communication is relatively new in the overall field of communication, as a subset of strategic communication, gaining traction as a reputable academic discipline in the 1980s. The primary research area that emerged in the inception of the field of study was a desire to reduce problems caused by crisis events. As the field grew in prominence, researchers began to explore topics such as managing meaning and information, attitudes (reputation), emotions (affect), and behavior. Coombs (2009) investigated crises as stages: pre-crisis (prevention and

preparation), crisis response, and post-crisis (learning and recovery). Gone were the days of only trying to react to crises, but instead researchers sought ways to prevent crisis events through protection and planning, and when crises did occur, they sought ways to bring restoration in a timely and effective manner. Prominent theories in the field include Image Repair (Benoit, 1995), SCCT (Situational Crisis Communication Theory) (Coombs, 1994, 2006), the IDEA Model (Sellnow and Sellnow, 2013), the Discourse of Renewal (Ulmer and Sellnow, 2002), and the Narratives of Crisis (Seeger and Sellnow, 2016). In addition to theories and theoretical frameworks, several crisis communication strategies have been developed to implement in research capacities and applied strategies to be used by practitioners. These strategies include instructing information, adjusting information (sympathy, corrective action), risk management, and reputation management. Each strategy has the possibility of producing unique outcomes and should be chosen carefully. The field of crisis communication has also revealed that crisis events expose vulnerabilities, afford opportunities for learning, and that corrective action(s) must be taken to move toward renewal. The theories, frameworks, and communication strategies developed over the past 40+ years all offer the opportunity for application to crisis response, and the ability to learn and educate through the use of applied tools to prevent crises or to better respond to future crisis events.

Oral History and its Use in Social Sciences

The tradition of oral history has been used since ancient times as a way to remember history and pass it on to future generations. The introduction of modern oral history as a tool in the academic setting can be traced back to the initiative started by historian Allen Nevins at Columbia University in 1948. Nevins viewed oral history in an archival sense with the goal of

recording the thoughts and memories of prominent politicians, judges, and businessmen. According to Nevins (1996, p. 37) interviews should be challenging encounters and should be facilitated by a "courageous interviewer who has mastered a background of facts and who has the nerve to press his scalpel tactfully and with some knowledge of psychology into delicate tissues and even bleeding wounds." Though this level of assertiveness was most likely not needed in all Nevins's oral history interviews, it highlights the ideal that was both established by Nevins and was emulated by many other American universities at the time to view oral histories as encounters reserved for elite subjects to be archived for posterity and future research. Though Nevins's standard was the industry standard for many universities, oral histories were not reserved to just elitists. Others in academia became interested in capturing the voices and stories of those who existed outside the powerful bubble of the world of elitists. The Federal Writers' Project of the New Deal area and the Chicago School of Urban Sociology in the first half of the twentieth century provided a balance to share the life experiences of people from all walks of life (Grele 1996, p. 64-65).

A new practice of oral history collection within academia began in the 1960's and 1970s, beginning with the prominence of European researchers who approached the field with the influence of folklore and local history in mind. Within this emerging field, researchers were specifically concerned with underrepresented voices instead of the elite voices of previous research. Ken Plummer (2001, p. 29) argued for 'critical humanism', which constituted a return to human agency and to research in social sciences. With the catalyst of the emergence of hearing 'everyday voices' a new trend began within many major institutions across America and much of Europe to create repositories that could house oral history projects of a vast variety of

areas of topic. During this transitional time in the field Luisa Passerini (1979, p.84) argued that the true value of oral histories was not in describing the past "as it really was", but that its strengths could be found in its differences and its ability not just by collecting "literal narrations but also the dimensions of memory, ideology and subconscious desires."

As the field of oral history continued to develop as to how it should to be defined and interpreted, Thompson (2006, p.53) refers to a second paradigm transformation in oral history when what had been viewed as oral history's weaknesses of subjectivity and lack of credibility began to be viewed as some of its greatest strengths. This new way of thinking about narratives within oral histories is described by Alessandro Portelli (1981, p. 99-100) as uncovering "not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did."

Oral History in Kentucky and Cultural Considerations

Oral Historian, Anna Green (2012, p. 88) said, "What is remembered, when, and why is molded by the culture in which [people] live, the language at their disposal, and the conventions and genre appropriate to the occasion." An oral historian must approach each project with caution since the use of a culturally insensitive or inappropriate question within the oral history interview risks a break in the bond of trust between the interviewer and interviewee.

Kentucky is unique in the field of oral history in that it culturally embraces both the tradition of storytelling and the support of formal oral history initiatives. For more than 45 years, the state has been a national leader in the field of oral history, in large part because of the work of the Kentucky Oral History Commission (KOHC) (Mulligan, 2012, p. 73). Though Kentucky's modern oral history movement first gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s with Appalachian

initiatives such as the *Foxfire* project, by the 1970s, universities across the state were establishing oral history archives to capture not only oral history interviews, but traditional folklore, music, photographs, and ethnographic fieldnotes (p. 74). Between the years of 1971-1973, three major oral history programs emerged in Kentucky: Western Kentucky University's folklife archives in 1971, and oral history centers at the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky in 1973. In 1982, the state converted its 1976 bicentennial commission, which oversaw the oral history projects connected to the bicentennial, to the KOHC. In 2006, on the 30th anniversary of KOHC, James Klotter, a Kentucky state historian described KOHC as "…something special. It's the pride of Kentucky, but it is also the envy of the nation in many ways" (p.75).

Since the researcher of this study has generational roots to Kentucky, the process of working with the Louie B. Nunn Oral History Center at the University of Kentucky to develop interview questions came naturally. For example, it is understood in Kentucky that it breaks traditional cultural norms to ask an interviewee their political affiliation. When in your own regional area, the understanding of the boundaries of social and cultural norms can be more easily maintained. Oral historian, Alessandro Portelli (1992, p. 53) discussed his first interactions when arriving in Harlan County, Kentucky as both an outsider to the state and to the United States. When Portelli was introduced to his first interviewees through mutual friends, he found himself on shaky ground to be accepted and trusted by his potential interviewees. Only when asked by an older gentleman, who came from the background of a unionized coal miner, if Portelli was a union man (which he was) could he find the beginning of common ground and acceptance within the community. In the same way, the researcher of this dissertation understood

the social and cultural regional boundaries when designing the interview questions to work with those residing in Mayfield, Kentucky, and was accepted by the community as a generational Kentuckian from a rural upbringing and a similar county seat.

Narrative Theory and its Use as a Tool for Analysis in Communication

The history of collecting stories, memories, and narratives after crisis events has become more acceptable in recent years as a valid source of the historical record. The changes that happen within memory and storytelling after a traumatic event can be telling and valuable information on its own, as it can be a window into the way people process events, make sense of them, and see them later with the benefit of hindsight. The book, *After the Fall*, is a modern example of the use of interviews conducted over a span of time to capture the changes in memory and insight in the weeks, months, and years after the tragedy of 9/11. A wide net is cast of types of interviewees as the editors attempt to tell a holistic story of a city trying to rebuild itself after a crisis. The strength of *After the Fall* is its ability to let the interviewees speak for themselves, and the book was chosen to use as a framework or example of how to format interviews conducted with the same people over time. The allowance given to the interviewees to have an active voice over the novel style approach of other sources delivered a significant impact to readers.

The first theory to be implemented in research focusing directly on narratives after crisis and their link to studying renewal was first introduced by Seeger and Sellnow (2016) in their book, *Narratives of Crisis: Telling Stories of Ruin and Renewal*. Guided by Fischer's earlier work of the narrative paradigm, and subsequently, Narrative Theory, Seeger and Sellnow introduced a new framework to be used in the research of narratives in the aftermath of a crisis,

and as an extension of how narrative theory could be implemented in the field of crisis communication.

Fischer's Narrative Paradigm and Narrative Theory

A prominent narrative theory often used in communication is Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm (1984). Fisher was not the first to theorize about the use of narrative in communication research but built on the theories of many researchers who came before him. Berger influenced Fisher in his creation of the uncertainty reduction theory, and his idea that all humans are curious by nature. Mead's symbolic interactionism also influenced Fisher's theory. Instead of dismissing past work, Fisher built upon it by asserting that humans are narrative beings who make sense of every part of their lives through the lens of an ongoing narrative. Along this line of thinking, Fisher creates a reality in which every form of communication that seeks to influence beliefs, actions, and/or attitudes impacts the ongoing narrative of one's life and should be viewed as stories. Narration in this sense refers to symbolic action that has sequence and meaning for both those who create stories, and those who listen to and interpret them. For Fisher, the paradigm is a conceptual framework in which all narrative that creates impact should be viewed. The framework makes the claims that people are storytellers by nature, and that the directions our stories go are guided by the situation, media, and genre of which a narrator finds themselves. Outside influences, such as culture and the narrator's character, determine the reasons the narrator chooses to frame their stories. The listeners of a story will determine if the content is reasonable based upon the coherence of the narrative and the fidelity, or trustworthiness, of the narrator. Overall, Fisher asserts that we are surrounded by stories in the world from which we

must choose, and those choices constantly reshape the way we view ourselves and the world around us.

Fisher's Narrative Paradigm was an important development in the field of communication, as it allowed researchers to expand their view of the importance of narrative within the field, and how narrative should be more strategically crafted and disseminated to stakeholders. Storytelling, or narrative, has long been a way people make sense of the world around them. John A. Robinson asserts that stories can serve a wide variety of functions, including the learning from past experiences in a way that can both change the way we behave or act in the future, and make unexpected experiences, which are hard to process, easier to understand and manage within an instructional context (1981). Fischer seemed to agree with Robinson's assertion, and the idea that communicating through stories could be more powerful and effective than the idea of logical and rational argumentation. In addition, he constructed an understanding that narrative employs more of our common sense, and that narrative rationale and narrative emotion complement each other in a way that traditional argumentation does not (Deslandes, 2005). Fisher (1984, p.15) also believed that "public-social knowledge is to be found in the stories that we tell one another (and) would enable us to observe not only our differences but also our commonalities. This idea of "sensemaking" through storytelling both reshaping organizational structure and behavior was heavily evaluated by Karl Weick, who studied the process of storytelling as a creation of reality in which people construct reality themselves in a retrospective fashion (1995). Weick's defense of the power of storytelling in crisis communication shows the need for the understanding of both individual and converging stories after a crisis as a way of constructing past events through the lens of our present world.

The telling of one's experience through oral or written narratives can be an effective tool to convey experiences of people who have experienced crisis, and their narratives can be evaluated to analyze several areas of interest, including the topic of renewal. The idea of moving individuals within a community and/or organization toward renewal has been studied for decades, with Gordon Lippett being a leading authority around creating systems to make sense of and learn from crises.

The Themes of Narratives of Crisis

The five major themes of the theoretical framework of Narratives of Crisis are: Blame, Renewal, Victim, Hero, and Memorial. Though the five themes are universally found in crisis narratives, the way they are processed and reveal themselves in a narrative is strongly dependent on the circumstances of a particular crisis. Natural disasters, such as a tornado, which would be an unpredictable crisis with no one responsible for the onset of the crisis, are a unique context that is explored here to correctly assess the context of the narratives of this study.

Renewal narratives are found in the post-crisis stage after a disaster event. They tend to emerge initially as a spontaneous response that flows from an individual's or community's core values (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016). As time moves on, narratives of renewal are often prospective versus retrospective in nature, and are, "stories of hope, possibility, and optimism" (p. 91). This type of optimism can allow people to see the crisis as an opportunity to create a new reality within their community that has the potential to be better and stronger than before the crisis. Often leaders are the figures within the community that disseminate these types of narratives, as they hope to spur the community toward renewal. According to the theory, although renewal

narratives are compelling, they are a less common form of response to a crisis, since often renewal is overshadowed by blame or the cost of rebuilding (p. 92).

Blame narratives often try to decide who is to blame after a crisis event. Though no one is to blame at the onset of a natural disaster, blame can still become part of an individual or collective narrative as the crisis enters the recovery stage. Recovering and rebuilding after a natural disaster is complicated with many moving parts of non-profit and government agencies-local, state, and federal. The way a natural disaster recovery is handled can come under scrutiny by those who believe the process is not efficient or if they or others have been personally wronged in some way during the post-crisis period. Victim narratives contain the theme that is defined by Seeger and Sellnow (2016) as:

> A person or group harmed, damaged, or made to suffer from an act, circumstance, agency, or condition that is generally not of his or her own making and is of an illegitimate or unfair nature. Victims generally suffer as a consequence of conditions largely or entirely beyond their control" (p. 100).

Speaking directly to the subject of victimhood as it relates to nature disasters, Seeger and Sellnow indicate that they are a type of crisis "where victims bear no responsibility for the onset of their suffering…In these cases, there is a strong imperative to help" (p. 102).

Hero narratives come in a variety of types ranging from an expected hero, such as a firefighter or other first responder, to an unexpected hero, such as an everyday person who puts themselves in harm's way to help rescue someone. After natural disasters, individuals within organizations can also be seen as heroes since they often rush in to begin the tedious and long-term process of recovery and rebuilding. In addition to providing comfort after the loss of a

natural disaster, heroes can also act as models of behavior that should be emulated by others in the community (p. 122).

Narratives with the theme of Memorial are "central to the grieving, healing, remembering, and learning associated with crises" (p. 139). After a natural disaster, memorialization can be not only for those who lost their lives, but also for the loss of livelihood, and the loss of physical items and property. In the case of Mayfield, KY, many of their historical buildings that were central to their downtown area and their generational roots and personal memories were lost after the tornado. Memorializing physical buildings, in this instance, serves as a way of healing, but also as a way to pass down the history of their community to younger generations.

Narratives of Crisis as an Extension of Narrative Theory

Narratives of Crisis: Telling Stories of Ruin and Renewal (2016) uses many case studies that include narratives told during crisis times to develop a theory about the themes found in all crisis narratives. Seeger and Sellnow integrate Fisher's Narrative Paradigm (1984) by agreeing with his initial assessments, such as that narratives are rhetorical in nature, and that narratives share the elements of character, setting, plot and theme. Seeger and Sellnow expand the theory into the field of crisis communication by introducing the theory that individuals who have experienced crisis must reconstruct their life story through making sense of traumatic events, and often exploring how their story fits into the larger narrative of their community. This idea of reducing uncertainty and constructing a new reality within an individual's life story is reinforced by the earlier research of Weick (1993), who theorizes that uncertainty caused by trauma can be disorienting and can result in a breakdown of belief and sensemaking. In addition, crisis

narratives include emotional expression, filling gaps in knowledge, and self-reflection. Crisis narratives help both the individual and the collective create co-constructed meaning of events, and to learn experientially. The theoretical framework of the Narratives of Crisis asserts that five major themes emerge within crisis narratives: blame, renewal, victim, hero, and memorial. These themes rise to the surface as the narrator has to make sense of traumatic crisis events and situate themselves within the larger story of their community. Outside influences, such as a lack of information, which causes the need to fill gaps in knowledge within a narrative, can lead to how the narrator makes sense of the events and frames their story. Alternatively, those in leadership positions often choose to frame their narratives with optimism and opportunity to bring hope to a community and guide them toward a sense of renewal.

Discourse of Renewal

Lippett created a framework that led the way to organizational renewal theory (1969) and was expanded later by Robert Ulmer & Timothy Sellnow (2002) as they created ways of applying Lippett's work specifically to crisis management. Ulmer and Sellnow's work aimed to examine various narrative reactions to crises, and focused on forward-thinking or prospective narratives, defined as the discourse of renewal, instead of the narratives of dwelling on the past, or emphasizing blame (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016). Narratives of renewal can stand alone or can come alongside blame and responsibility narratives to provide a more balanced and optimistic view of a post-crisis situation. Renewal narratives most often emerge in the media from community or organizational leaders, those who had personal connection and/or experience with the crisis, and those in the field of emergency management (2016). The original framework of the Discourse of Renewal (Ulmer, 2001) introduced four elements that it found to be essential to

find renewal after a crisis: organizational learning, ethical communication, prospective rather than retrospective vision, and effective organizational rhetoric. In contrast to the theory of Image Repair, the Discourse of Renewal theory was introduced to study leaders who, through tremendous crisis events, recognized the opportunity for meaningful and substantive change that benefits the community as a whole. Later (Ulmer et al, 2007) the idea of Image Repair was contrasted with the Discourse of Renewal to allow an organization (or community) to move beyond the concepts of image repair to "a post-crisis innovation and adaptation of the organization" (p. 131).

Lessons Learned After a Disaster

According to David Fleming (2001), leaders within a community can use their narratives as a catalyst toward organizational change, if leaders can recognize that change requires them to "embrace paradox and process- ambiguity and opportunity" (p.34). Fleming also asserts that the use of narrative after a crisis creates sensemaking for the narrator and sense-giving for those listening. Beyond a one-way type of communication from leaders, Fleming concludes that for long-term effectiveness, leaders must also listen to the stories of their stakeholders and learn from both individual and communal stories (p. 35).

The lessons learned during the post-crisis, or recovery stage, after a disaster have the potential to be used in a variety of ways. Communities who have experienced a disaster can use lessons learned to be better prepared for future disasters, not only at the government level, but also in every professional field and unique people groups that were impacted.

There are many case studies of natural disasters and the lessons learned through each specific disaster event. Donahue and Tuohy (2006) explore why, despite the ability of responders

to effectively predict issues that will arise in a particular crisis before it occurs, communities are often ill-prepared when disaster strikes. According to Donahue and Tuohy, when patterns of learned lessons continue to be known and continue to repeat, there is often a failure to learn. They contribute the failure to learn "in part, to a lack of systems to identify and disseminate lessons" (p.11). They go on to assert that once the cycle of identifying an issue and developing new policies or procedures occurs, the process should not stop with instructing information. For substantial change to happen, the identification of corrective action, training, practicing the new process, and performance metrics must all be implemented to test if the decided upon changes corrected the initial problem (p. 12).

Alessandra Jerolleman (2021), who studies narratives in the context of crisis and disaster studies, contends that narratives from storytelling can be useful in planning within the public sphere, for use as pedagogy, and as a tool within organization and training. By viewing stories told after a crisis as narrative pedagogy, the researcher encourages the deconstruction, critique, and interpretation of narratives as an instructional method. In addition, Jerolleman concludes that crisis narratives can be used as a form of adult learning, which facilitates learning with the use of stories (p. 7).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The current study proposes the following two questions:

R1: How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?

R2: What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?

R3: At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?

The first question stems from the theoretical framework of Narratives of Crisis, and an understanding through the analysis of past research, that a gap exists in the field of risk and crisis communication. It is not uncommon to see media interviews with residents of a disaster-stricken area on the anniversary dates of the disaster, such as at a one, five, or ten year remembrance of an event. It is uncommon, however, for a researcher to follow the same group of residents over a period of time to examine how their crisis narratives have changed, particularly in the area of renewal. The second question expands the field's understanding of the Discourse of Renewal by examining potential divides that could form between community leaders and the public if the four steps of the Discourse of Renewal are not followed. Thus, this current dissertation is a constructive inquiry concerning the ability of a community to move collectively forward toward renewal, and the examination of community leadership, which includes a prospective vision, learning through the crisis, creating ethical and effective rhetoric, and the dissemination of information to the community, as well as broader lessons that can be learned and shared with practitioners of disaster recovery and renewal in future natural disaster situations.

Oral Histories Among Graves County Residents

The current study consists of in-depth oral histories with a stratified sample of residents in Mayfield, KY (N=18) who were impacted by the tornadic events of December 10, 2021. The focus on creating a representative sample is being used to create as equitable and realistic an overview of the narrative of the community as possible. Oral histories fall into a unique category of their own, in both intent and procedures, but can also be viewed under the broader umbrella of qualitative, or narrative, interviewing.

The theory of Narratives of Crisis and its accompanying theoretical framework is the guiding force for the design and analysis of the research conducted in Mayfield. The existing research in risk and crisis that used narratives as data showed that the best potential methods for data collection would be narrative interviews or oral history interviews (Abrams, 2016). There are few differences between narrative interviews and oral history interviews, with the main difference being the underlying intent. Narrative interviews are created solely for the purpose of research and are often de-identified, whereas oral histories are first conducted with the intent of capturing memories and stories of individuals and their larger roles within the community for the sake of memorializing an event and for the historical record. In this way, oral history places a high value on the voice of the individual. From the preliminary contact with potential participants in Mayfield, it was determined that the community had been inundated with journalists and researchers collecting data in the days, weeks and months following the tornado that destroyed much of their town. The influx of pressure by reporters and researchers upon the community meant that it would be unlikely to secure buy-in from residents by requesting to conduct more traditional interviews. Through continued communication with residents, however,

it was discovered that many of the community members were devastated that the Mayfield they had grown up in was now largely wiped off the map, with many of the historical buildings destroyed beyond repair. It was also learned that Mayfield was a deeply rooted community, with most residents having many generations of ancestors who all lived within a small geographical area, thus creating a large body of collective memory of their town. It was for this reason that the idea of an oral history project was presented to the residents of Mayfield. By co-constructing a project with residents and by identifying residents who represented a variety of voices and points of view, it was possible to find buy-in from a stratified sample of the community and create a project that was mutually beneficial. Though the project required the collection of quite a bit of data that fell outside the scope of the later research project of this dissertation, crisis narratives were included as part of the larger oral history project, which created a dataset of narratives that could be used for research purposes. The crisis narratives emerged as a small part of a larger project, which fulfilled the desires of participants to share and memorialize a more holistic history of their upbringings and memories of the historical buildings of their town.

The open-ended questions created for the interviews led each participant through a chronological telling of their life story in Mayfield. After introductions were made and the consent forms were signed, questions were reviewed and then asked of participants. Additional questions were only asked if there was a need for clarification (See Appendix B for interview questions).

Interview questions were modified for the interviews with the meteorologist, since he has family connections to Mayfield, but lives in the neighboring city of Murray, KY. The meteorologist was chosen for the study since he was an important and trusted part of the

community and was an integral part of issuing National Weather Service (NWS) watches and warnings for the Mayfield tornadoes. A subject matter expert in meteorology and communication was consulted to create customized questions for the first and second interviews. (See Appendix C for meteorologist interview questions).

By collecting the stories of participants as a facilitator of the narrator's story, and less of a journalist or a participant in a conversation, participants were allowed to tell the story they chose, instead of answering through the short question and answer style they had experienced with traditional media outlets. Through the theoretical framework created by Seeger and Sellnow, it was known that the creation of an environment of safety and comfort for the narrator was of utmost importance. Even though six months had passed after the tornado by the time the first interviews were conducted, there was still much sensemaking and filling in of gaps that needed to happen to allow the participant to fit their traumatic narrative into their larger life story. This was especially true since it was discovered that many were sharing their stories aloud for the first time during our sessions. The style of interviewing allowed for participants to share complete stories without interruption or leading questions and follow-up questions were only asked if needed for clarification after the completion of the narrator's story.

The research about where to house the oral history interviews began with the two nearby major universities, Western Kentucky University and Murray State University, both which have small oral history collections, but do not offer oral history classes or programs. The University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Oral History Center ultimately was chosen as the institution to archive the interviews. This decision was made because the University of Kentucky is the most prominent oral history center in the state and the center offered to provide substantial support in

the way of equipment and processing of interviews. In addition, the University of Kentucky is wide reaching, with a vast digital repository and cutting-edge access to both audio oral histories and searchable transcripts. Lastly, the residents of Mayfield were overwhelmingly supportive of having their accounts archived at the University of Kentucky. They expressed a trust for the institution, a connection to the history of the school and a general appreciation for their sports programs.

Recruitment Procedures

The priority for recruitment was to identify a diverse cross section of the population of Mayfield, KY to collect oral histories from a variety of demographics and perspectives. By beginning with individuals tied to prominent local organizations, such as non-profits and churches, snowball sampling was implemented to identify prospective participants. In addition, a Facebook support group for tornado survivors was used to recruit participants, especially those who had been displaced by the tornado.

For the current study, a total of 22 residents of Graves County, primarily residing in Mayfield, who were impacted by the tornadic events of December 10-11, 2021 were chosen to participate in oral histories about their experiences living in Mayfield before, during, and in the aftermath of the disaster. Eighteen of the participants completed both the first and second interviews and were included in this longitudinal study. A table of participant information is provided below:

Table 1: Study Participants

Participant	Gender	City	Occupation	Community Leader
Participant 1	Male	Mayfield	Church Trustee, LTRG	Y
Participant 2	Male	Mayfield	School Superintendent	Y
Participant 3	Male	Mayfield	Pastor, LTRG	Y
Participant 4	Female	Mayfield	Mayor	Y
Participant 5	Female	Mayfield	Emergency Manager	Y
Participant 6	Male	Murray	Meteorologist, NWS	Y
Participant 7	Female	Mayfield	CFO of Local Non-Profit	Y
Participant 8	Female	Mayfield	Fairgrounds Manager, Graves Co.	Y
Participant 9	Male	Mayfield	President of local foundation, LTRG	Y
Participant 10	Female	Mayfield	Retired, Church Member	N
Participant 11	Male	Mayfield	Business Owner	N
Participant 12	Male	Mayfield	Retired Sheriff, Local Historian	N
Participant 13	Female	Mayfield	Nursing Home Nurse	N
Participant 14	Male	Mayfield	Volunteer Fire and Rescue Chief	N
Participant 15	Male	Mayfield	Displaced, Wal-Mart Employee	N
Participant 16	Female	Mayfield	Displaced, School Employee	N
Participant 17	Male	Mayfield	Retired, Volunteer w/local orgs.	N
Participant 18	Female	Mayfield	Displaced, Phlebotomist	N

Data Collection Procedures

The first set of 22 interviews were conducted in June and July of 2022, approximately six months after the tornado disaster, using a stratified sample of Mayfield, KY residents. Eighteen interviews were conducted in person during the first two weeks of June in 2022 with four interviews being collected over Zoom during the last week of July, 2022 because of availability

or accessibility issues. The second set of interviews were conducted in May of 2023. Sixteen participants were interviewed in person, two participants were interviewed over Zoom, and four participants declined a follow-up interview. Interviews were conducted in person, unless the participant preferred Zoom because of accessibility or availability issues.

Interviewees worked with the interviewer to provide biographical and demographic information to prepare for the interview during a pre-interview. Though broad questions were used throughout all interviews, potential follow up questions were planned through the pre-interview process, which were conducted by phone, and follow-up questions were occasionally adding during the interview as needed for clarification. The tone of the phone meetings was intentionally informal to establish a level of comfort with the researcher and to create a foundation for the best possible facilitation of everyone's story. In addition, pre-interviews were used as an opportunity to build rapport and answer any questions.

On the day of the interview, interviewees completed release forms after discussing any questions and/or concerns. Interviews were conducted in-person and were audio recorded. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing the interviewee to feel comfortable telling their own story, in their own way. Notes were minimally taken to record thoughts, possible follow-up questions, and significant non-verbal cues, such as crying or anger, that could not be captured in the transcription process. Follow-up questions were implemented as deemed appropriate by the interviewer. Follow-up interviews were conducted, when possible, in person, approximately one year from the date of the original interviews.

Nearly all the interviews, apart from Zoom interviews, took place in Graves County Public Library, a centrally located public setting that was comfortable and quiet for the residents

and for the needs of the recording equipment. Two of the first interviews in June of 2022 took place in the boardroom of the Annie Gardner Foundation because of scheduling issues with participants.

Most participants cried during the recording of the first interviews. Before the beginning of each interview, interviewees were asked to silently place their hand up, palm out, if they needed to take a break for any reason. The hand raising was implemented to pause the recording without additional conversation about the need to take a break during the interview. At minimum, participants took advantage of a box of Kleenex that sat on the table in the interviewing room, and most placed a silent hand up at least once during the recording because of crying to the point of not being able to continue with the interview. In each of these occurrences, after a drink of water, and/or time to compose themselves, all participants continued with and completed their interviews. Nearly all interviewees disclosed that this initial interview, conducted at the six-month mark after the tornado, was the first time they had told their story aloud.

In preparation for the second set of interviews in May of 2023, all 22 of the original interviewees were invited to participate in a follow-up oral history interview. Four of the participants declined a second interview, leaving 18 participants for this longitudinal study. All interviews, apart from four Zoom interviews, were conducted in the same room at Graves County Public Library as the initial interviews. The set-up and procedures of the second interviews were the same as the first, with participants arriving at the library, being asked if they would like a bottled water, and with a box of Kleenex sitting on the table between the microphones of the interviewer and interviewee. Very few tears were shed during the second set

of interviews, no one required a break during the interview to compose themselves, and several participants lightly joked that the tissues were needed more that summer for their allergies than for their tears. Most interviews were slightly shorter in length, primarily because the questions did not include preliminary questions about upbringing, traditions, etc., but instead started at the point of retelling of their recollections of the events of December 10, 2021 (See Appendices B and C for interview questions).

Note that participants will be referred to as their assigned numbers from Table 1. The letter A will represent the first interview, and B, the second interview. So, participant 1, for example, will be referred to as 1A for their first narrative, and 1B, for their second narrative. When labeling for community leaders, the abbreviation CL will be used, and the abbreviation of NCL will be used for non-community leaders. Interviewees 1-9 were identified as community leaders and 10-18 were identified as non-community leaders through the definition as written earlier in this paper.

After the completion of the interviews, the collected stories and narratives were professionally transcribed and all interviews were archived and indexed through the Louie B. Nunn Oral History Center. All transcribed data was analyzed thematically to identify the types of narratives found within the interviews based upon the five types of crisis narrative themes as defined by Seeger and Sellnow. The first interviews were then compared to the second interviews one year later to analyze if there was any shift toward or away from blame/renewal narratives as a community. Interview excerpts were heavily used to allow the individuals of Mayfield to tell their own story and have their own voices.

Analysis of Data

RQ1

The first research question, *How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?* Was answered using the Narratives of Crisis theory and theoretical framework. The book, *Narratives of Crisis* (2016) has a clear theoretical framework created by Seeger and Sellnow that was used to evaluate the narratives in this longitudinal study. The five major themes the authors theorized could be found within all crisis narratives allowed a framework to be used for analysis that was already vetted in lieu of creating an emergent thematic framework. Out of the original 22 participants, 18 agreed to a follow-up interview. To analyze the data collected in the 18 oral history accounts of a cross-section of Mayfield's residents who agreed to participate in both the initial and follow up interviews, the crisis narratives were extracted from the oral histories and were considered separately from the oral history accounts. The five themes of: blame, renewal, victim, hero, and memorial were used to thematically code the narratives. Though narratives typically contain more than one theme, the theory asserts that one central theme emerges within narratives. Despite the theory's assertion, all themes were considered to best discover the dynamic of the crisis narratives of the participants. The same people were interviewed in follow-up oral history interviews, and the same process was repeated to identify all themes for each narrative. The crisis narratives of the participants were evaluated to note if and how their narratives changed over the year time lapse between interviews.

A thematic analysis, through which the researcher assesses the data, in this case transcripts, is "looking for similarities, or patterns" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 46). The thematic coding

process followed an etic approach by using categories derived from "disciplinary knowledge and theory" about crisis narratives (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 95). The categories reviewed in Chapter 2, focus on blame, renewal, victim, hero, and memorial narratives (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016). The process included reading the transcripts repeatedly, observing comments fitting within each category (see Appendix D for codebook). Comments were color coded for each category by the researcher. A second coder, trained in the use of narrative typology, then read each comment independently to verify that the categorization was appropriate. Disagreements were reconciled through conversation. If disagreement continued, a third expert was to be consulted, though one was not needed in this study. Once coding was complete, the themes were analyzed internally to identify if differences exist in two areas: 1) in the narratives between the first and second interview sessions within the community: and 2) between those in a position as a community leader (CLs) and residents who do not hold such positions, and who were considered non-community leaders (NCLs).

If thematic differences were found in the evolution of narratives over time, whether toward a positive outcome of renewal, or a negative outcome of victimhood and blame, the additional data collected in the remaining portions of the oral histories were used to provide context to assess the results. In the same manner, if the results of the analysis were segmented, with one group moving toward renewal, and another remaining stagnant or moving further toward victimhood or blame, contextual information from the totality of the oral history data may be used to try to better understand why one group within the community was able to move forward, while another was not able to find renewal. These factors include the history of the individual within the larger context of the community.

RQ2 and RQ3

RQ2, *What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?* and RQ3, *At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?* were evaluated using the Discourse of Renewal and its four major elements of: organizational learning, ethical communication, prospective rather than retrospective vision, and effective organizational rhetoric. The Discourse of Renewal was coded amongst both the narratives of those who were classified as community leaders, as well as in the narratives of non-community leaders. The finding of any of the four elements were coded within the narratives of community leaders, and coding was also noted within the narratives of non-community leaders if the leadership of the community was discussed, or if the access to up-to-date information as it related to the leadership of community leaders was noted. The analysis of those in leadership within the community as defined by this study and the themes and/patterns that are uncovered were used to analyze the contribution, if any, by community leaders to help move the community toward or away from renewal, as well as to discuss the lessons learned to better understand what practitioners can learn at an applied level about disaster recovery and renewal.

CHAPTER 4: DECEMBER 10, 2021, THE CRISIS NARRATIVE AS TOLD BY RESIDENTS

Throughout the first and second interviews with 18 residents of Mayfield, KY, interviewees were asked to recall the day of December 10, 2021. This one day, the day the tornado hit Mayfield, was just the beginning of each resident's crisis narrative, and many chose to tell this part of their story in a chronological, informative manner. The choice to remain matter of fact in many of the beginning parts of their interviews resulted in an area of their stories that was not as heavily coded as the later part of the narratives. Their recollections of that day could be entirely coded as the theme of victim since each resident was negatively impacted by the events of December 10, 2021.

When people are experiencing a crisis, they cannot initially process beyond the known facts of the event to place blame or to think of renewal. Most of the themes of crisis narratives come in the days, weeks, months, and years following a crisis as an individual has time to process the reality of the crisis and can reflect upon the situation retrospectively. This does not mean the telling of the initial crisis is unimportant. The informative telling of that day is vitally important to understanding how the crisis unfolded and to give context to later analysis. For this reason, a chapter is being devoted to the telling of the day of the tornado, from the interviewees themselves.

Many of the narratives began with the knowledge that the weather seemed strange for the time of year stating, "I remember about early afternoon that day, and it was in the 70s, and it's December the 10th, and it's in the 70s. And I was getting in my car, and I just happened to think, this feels like the beach. It was…that humid and warm for December" (Interviewee 4). Another

participant recalled, “I got off work at seven o’clock (in the morning) that day, and I remember walking outside and it just feeling sticky and really, really warm for December. And the sky was, it was cloudy, but it was almost like an overcast- but it was weird. I don’t know, it was just weird” (Interviewee 15). As the storm approached a resident who lived several miles outside of the tornado’s track said, “the power cut…the atmosphere was just wicked and strange, it was warm, it was cold, and the wind was blowing and then it wasn’t, it was just spooky” (Interviewee 9). Interviewee 17, who lives less than a mile from the track of the storm remembered “our dog…howled the whole time we could hear the tornado…her sensitive ears were feeling the low pressure.

As the storm carved its destructive path toward Mayfield, residents were responding in a variety of ways. Since the area had been experiencing an unusually warm December up to that night, several severe weather warnings had already been issued that month along with siren alerts, so some people were unaware that the sirens of this particular warning were unusually dire. Interviewee 18 described the evening of December 10 in this way:

> And so, I worked that morning, and that was the evening of their Christmas party. And I guess the best way to describe it is I was naïve, because for years and years and years we have heard, oh, there’s a tornado watch, or there’s a tornado warning. And it’s like, nothing ever happened around here. And so, I just really didn’t think it was going to happen. I mean, just to be perfectly honest. It was like, oh, it’s probably going to come, this big old rainstorm, or something, later. And they’re just overreacting, it’s not that big of a deal. That was my take on it.

Interviewee 2 was helping arrange sporting events that day, and was discussing back and forth whether to transport students or cancel events:

> And we kind of went back and forth on that, and ultimately we decided to, let's go ahead and play games. Both school systems were good. We thought that the timing of the event at that time when we made that decision was going to either be well before the games started or well after the games ended, and so we felt like we had enough of a window to be able to play the games. And then of course, the way that we--the way that I personally viewed those types of situations was very different than how I view them now…I know my approach then was one of, well, if we can miss the window, I think we're going to be okay.

Others in the community were closely monitoring the weather situation and were preparing for the worst. Interviewee 5, an Emergency Manager, describes her day in this way:

> So that day, the--just trying to get things ready for the event. We knew that it was going to be catastrophic, is what the National Weather Service used--their words exactly, and so just trying to get people prepared for it and plus set up an emergency operations center. Here in Mayfield, Graves County, we don't have a dedicated facility, so we had to set up--try to set up phones and stuff, move some equipment to use the facility that we had, get a key to the door. And so getting it ready and then just trying to prepare my family, get them. We knew we wouldn't be going home probably that night, so I had my girls take extra clothes with them. I packed my bags and medications knowing I wouldn't be going home that night, so, we'd be busy, and we were.

A nurse at a local nursing home described her night preparing for the potentially bad weather:

> I picked up a night shift, and went to work, and you know, we were expecting some bad weather, but we never really knew how bad it was, and going in that night, I was just preparing, you know, you always prepare for the worst, and I think a tornado is pretty bad. So, I just wanted to make sure all the residents were safe, and that night, I just prepared, and helped cover them up, and get them out in the hallways, like we were trained to do during our trainings that we have there. (Interviewee 13)

As the tornado made its way to Mayfield, those in the path of the storm rode out the storm in basements, coal cellars, hallways, bathrooms, and other locations that were as sturdy as possible. A pastor and his wife took refuge in the basement of the church near their parsonage. He describes the events this way:

> So after just a few seconds, we could smell an earthy smell and a blast of fresh air underneath the door…we realized that we had been spared because we had chosen the closet instead of the hallway…we made our way out of the building because we realized very quickly that it might not be stable, which was accurate…it was very dark, so my flashlight wasn't providing much, but I could see just a little bit in the dimness of the night that there was an extensive amount of damage. I did shine my light up on to the building to see what I was looking for, to see how much damage we had taken, we had beautiful stained glass. And as I was shining my light, Rob was trying to get in touch with me, "Are you okay, are you okay?" and I couldn't text back because my hands were shaking, I realize now that it was all that stress and trauma that lasted for several weeks actually. So, I called Rob instead, and I told him we were okay, but that the church was heavily damaged, and he said, "How bad?" and I shined my light up onto the south wall

of the sanctuary and realized I was shining my light up into the sky, it was just completely gone. (Interviewee 3)

The woman who was mentioned earlier at her work's Christmas party talked about the moment she realized she was in the direct path of the storm as she was with her home with her husband, daughter, parents, and pets in the coal cellar of her home:

> We were all just kind of huddled down in the basement against one of the walls. And I could hear the sound. There was a train track that ran behind our home and sometimes you could just hear the clacking of the wheels for better word on the rails…it was quiet because nothing was running anywhere…then the first thing that popped into my head was, what in the world is the train doing? And I was like, oh, it's the tornado…and you could hear the boards pulling free and you could hear creaking and banging and glass was breaking and it was over the house, and it was so loud. I didn't realize how loud they were. And it sounded literally like a jet airplane was landing on top of our house as just the noise…It was just like this force that you could feel pulling on your body and it's like, I can't make this not get me. It was just terrifying. And I don't know how long the tornado was over the house. It probably wasn't long… but it felt longer at the time. And then as quickly as it hit the house, it was just silent. (Interviewee 18)

The nurse who was preparing at the local nursing home describes the tornado in this way:

> The tornado sirens went off, and the next thing you know, the power went off. And I remember standing up there at the nurse's desk with other employees, and we had these side doors where we'd come in and out, and they were locked. And they flung open like it was nothing. I actually had a resident fall and start getting drug out of the facility, and I

> actually went and grabbed him, and I pulled him back. And I held on to him, and he was, like, "There's a tornado!" And…I said, "Everything is going to be okay." And I could just remember seeing things flying all around us, and debris, and just the things from off of the desk, like the computers and everything flying by us, and just holding on to that resident, and just reassuring him that everything was going to be okay…I was holding on to one of the walls, up against the--there was a railing up against the wall, and just holding on to that and him, because just the pressure from the wind was trying to suck us out of the facility…I remember another employee, Tina, she was covering another resident with her own body. And then I remember two of the other employees were holding on to one of the railings and covering themselves. And it was just--it was loud. Everyone always says it's like a train coming through, and it does sound like a train coming through. (Interviewee 13)

As the storm moved out of Mayfield, most residents were left without electricity and many with the leaking of natural gas in the downtown area. Blocked roads were a major issue throughout the area as the tornado had left the area blanketed in a layer of glass, metal, downed power lines, rubble, and other debris. The darkness of night brought additional challenges to those who needed to check on family members and physical property. Interviewee 1 speaks of trying to locate a family member after the storm:

> And so I got in my car, and I left going towards my aunt's house, and as I got further down the road, I could see all the destruction…and so I had to park my car because I couldn't walk any further because everything was just down. And so there are several people out too, they were looking for their relatives and friends with flashlights, and it

> looked just like a war zone… the area where my aunt lives, there's a school bus garage where the school buses are parked, and then I saw a school bus, and it was way where it shouldn't have been, I guess where the tornado had blew it a block or two over…as I was getting close to her house, I see, well, the houses and everything were just gone... and then when I saw that bus garage and how it was damaged, I just knew my aunt's house was gone as well. So when I made it up to her driveway, all I could see was just the concrete foundation of the house and then I start calling her name and trying to find her and with my flashlight…something told me to use the flashlight and start looking on the ground, and there she was lying on the ground outside the foundation of her house…she was already gone…and I had called 911, and they was getting all kind of calls, and I told them what was happening. They said they couldn't cross the streets, you know, there was a block, so they couldn't get an ambulance over there if she was alive. And so I had found a shower curtain, and I had covered her up with that, and I stayed there with her body for a while, you know, sat there. There was a chair and so I sat there for a while and then I had left and made my way back.

A local business owner whose business was lost by a tornado in 2016, discusses finding out his current business, which had been rebuilt at a new location after the 2016 tornado, was destroyed by the December 10 tornado:

> So I turned on Thirteenth Street and remember I turned back on James Street which is where the building was located and kind of dodging downed power lines and hearing water shooting out everywhere. And when I got there I noticed…the whole roof was gone basically and I could hear the gas rushing out and I had to find--there was a fireman who

> happened to come by later…we had to go turn the gas line off because I knew that could be a major problem. The walls were still standing for the most part but every bit of the improvements we had done that morning were totally gone. We put a new heater in. And I still don't know where it went. I never did find it even after all the cleanup. It was just gone. I tried to get in and just look around and see what all--if anything was salvageable…then in the middle of the night like maybe one thirty, two o'clock, and maybe my kids won't hear this for a while. But we had all their Christmas presents hidden in the building…so I had to rush back and try to dig through everything to get all their Christmas presents we had been hiding for them. I managed to find most of them. But some of them we couldn't which I know that's not a big thing but it was at the time. (Interviewee 11)

The following morning, with the rising of sun, residents began to see more clearly the damage left behind by the tornado. A former sheriff and local historian recalls his first look at the destruction:

> We were probably a mile and a quarter from where the damage actually started. And was not aware of how bad it really was until the next day when my sons called me, said, "Let's go riding around." So they came and picked me up and we went down Broadway which is--could have picked anywhere on the north side of town and find the devastation that was there. And I remember driving by the post office. I said, "That's still standing."…we went by Carr's Barn, little restaurant, tiny restaurant, and it was not still standing. It was just flat on the ground…we drove a couple more blocks and there was the courthouse…I said, "Guys, that's my courthouse, it's gone."…That's the sad part. And

> I pulled over and had a good cry. I'm still a little emotional over that night …So I'm pretty much a wreck a lot of times. But when I actually saw the courthouse, because I grew up as I say within two blocks of the courthouse, that's a place I went, my best friend's father was circuit clerk, you knew people that worked in the office, we spent a lot of time up there, and it was part of my growing up and I think anybody over, I don't know, fifty, maybe sixty years old will tell you the same thing. It was a vibrant part of a vibrant downtown. No longer. There is no downtown. (Interviewee 12)

Interviewee 8 remembers her first time seeing the destruction of her beloved downtown:

> I said "It feels like someone's just punching me in the chest." I said "It's just gone." And I said, "I'm looking at the Hall Hotel. I don't know if it can be saved or not, the courthouse can't." I mean I knew when I saw the courthouse there's no way. And I said "I've just passed by the Legion, the American Legion, it's gone, it's going to be torn down. It has to be." …And all these old churches that's been here so long, and all those are just, you know, it won't be the same. But that's the thing too, when you first go on some of these streets now like K&N Root Beer that's been there for a long time, you drive by and you see all the damage, or damage on the church and it's just rubble. Well you see it though, it's there and you knew what was there. But then when they clear the lot off you drive by and it's nothing, it's just emptiness. And that has affected me more than seeing that rubble there, because rubble represented something. And I don't care if they've got a sign that says we're going to rebuild or whatever, to me it doesn't make any difference. It's still empty. And so it's, that part is really sad and then you have the sad part of a little Mexican store by a young couple. And I think they have a couple of children, and I don't

know their names or anything. But my niece is, her father is Mexican and so we had been going there-- in fact our Christmas parade is the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Well we were downtown for the Christmas parade so we walked the street and went up to the little Mexican store that we had basically just discovered and we'd only been in there maybe a couple of times before. So we go in and we're looking around and she wants to get this and that and whatever, and there's the little children running around playing. And it's just a young couple that's opened it up trying to make a living for themselves. And the tornado totally whacked out their store, just totally rubble…they lost their livelihood, and they were trying to do it on their own, and so I feel for them because you wonder if they'll have another chance.

Interviewee 6, a meteorologist, talked about the emotions in the aftermath of seeing the storm move into Mayfield:

I think, at one point, one of the WPSD meteorologists turned to the camera and just said, "Pray for Mayfield." That's something you don't hear an on-air forecaster say. That's what he said. And you knew the significance of it when it was happening…so it was a tough day for forecasters. I don't think that I finally went to bed until Sunday night, you know, the following night, because of the adrenaline…it was traumatic. Every forecaster cried. Every forecaster cried for days…We definitely take it personal when there's loss of life…we don't know how to internalize that, and it's very much like a first responder, traumatic PTSD response. I always say that meteorologists are on par, emotionally, mentally, with first responders because we knew, based on radar, when it was going to hit Mayfield. We knew everything in our head already. We knew what it was going to look

like afterwards, we knew that people will have died, we knew that a community will have been destroyed. So we have to process all that. And we take it personal. So processing all that was not easy, and I don't think we still have, here. We're in June (2022). I don't think--you know, even now, it brings up an emotional response. It was the hardest day of my life, forecasting.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

This chapter will share the results of the data collected over the course of two interviews, roughly one year apart through the coding of the theoretical framework of Narratives of Crisis (Seeger and Sellnow, 2016) and the Discourse of Renewal (Ulmer and Sellnow, 2002). All coding analysis sought to answer the following three research questions:

R1: How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?

R2: What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?

R3: At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?

Narratives of Crisis Analysis

To answer Research question 1, an etic, qualitative thematic analysis was conducted using the existing 2016 framework of *Narratives of Crisis* by Seeger and Sellnow. The order of themes as outlined below is by the most frequently coded themes to the least frequently coded themes during the thematic analysis process. As mentioned in the methodology section, the analysis sought to identify if differences exist in two areas: 1) in the narratives between the first and second interview sessions within the community: and 2) between those in a position as a community leader (CL) and residents who do not hold such positions and were considered non-community leaders (NCL).

All quotations that refer to a particular question will be listed (see Appendices B and C). Since the first and second interview questions were not ordered identically, the same question

asked in both interviews may have different corresponding numbers. If this is the case, the numbers will be placed in parentheses. For instance, the question, “Share with me if and how you believe Mayfield will move forward in the short term?” is the fifteenth question in the first interview, but the tenth question in the second interview. In this instance, the refence to the question would be (15,10). In addition, community leaders are designated as CL after their quotes, whereas non-community leaders are given the abbreviation of NCL. An interviewee’s first interview is marked as “A” and their second interview as “B”.

Table 2 illustrates the presence or absence of the five themes of Narratives of Crisis. The presence of a theme is marked with a check, and the absence is marked with an X. Interviewees 1-9 were identified as community leaders (CLs) and 10-18 were identified as non-community leaders (NCLs). The white columns signify the first interviews, and the grey columns signify the second, follow-up interviews. The presence of each theme is sub-totaled for community leaders, then again for non-community leaders before being added together for a complete total at the bottom of the table:

Table 2: Presence or Absence of Themes of Narratives of Crisis

Interviewee #	**Presence of Renewal**		**Presence of Victim**		**Presence of Hero**		**Presence of Memorial**		**Presence of Blame**	
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
CL sub-total	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**3**	**4**
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X
16	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X
17	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
NCL sub-	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**6**	**5**	**3**	**3**
Total	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**14**	**11**	**6**	**7**
Please note that first interviews are in white, and second (follow-up) interviews are in grey.										

Renewal Narratives

The theme of Renewal was the overarching theme for all 36 interviews, being found heavily throughout the crisis narratives of both the first and second interviews. As Table 2 illustrates, the themes of the Narratives of Crisis framework were similar in their presence amongst both community leaders and the public.

It was found that the narratives of participants intertwined their stories of renewal with many of the other themes, often with two or more themes co-mingling, or with a sub-theme wedged within two statements that were coded as Renewal. For example, the co-mingling, or intertwining of themes could include the themes coded as Renewal, Victim, and Memorial. In this instance, an interviewee might discuss their desire to move forward toward a sense of normalcy (Renewal), while grieving the loss of their home (Memorial) and being displaced to a hotel (Victim).

In the case of wedged themes, this phenomenon was only discovered with the theme of Victim coded within a narrative of Renewal. For example, an interviewee might discuss the ways in which they are excited about their future housing developments (Renewal), then shift completely away from the topic of housing to a statement about the struggles they are having with coping with weather events after the tornado (Victim), before returning to complete their thought about the happiness surrounding the construction of their new home (Renewal).

Within the analysis of the theme of Renewal, two sub-themes were found: 1) Renewal Through Resilience, and 2) Discovering Renewal of Self Alongside Community Renewal.

Renewal Through Resilience

The Narratives of Crisis framework asserts that resilience is often a component of Renewal narratives. Seeger and Sellnow (2016) mention resilience is often thought of a mechanism of working through the challenges that a disaster brings to begin to recover. In addition to working to rebuild, resilience can also allude to building a new and better capacity to withstand future crisis events (p.88). A school employee, Interview 16, who was displaced with her children after the tornado, had this to say about the renewal of her community when asked about the short-term recovery (15, 10):

> Interview 1 (Coded Victim and Renewal): You could just feel that tension everywhere we went. Like everybody's carrying something. Either you're carrying the weight of your own challenges from being displaced or you're carrying the weight of everything you're seeing by the people you're helping that are displaced. And so, I think our community was definitely affected in that the huge loss…and also our endurance is being tested. We're six months out…we're all wrapping our minds around that this is going to be a process and a long process…And so, the good news is that, I think, like me, a lot of people are experiencing some cool moments in the midst. There are some really awesome moments where people are stepping in and helping and just you're seeing the goodness of people. Our community is experiencing just--I have more a village here than I thought I did. That's something that has really been very special to me to realize…I've never seen a community pull together like this one. (Interviewee 16A, NCL)

In the first interview, the participant did not explicitly use the word resilience, though she was beginning to process the idea of the community finding a way together to diminish the impact of

the crisis and begin to work toward renewal. Here is what she had to say about the idea of resilience when asked the same question in the second interview:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): I know we would love to snap our fingers, and it'd be finished, but it's just something that's going to take time and going to take, effort… we're just still being our resilient selves and marching forward, despite the obstacles. So that's something I think we've really exhibited as a community is that resilience. There's still that positivity even in the face of the ordeal we're experiencing collectively. (Interviewee 16B, NCL)

Interviewee 10 speaks with optimism about the opportunity for change and building capacity that has appeared after the disaster after being asked about the short-term future of Mayfield (15, 10):

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal): I'm optimistic, of course. And I just--I cannot see how we could pass this opportunity, such a horrendous, devastating thing to happen to us, for us to just go back to being the same old, same old. I just hope that we can move forward on a more inclusive basis that everybody feels a part--important in Mayfield...for people to be able to work together on all levels, there needs to be changes. There needs to be changes in the city politics. There needs to be changes in the school system. There needs to be changes in the way we worship, segregated on Sundays. There just needs to be more togetherness for the whole community and for us to get out of our little cliques and start to mingle with everybody. If we could--that's my vision for a better Mayfield. I don't know that that will ever happen, but this would be a great opportunity for us to try to forge something like that when we start to rebuild. (Interviewee 10A, NCL)

In her second interview at the 1.5 years mark after the tornado, Interviewee 10 maintains her optimism, but directs the responsibility of the rebuilding effort more toward the government:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): Oh, I believe they will move forward. From the news reports and everything that I'm seeing, I think the city is doing well and on track to getting things back in order. And I think that's where I guess it needs to begin. At least they have a real central part in what happens in the next two or three months with the funds and the resources that are available for whatever projects have been deemed necessary or appropriate for our growth and sustainability. That's the city's job. The mayor and the county government and all of that. I think they are in control of that. (Interviewee 10B, NCL)

Interviewee 3 discussed the resilience of the everyday individual as a force that propelled the community toward renewal. His narratives intertwined the themes of Renewal and Hero throughout the following excerpt when asked if there was anything else he would like to discuss at the end of the interview (16, 10):

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Hero): I think that the part of the story of the night of the tornado and the days that immediately followed that is told, but it's not told well. I don't remember seeing any video of the events that I'm thinking of in the three or four days right after the tornado. On social media the night of the tornado, there were civic authorities, emergency management personnel, fire, rescue, police, EMTs begging people to stay home, don't come out, you can't help, it's not safe, and there was this onslaught of people just wanting to help. They crowded around the candle factory, they were walking the streets looking for survivors in the downtown area. John and Marilyn Marshall for

example came to get my wife and I. But in the days following, the cleanup that took place over two, three, four, five weeks, a lot of it was done by heavy equipment, but there was a huge portion of it that was done by folks who just pulled the tractor out of the shed. Went and got the tractor out of the barn, and they came to town, and they pushed stuff away from the streets so that emergency vehicles can get through, so that rescue operations can continue, and the streets were cleared. There was still debris piled on the sidewalks and in some of the now empty lots, but the streets were clear. It was because of the folks who would not take no for an answer when they were asking how can we help. And that resilience in the people of Mayfield is something that I'll take with me everywhere I go. (Interviewee 3A CL)

In his follow-up interview, Interviewee 3 had this to say in response to the same question. Note that he still explicitly mentions resilience, but in a broader way one year later:

Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): I would just like to say thank you for the opportunity to record some of these thoughts and to make a historical record of the resilience of the people of Mayfield, who despite the silos and the separateness of the groups and the political intrigue and the criticism that comes from various quarters, I don't want that to overshadow the fact that this is a community of resilient [01:08:00] people who have every intention of bringing Mayfield back, despite the naysayers. Mayfield has an opportunity here to be something that is extremely profitable for the people of Western Kentucky and to demonstrate the absolute strength of character that is required to come back from a disaster of this magnitude. And when all is said and done, I hope that these

historical records will show that we pointed to those possibilities before they became reality. (Interviewee 3B, CL)

A distinct shift toward renewal, specifically the idea of resilience as part of his renewal narrative can be found between the first and second interviews of Interviewee 11, who in the first interview speaks about his children as victims (Questions 11, 7):

> Interview 1 (coded Renewal and Victim): I remember the other day I was talking to my sons. We were doing something and one of them was upset. And I said, "It's okay to cry." And he said, "No, crying is not something that men do." And I said, "That's--I don't know where you got that from." I said, "I cried all the time during the tornado. When we were doing all that, I cried all the time." And he said, "We never saw you." And I said, "Well, that was on purpose, you know." I said, "You get it out. You get back to work." But like I said, you do the crying and you get back to work because it's got to be done. The crying is not going to accomplish anything other than sometimes you just got to let it go. (Interviewee 11A, NCL)

The following is Interviewee 11's answer to the same question a year later. At this point he moves away from viewing his children as victims and instead refers to them as "resilient" and "strong". Compared to the first interview that was coded as an intertwining of Renewal and Victim, his second interview is coded solely as Renewal:

> Interview 2 (coded Renewal): Yeah, I mean the kids were, you know, kids are resilient… I think they're more aware of when weather's rolling through, or they listen more, and they're sort of proactive about hey, what's the weather going to be like, what do we need to do? Hey it's raining…they're a little bit more safe feeling now that we have a shelter in

> the house. So that helps with that, too. And we have set it up and made sure that it's comfortable. You can't see the (air) quotes, but, and we kind of work with them, let them go in there, and take them in there, and say this is what we'll do if another one comes through. And we'll ride it out as best we can. So, but yeah, they're good, strong kids. (Interviewee 11B, NCL)

Discovering Renewal of Self Alongside Community Renewal

The idea of self-organization after a crisis is an important feature to move toward renewal. Seeger and Sellnow mention self-organization, in part, as a tying of oneself to an ideal or a community symbol or value (2016, p. 83). In the case of the Mayfield interviews, some participants found themselves moving toward renewal alongside their hope for renewal within the community. For Interviewee 8, when asked if there was anything else she'd like to discuss at the end of the interview (16, 12), she talked about a change that began within herself as she worked alongside volunteers:

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Hero): And we're sitting inside the building that has no heat, no electricity, no water… and we have a lantern and we're in a circle. And we're talking, and it reminded me of like a therapy session you see on TV…it got pretty deep, because I guess you are with strangers, you may never see them again so you can talk about things that are hurting you or on your mind, on your heart. You can get it off your chest…we just kind of went around the circle and we all talked. And I talked about (the loss of) my son, which I don't talk about a lot and we talked…it was a good therapy session…it changes the way you think about things too when you hear people's stories and you're hearing these people's story that came here to help, and you know some of

them have got some problems of their own that maybe they shouldn't even be up here helping us, but they felt called to come…I'm going to tell you, I told someone this and I truly mean it, I have come out of this a better person. I mean that's what I feel. I have changed on so many avenues you have no idea. And so I hate that it brought a tornado to do this but that's what happened. (Interviewee 8A, CL)

By the second interview, in response to the same question, she continues to discuss a self-change, of self-organization, but no longer expresses a narrative that is intertwined as Hero and Renewal as it relates to her relationship with the volunteers, but is coded solely as renewal:

Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): The tornado changed me a great deal…I used to see black and white. Now I see there's black, gray, and white. There is that gray area, and you have to make decisions based on what can change, what can't change, whatever. And like I said, I did not used to be this way. It was like, hey, it's this way or no way, and I look back, and I think how selfish I was, and that's what the tornado--it had a positive effect on me as far as myself and the way I think and the way I feel. And like I said, all of a sudden, I'm different, and I'm glad. So, but I don't wish this on anyone ever, ever, and now when I look, when I watch TV and I see--I see a tornado's hit this town, or it's getting ready to, I understand. Before, I'd just see the photos or on the news or whatever, the film, and I would think, "Oh, I'm so sad for them." Now it's like my heart breaks for them because I know what they're--what they're going to be up against, and I feel for them so badly. I mean, but they'll be strong. They'll come back, just like we are. We're coming back. (Interviewee 8B, CL)

Interviewee 14 draws from past incidences of resilience within the community to imagine a prospective Mayfield of the future (Questions 13, 6):

> Interview 1 (Coded Victim and Renewal) As a whole, of course it's definitely made us stronger. The people in Mayfield and Graves County, and I want to say Graves County, Mayfield got hit very hard. But the outskirt of Mayfield got hit just as well. A lot of homes were lost in the Graves County area around Mayfield…it's just--it's an eye opener for a lot of people who never thought anything of this magnitude would happen to Mayfield. Like I said, it's made 'em stronger…it's going to be years on down the road before we get Mayfield hopefully back like it was, and even better than what it was... I mean, they always have, through the tragedies through my lifetime. And they've always come back, better than what it was. So, I believe it's going to be good. (Interviewee 14A, NCL)

During the follow-up interview, the participant still expresses optimism about the impact on the community, but no longer draws from past incidences of resilience in his narrative. He also moves away from an intertwining of Victim and Renewal to a narrative solely coded Renewal:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): They’re trying to build back, trying to get it back like it was. It’s going to be—like you said, it’s going to be a long term, it’s not going to be one, two, three years, it’s going be several years down the road before Mayfield actually gets back like it was. And hopefully, it’ll be better when it does that because the houses are—well, they’re newer houses and so I believe that’ll help Mayfield and Graves County both grow. (Interviewee 14B, NCL)

A former city councilman, and current banker and President of a local non-profit organization, envisioned Mayfield from the viewpoint of its potential when asked about the long-term outlook for his community (15, 11):

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Victimhood): it's a hard question to answer because we just don't know. Are people going to stick around? People can say, "Absolutely we're going to." Well, you don't know. You take communities that have had this kind of destruction and damage, and they may lose forty percent of their population, and then maybe twenty-five percent of it comes back…I think you have to attract people by becoming an attractive place … You're always going to have people that just can't leave for a number of different reasons, but you also need all of those people that are going to create businesses, be entrepreneurs, have that discretionary income to spend locally, entertainment, all those things are going to have to happen in order for Mayfield to be successful…I mean what if we all left? You lose your sense of place and your community and your history and your--you lose everything. So it's going to take the people working together to have a vision to make it happen.…we have that opportunity to do that, so it's going to take a lot of planning…what an opportunity for the government, state or federal, to come in and say, "We're going to support this community and the rebuilding effort. And we're going to make this the showcase of what can happen when government does work." And if they'll come in and help us with those dollars and support that, we'll definitely get back to where we desire to be. I think…this could be a model in the middle of the country to show what could happen in a positive way if government will work together. (Interviewee 9A, CL)

Interviewee 2's narrative is similar in his second interview, but he no longer has a narrative of Renewal intertwined with Victim, but has a narrative solely of Renewal:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): Well, I don't know exactly what will happen. So I suppose, I guess my best guess would be is to go on that hope. And so I would hope that we have a vibrant community that is welcoming to everyone, and that we build something that we can truly all be proud of. I think one of the advantages that we've always had is that Mayfield is in the center of the Jackson Purchase region. And why isn't Mayfield that hub and mecca and growth for the rest of the region? It's always been kind of north of Paducah, but we have the interstates that are running right through us; I-69 connects with I-24. We have great educational facilities that are within our community, but then also surrounding us. We have a very large county, the county of Graves, that's very diverse in terms of industry, agriculture, businesses, financial, banking, a great chamber of commerce. So we have all the ingredients of being a true, vibrant, and wonderful place to call home and to attract people there…And so we have to move rather quickly of creating an attractive community to have people be attracted to. And if we can do those things, it could potentially be a model for other communities that go through this, but also a model for the rest of the United States to show what we've gone through and what we can become. We could be that shining star, we really can. (Interviewee 9B, CL)

Renewal and Victim Narratives

All interviewees began their crisis narratives chronologically with the tornadic events of December 10, 2021. Even if a participant was not directly impacted by the tornado, the residents overwhelmingly expressed the theme of victimhood on behalf of their community, and the fear

that everyone felt as the mile wide, high EF4 tornado came through their small town close to 9:30 p.m. that night. During the recovery stage, themes of Victim were almost exclusively statements of feeling victimhood for a child, spouse, or for the community, rather than for self. After the initial recollections of December 10, 2021, almost all narratives of Victim were intertwined with other themes, with the strongest overlapping occurring with the theme of Renewal. The sub-themes found during the coding and analysis of theme of Victim were: 1) Moving Toward Renewal as A Tornado Survivor, and 2) Processing Through Victimhood Toward Renewal.

Moving Toward Renewal as a Tornado Survivor

In both his first and second interviews, a pastor spoke of the struggles he and his wife were experiencing as they were striving to move forward after surviving the tornado in the basement of their church where he was a pastor:

> Interview 1 (Coded Victim): If you had asked me in January, I would've given you…the answer that you expect from the leader of a congregation. I talked about going from our own personal suffering to servanthood and focusing on the needs of the people around us, taking time to grieve our losses of course, but I didn't realize the extent of the trauma and stress that I was carrying with me. I still don't like to think of myself as a tornado survivor, but that's obviously what happened. So many other people lost so much, and we walked out of that church with everything we walked into the church with that night, so it doesn't feel like we had any personal losses…but a brush with death that comes that close, if we'd been in a different part of the building, it would've been a different story, and I wouldn't be around to tell it.…All that is to say I didn't do a very good job of taking

> care of my own emotions, dealing with my own traumas. I've since had conversations with some professionals, and I'm going to continue those conversations. I'm told that every psychiatrist has a psychiatrist. I'm also told that every pastor needs a pastor, and I've been told recently that every tornado survivor should probably talk to a therapist, and I'm starting to believe that that's exactly the truth. (Interviewee 3A, CL)

Though Interviewee 3 continued to recover from the victimhood he felt as a survivor of the tornado, his second interview was no longer solely coded as Victim, but was instead an intertwining of the themes of Renewal and Victim):

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Victim): Well, I mentioned I have a new cardiologist. My blood pressure is back under control. I think about recovery every day. I think about the tornado about three or four times a month...My family is very aware of the stress and trauma that we've experienced. My wife and I both are still dealing with emotional and psychological traumas, but we are much further along than we were. We have taken time to rest, we have taken time to relax and vacation. We have spent considerable effort changing our lifestyle so that our diet and exercise routines are much more healthy than they were. That said, we are still defined by the work that we do in so many ways. And because so much of that work is related to the tornado and our recovery from the tornado, it has a lasting impact and continues to be a part of our everyday lives. (Interviewee 3B, CL)

In his first interview, Interview 12 spoke about the impact the disaster had on his community (Question 13, 6):

> Interview 1 (Coded Victim): The people who were displaced, I cannot imagine what they went through. A friend of mine that (had gone) to church with me, he's not capable of coming to church. He was probably five blocks north of the fire department which was devastated. He lived in an apartment complex down there. It took the roof off of his building and all he had was open air. The walls were gone and he's in a wheelchair. He couldn't do anything until finally somebody came along and heard him and helped him get to the fire department. Now that's scary. I talked to another lady Monday of this week and they have lived here, I believe she said six years. And they lost their house. She said they were in the house at the time. Trying to hunker down. Tough it out. And it took her roof off, came down through the windows, and their automobile was in the driveway. Next thing they knew it was in their living room four feet from where they were sitting. I cannot imagine that. I really can't. If I remember the numbers and it doesn't matter if I do or not but they were somewhere in the area of four hundred residential customers of our electric system that were affected and about a hundred commercial customers. The entire what I would call the northeast quadrant of our city no longer exists. (Interview 12A, NCL)

In his second interview, Interviewee 12 spoke of hope for the community moving forward, while recognizing that some residents in the community were still displaced at the 1.5 years mark. Compared to his first interview that was coded solely Victim, the second interview intertwines the themes of Renewal and Victim:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Victim): The community is I'd say on the right track. I've told you before, probably twice, I'm excited about what's going on, I'm excited about

> the reconstruction, I'm excited about the rehab. Sunday morning after church is my time to drive around and just look and pay attention and see what changes have been made. I know there's one house that has been finished for I don't know three, four months, and you drive by, it's still empty. Well then the next Sunday I drove by there were people inside there working. I thought okay maybe somebody's going to move in, then the next Sunday I saw other people working with a work truck out there. So I don't know who to talk to about that…I don't think it's a local group that built the house, but nonetheless that's what frustrates me is when we've got these houses that you're pretty sure are finished. Now let's get them filled up, you don't want to have a brand-new house empty where somebody's still living in a hotel room or whatever. And I really think there are still some folks that are living in the hotels and motels, not like it used to be…I know there are some still living in the little camper trailers. But overall, I think we are moving in the right direction and I'm excited about it. (Interviewee 12B)

Processing Through Victimhood Toward Renewal

Occasionally instead of an intertwining of themes, a theme was sometimes injected or wedged between two statements of Renewal. This exclusively happened during the first interviews, and only happened with the theme of Victim being wedged within a renewal narrative. For example, a participant would be discussing a theme of Renewal, then shift completely away from Renewal to a sub-theme, before returning to their original thought process, to continue with a narrative of the theme Renewal.

In Interviewee 18's first interview, she expressed excitement about organizations working with residents to move forward toward better housing options (Questions 15, 10), but

then interrupted her thought process to express fear, or victimhood, for renters in the community, before returning to her original thought process of Renewal. Asterisks have been placed at the beginning and end of the area coded as Victim to show the placement of the Victim statement between two statements of Renewal:

> Interview 1 (Coded as Victim wedged between two statements of Renewal) Well…there's an organization called--I think it's called Hope for Homes--that is trying to get people to buy lots that a lot of these landowners, or landlords, are now selling…So, they will be gifting the lots to the homeowners. Because what they do its, they--you basically only pay for the materials, they build the houses for free. So, they're getting very low cost homes. And so, they're trying to do that, to instill a sense of pride in ownership. So, I think that's a good thing. *My fear is that some of these landlords are going to try to rebuild, and…so many people aren't going to be able to afford it. So, I don't know what's going to happen…It's like, how are the people--because a lot of the people that lost their homes--the renters--didn't have that kind of money. And so, that makes me sad for them that, what are they going to do, you know? We still have to have places for people to live, that can't afford a thousand dollars a month in rent…And so, I'm not sure what they're going to do. But I fear that that's what going to happen, is either the landlords are going to rebuild, and then, in order for them to afford the payments. Nobody's going to be able--the people that are needing the homes, are not going to be able to afford them, which is sad.* And but now, I do think Mayfield's going to rebuild. I know the people of Mayfield. I know the good people of Mayfield. And so, Mayfield has a good heart. So,

> they're going to rebuild. It's going to take time, there was a lot of devastation. And it's just going to take time to get there. (Interviewee 18A, NCL)

In her second interview, she continues to discuss the rebuilding of homes in the community. In an answer to the same question from a year before, she expresses only the theme of Renewal:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal): From things that I've heard, they are continuing to build houses. I mean, it takes a little bit of time…so they're continuing with the houses. I think businesses are continuing to rebuild and relocate. And so some of those are coming back. There are a few that have been in temporary buildings that their buildings are finally finishing and they're coming back in. They've started rebuilding the First National Bank, the main branch that was demolished…So I mean, there's a lot of construction, continued cleanup…there's continuing growth, there's continuing rebuilding. And so, I foresee that continuing. (Interviewee 18B, NCL)

Renewal and Hero Narratives

The most intertwined combination of themes found within the *Narratives of Crisis* thematic analysis were the themes of Renewal and Hero. There were many forms of Hero that emerged as the theme was coded. The subthemes that emerged during the coding and analysis process were: 1) Everyday Heroes, 2) Organizations as Heroes, and 3) Community Leaders and First Responders as Heroes.

Everyday Heroes

A former mayor and CFO of a local foundation in Mayfield had this to say about the general heroism of those who helped post-crisis (Questions 13, 6):

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Hero): I've heard over and over…how people just can't believe how many people have come in, people that knew nothing of us, that had no ties here, but they just--whether it was--they sent money, they sent water, they sent things, and it just poured in. And then there's--they came in with their physical selves and worked on cleaning out houses and worked on cleaning up debris, and, you know, that was very, I think, humbling for us. It made me a different person. I will never see a storm happen in another area that I don't do something, if it might just be writing a check…I've never done that. But thank God that there are people not like me that--that did that, that do that. (Interviewee 7A, CL).

In response to the same question a year later, Interviewee 7 continued to intertwine her narrative with the themes of Renewal and Hero, but was more specific in directing her appreciation toward a particular individual:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Hero): It was just a blighted area…where we dealt with code enforcement issues constantly. There were a lot of rental units….a group, and I know Pastor Stephen Boykin, he's the pastor of His House Ministries, I know they bought some land over on South Tenth Street, and they're putting up these just darling little houses, where there had been shacks, and just, it's really improved that side of town…I think that is such a positive impact…you can see it from Broadway…when I'm driving in, I can see it from Broadway and look back over that way by where the big water tower was down and see all those cute little houses going up and thinking that's great. So, I think we're impacted that way. (Interviewee 7B, CL)

Organizations as Heroes

During the first interview with the mayor, she spoke about a long list of non-profit organizations that flooded into her community and helped in the days, weeks, and months after the disaster. This is short excerpt of part of the longer list of non-profit organizations she mentioned when asked about who has been of help in her community (Questions 14, 9):

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Hero): Samaritan's Purse is back now with their home building division; they are building homes for people who lost their homes. Another group that is building homes that is Homes and Hope…the labor is provided by a Mennonite group, and they come in and do all the labor at no cost… The first home that was--the ground that was broken on the two-month anniversary, on February 10th, was in this organization. And that day, Tunnel to Towers came and presented a $250,000 check to buy materials for this group. I was at a rotary club meeting, and KFC of Canada had a representative there, and he presented a $400,000 check to buy materials for this group. Locally, there was lots of money donated to a group that was set up through a local bank, and they have donated money to buy materials for this group. (Interviewee 4B, CL)

In her follow-up interview, the mayor's answer to the same question from a year before was still coded as the themes of Renewal and Hero, but her narrative was focused more on the response of the state and federal government as a way of helping the community move forward:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Hero): The state government has been amazing. Very quickly after the tornado, the Governor asked for and then the legislature $200 million they're called SAFE Funds, and I can't tell you what SAFE stands for. Everything has initials. But we have been fortunate to receive those. We expect to receive more as we

rebuild, hopefully starting end of this year, maybe next year, our city buildings. I know the county's relying on them to build their county municipal buildings. We have been super fortunate, and like I said, just announced, this $123 million CDBG (community building block grant) granting through HUD (Housing and Urban Development) and that's for 2021, people in Kentucky who were impacted in 2021, so it doesn't cover the 2022 flooding in East Kentucky. There was some flooding in East Kentucky in '21, but I'm not talking about the drastic in the summer of '22. For the 2021 money, the four most impacted counties will benefit from 80 percent of that $123 million. And of course, Graves County is one of those. (Interviewee 4B)

Community Leaders and First Responders as Heroes

Another intertwining of themes that was found was the combination of Renewal, Hero, and Victim. This combination was only found in the first interviews, and only occurred among community leaders and first responders. The context of these crisis narratives was trying to fulfill the requirements of the job (Hero, Renewal) while juggling the trauma that was being experienced personally or by the interviewee's family (Victim). The mayor discusses the struggle to continue at an overloaded pace into the recovery:

Interview 1 (Coded Renewal, Hero, Victim): We--those of us in city government, we check on each other. Just, "Are you doing okay? Make sure you take some time off." I did--I did leave town in February. I didn't tell anybody. I had a trip planned with my sisters, and it was just four days. And it was, like, the first time I ever left my daughter when she was an infant. I knew she was going to be okay, but I was a wreck. Looking back, I was glad to get away, but I didn't even, because of what was in my head. And even now on the

weekends, I try to stay really busy because I don't like to be by myself. I don't like where my mind goes, and it used to go to, like I said, the tragedy of that night, and now it's on rebuilding and doing it right. (Interviewee 4A, CL)

The Emergency Manager discusses the balancing of her duties with the role of motherhood:

Interview 1 (Coded Renewal, Hero, Victim): But then from it (the tornado) coming into Wingo the next thing I knew was my daughter called me and said the nursing home had been hit. I said, "Are you okay?" She said, "Yes." She said, "But I need you here now." I pretty much decided that I don't care what shirt you're wearing. I'm always a mom. And so I said, "I'm leaving to go try to get to her." The second call I got was from the city fire chief. Saying that their building had been hit. And he couldn't get his ambulances out. And I immediately started calling McCracken County. And asked them to send ambulances. And so they did…We all went and we started trying to get to the nursing home. And when we popped the hill into Mayfield there's an overhead bridge that you have to go over and it was complete destruction. You couldn't drive anywhere. There was people were just leaving their vehicles to try to go check on their loved ones. There was I mean power poles in the road. There was parts of houses. And it was just unbelievable. Just completely crazy and it was dark. So dark…some of the fire-rescue guys had got in front of me. And I said, "We've got to get to the nursing home." And so they started trying to clear the path of getting there. And then once we got to the end of the road of where the nursing home was on, one of my best friends was there and she said, "I've been there. I've seen your daughter. She's fine. She's doing amazing. She's good." I said, "Well, just stay with her, I've got to go back." (Interviewee 5A, CL)

The meteorologist who was interviewed was outside of Mayfield at the time of the tornado but had many family members in the path of the tornado. He describes the combination of moving forward with the responsibilities as a forecaster as he balances his concern for loved ones:

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal, Hero, Victim): And that made the night that much harder, and you'll hear this from other meteorologists and forecasters…when we have severe weather, of course we're also concerned about our own family members. As the tornado moved into Graves County, I had to call my dad. He was in the path, the cast stayed south of him, but he was in the warning, and I had to say, "Get your shoes on." It was about eight o'clock at night and he goes to bed early…And my other sister was in the tornado warning, and I told her to get in the car. Her and her husband and their dogs. "Go north, drive north." She did. It was the first time I ever had to do that…So they immediately got in their car, they were in Symsonia, which barely got missed. She got missed by maybe four miles. They drove north. Our other family was in the direct paths of it, and we told them to leave. They were in modular homes…So, they drove south to Benton. They drove--they actually crossed the path of the tornado when they evacuated south… The tornado hit Mayfield, hit my brother-in-law's mom and dad. They're elderly in a large Victorian home here that was destroyed. They survived in the basement…Our other family that drove south to Benton…it missed their houses by half a mile, and then it missed where they were at by one block. And I was on the phone with them, I was sending out my own warnings, and then I had them on the phone and watching radar. And then there was one point, it takes a lot for me to panic, (laughs) I remember yelling at my cousin Amber, on the phone. "Get down now, get underneath something right now,

immediately." And I was using a loud voice. I was scared…because, by radar, you can tell where it's going to hit, but radar can still be off a block or two, especially as you go further out from the beam. And so I couldn't tell. All I could tell was they were about to be hit, I couldn't tell, you know, if it was going to be a direct hit…most of our family was missed. We had one family member that was directly hit, extended family, and then my brother-in-law's mom and dad lost everything. So, yeah, on top of all the other emotions, if it wasn't bad enough, on top of the other emotions, you're dealing with your family. (Interviewee 6A, CL).

The Chief of the Volunteer Fire and Rescue describes working alongside his daughter, who is also a volunteer firefighter/EMT, as well as his coworkers who were impacted by the storm:

Interview 1 (Coded Renewal, Hero, Victim): While we were working, somebody called on my cell phone, said, "David, have you been by your fire station?" I said, "No, we didn't have time." "It's not there." I said, "What?" And they go, "It is not there. It is gone." We still had equipment there, it all got destroyed…it didn't stop me, we just kept on doing what we're supposed to do, trying to save lives. And finally, I think twenty-four hours later, I got to go by and look at it, and it just made me sick, because there was nothing there…we went probably--I know I went two, two and a half days without sleep. And finally, when I did get sleep, I probably slept four, five hours, and we headed out again. I just wanted to keep going and help people, do what I can for the community, because it was my community, and I felt like I should be there. And so like I said, it went on for quite a while, the recovery, trying to find victims still alive. We did find people still alive several days later that was under debris…the guys did a great job; under a lot of

stress. And one guy that was with us, he actually lost his house…he never stopped, stayed right with us the whole time. His family was fine, but it was probably one of the things that you can't put in words. (Interviewee 13A, NCL)

Renewal and Memorial Narratives

Narratives that were coded as Renewal and Memorial were the fourth most frequently found out the five themes of the Narratives of Crisis framework. The sub-themes discovered in the coding of the theme Memorial were: 1) Renewal and Traditional Memorials, 2) Renewal and Memorial: Loss of Life, Way of Life, or Livelihood, and 3) Renewal and Memorial: Loss of Physical Buildings.

Renewal and Traditional Memorials

Memorials are often defined as physical structures constructed after a crisis to memorialize fallen victims and heroes. Physically constructed memorials were not heavily discussed during the interviews. The few instances they were introduced discussed collaborations as memorials, or community members planning future memorials. Interviewee 1 spoke about two different types of memorials that were being created in the downtown area. The first memorial was a formal wall being planned by a member of the community:

Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Memorial): There is one person in town, Steve Elder, and what he did is he got bricks from the different historical places that were destroyed. And he is going to build a memorial wall of bricks from each organization or each church that he got bricks from. And that's the way to memorialize the places that was destroyed during a tornado. (Interviewee 1A, CL)

In his second interview, Interviewee 1 moved slightly away from a memorial in the traditional sense when he discussed the use of bricks from a historic black church that were donated to help complete the restoration of his church. In that way, the church that could not rebuild would be memorialized through its materials being used to restore another historic black church in the community:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Memorial): We're in the process of trying to--it's a historic church. It was established since 1868 in this community, and we have a wall mural that was painted by a local folk artist named Ms. Helen LaFrance, and she was, you know, pretty well known now nationally and internationally. And so we--from the Black Historical Society out of Washington, DC, they gave us $100,000 to help to restore the church and then we had some money from insurance, but it wasn't enough to really do a whole lot on that scale or capacity. And then there was donations from the local organizations as well as churches within our denomination and nondenominational churches as well. And so we are in the process of trying to rebuild it, and so far since the tornado, we've been able to put the church, a lot of it back together. We're about halfway finished with that. We got--we had the church annex, we had--got a new roof put on it, and the church itself, we've got the four walls up and we've gotten a roof on that as well. And we're going to use the old bricks as much as is possible to, kind of, rebrick the church because we wanted to restore it back historically as possible. And there was another church about a block away that had got destroyed also, and it was…built within the same time frame as my church. And they had rebuilt the church in a different location, and they told us that we can use their bricks if we wanted to …and so between

> our bricks and the bricks from the other church, we've had enough bricks to put them back together. (Interviewee 1B, CL)

Renewal and Memorial: Loss of Life, Way of Life, or Livelihood

In crisis narratives, people also memorialize the memories of those who died in a crisis situation. In addition to the loss of physical life, the loss of livelihood, or the way of life before the crisis was also observed. Interviewee 1 was the only participant who encountered the death of a loved one the night of the tornado. While the memorialization of life, way of life, or livelihood was sometimes intertwined with more than one theme, the coding of this type of memorialization was one of the few instances in which the coding never included the theme of Renewal. The following are a few words of his words of memorialization:

> Interview 1 (Coded Memorial and Victim) And at the time it was me and my brother and I had two sisters and my mother had took the two girls and moved to Chicago. And my brother and I ended up being raised by our grandparents. And my aunt who got killed in the tornado, she was one of people who helped to raise me and my brother so she was more of a mother to me than an aunt…And ever since I was, could remember being a child, as a matter of fact…she was the one who first brought me down to that church and got me baptized, my brother and myself. Her name was Ollie Bright Reeves…and she was eighty years old when she got killed. (Interviewee 1A, CL)

The mayor speaks of the experience of her community:

> Interview 1 (Coded Memorial and Victim): We lost twenty-four people in the county that night…we can build back the buildings, we will look different, but probably better, but those families will always carry that burden of that. We lost two major residential…areas.

> We lost both of our HUD housing units, were horribly damaged. We lost a nursing home. We lost a facility downtown which had been an old hospital, which was now an apartment complex, we lost that. That was for elderly, primarily elderly people, and we lost that. One person lost their life there. But the nursing home, which had to be completely evacuated and was a complete loss, there was no loss of life there. And that is--that's amazing. (Interviewee 1A)

Renewal and Memorial: Loss of Physical Buildings

Since so many historic buildings were lost in Mayfield, it was the buildings themselves that were most frequently memorialized through stories of the memories attached to the physical structures. In her first interview, the mayor had this to say about the memorialization of buildings during some of her first experiences seeing the destruction (Questions 9, 2):

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal, Memorial, and Victim) We had been able to see the courthouse, which was right across the street from city hall, and a bank that's across the street from city hall, and I knew they were pretty horribly hit. But I was not prepared for what I saw…my first thought was that, have you ever opened a box of matches, and you pull it too hard and they all fall to the floor, so you just see sticks? And that's the very first thing that popped in my head. I've never seen devastation like that... I saw across the street in some brick rubble an American flag…at the fire station…and I went over and picked it out of that rubble and handed it to two of the firefighters. And they immediately began folding that flag as it's supposed to be folded…I don't know where it came from. The flag that was at the fire station has since been recovered…at some point, we will

> display those in our new fire station...the next thing I did was, the police chief took me out to the candle factory where the governor was. I had met Governor Beshear before officially, but there's something endearing about standing in front of a place you're so afraid of what's going on, or what's…going to be found over there at that collapsed building and being engulfed by a hug of your state's chief executive officer, and you're standing there crying with him. It was so comforting, and so reassuring. (Interviewee 1A, CL)

In her second interview, the mayor focused beyond the memorialization to the future:

> Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Memorial): as our homes and as our businesses are rebuilt, we realize we're going to look better. We're going to look updated. Now our hearts will always ache for those historic buildings that we lost. You know, my church was over 100 years old, this massive columned beautiful building with this pipe organ that we will never replace. But the truth is, we don't need that much space. We don't need to build that stately building anymore. So I think we are all rethinking our spaces. What do we need? We'll become certainly more efficient as far as energy and as far as the windows people put in, the storm resiliency. (Interviewee 4B, CL)

Renewal and Blame Narratives

The theme of blame was the least coded theme in the Mayfield narratives and was found in distinctly different expressions between the first and second interviews. In the first interviews, blame was directed either toward vague entities with uncertainty about the progress being made in the community or questioning and/or guessing why certain individuals or groups were not receiving help. Occasionally a specific entity would be named in the coded theme of Blame. In

the second interviews, blame was less present, but when it was discovered and coded, was found to be exclusively directed in appointing blame to a particular government group or community entity. The second interviews also had a higher frequency of being intertwined with the theme of Renewal, versus the tendency for the theme of Blame to stand alone in the first interview coding analysis. Blame coded in both the first and second interviews often contained narratives of blame as a tool of learning.

Renewal and Blame of First Interviews

Six first interviews contained the coded theme of Blame, some of which were explicitly directed toward a group or organization, and some of which were more generally directed toward a vague entity in charge of a process. Interviewee 9 expresses general blame as he learns the process in his first interview, but no blame was coded in his second interview. Since the context of this passage was the participant's attempt to help members of the community, the excerpt was coded as both Renewal and Blame:

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Blame): There was a lot of frustrations in the beginning because I remember at the fairgrounds, I went up to go get a generator for a family that needed one, and they said, "Well, you've got to be on this list." And I said, "Well who's got this list?" And so somebody had this list, and so I put my name on there, and I said, "Okay, I'll take one." And they say, "Well, you can't have one yet." And I say, "Well there's like twenty of them over there." And they're like, "Well, you got to go through this process." And I'm like, "Who are you people?" And then they would tell me, and I said, "Where are you from? I'm from Graves County, I'm from here, I'm trying to help people. Who put you in charge?" And so there was total disorganization of people coming in to

take over your community that really had no authority to do so. And so I remember calling the judge in that one specific instance, Judge Perry and I said, "Judge, you're going to have to get up here because two things are going to happen. They're either going to give me this generator, or I'm going take it by force." (laughs) Well, they ended up giving me the generator because Judge Perry said, "Give Steven what he needs." But that's the type of chaos we were in--there were so many people, and they were trying to do a job because somebody told them, "Don't allow generators to go out for specific reasons." So I get it, I understand it, but it really was a challenge to try to help people that really needed the help because there was a real lack of communication. (Interviewee 9A, CL)

In her first interview, a school employee who was displaced after the tornado, expresses direct blame for obstacles while trying to move toward renewal. Her second interview contains no coded areas of Blame:

Interview 1 (Coded Renewal and Blame): Then, it was the end of February that the housing authority called, it was the twenty-second of February. Because I thought she was going to tell me that my house was ready, because it was supposed to be March first. So I was pretty excited to see that call. And she said, “Well, the contractor’s been in …they want to take the whole ceiling down. They need to treat it, just in case for mold and all that.” And she said, “So we need you to do something.” She’s like, “We need you to take everything out.” I don’t know how I’m going to get that done. I’m still living in Paducah. And I’m a single mom. The whole thing…And she said, “Well, my boss said that you’ve got until Monday to get it out, or you can turn the key in, and we’re going to

> throw it all away." … And so, there are no words how helpless I felt in that moment…You can't really say to a person--it's really to me the worst of the worst to say to somebody who's already lost so much, that we're going to throw your stuff away…So, that was not a good situation to be put in. Nobody should be put in that situation. But here's the wonderful thing that happened in the midst of it…my friend texted me, "Are you okay?"…I said, "No, I'm not"…I started telling her the conversation…"Well, that's why I'm calling." She said, "I want to take this burden from you. I have trucks, and I have a crew, and I have a storage unit. And we can get your stuff out today, if that's what you need." And I was like, "Yes, that's exactly what I need." (Interviewee 16A NCL)

As the manager of the Mayfield-Graves Fairground, Interviewee 8 created and oversaw the major distribution center for her community. This included the coordination of volunteers, organizations, donation collection, and distribution. In her first interview, her narrative is intertwined with the themes of Renewal, Victim, Blame, and Hero. The blame portion of her narrative is in response to hearing the complaints of the residents she served about the Housing Authority, and finally seeing the source of their complaints in person:

> Interview 1 (Coded Renewal, Victim, Blame, Hero): Well right now I hear complaints that things aren't moving fast enough…we're a poor town, we're a poor community…so many of the homes that were lost was rental property…one of our housing projects authorities here, you drive by and there were all these blue tarps on the roofs. They moved everyone out…they had to check every home before some of them could move back. And I took some things to a person there that had moved back to their home…it's the first time I had driven down through there because I'd had no reason to go before. I

was trying to find her home and there's electrical lines down and generators. Big generators set up, and all this and it was just not what you was expecting. I mean I thought if they're moving people back in everything's all right. And no, there was still so much.…And so you know it's slow going. But I think it's going to be slow going because they're going to do it right, they want to do it right. They don't want to look back and say we moved too fast and we didn't consider something. And I commend our leaders here because our mayor and judge--I mean they have been well. They've been an inspiration, and I can't imagine being in their place. (Interviewee 8A, CL)

Renewal and Blame of Second Interviews

Seven second interviews were coded with the theme of Blame, most of them explicitly direct blame toward a particular group or organization. This excerpt from Interviewee 7's second interview was coded overall as Renewal but had an undertone of the theme of Blame for the current local elected leaders. No instances of the theme of Blame were coded in her first interview. In this passage of narrative, she is speaking of past failed initiatives when she was mayor, and the need for a new structure of leadership:

Interview 2 (Coded Renewal and Blame): They had that plan. They tried to facilitate it. It didn't totally work. So, we have this plan. And I--my hope is that some young people get involved in leadership, some young people with a vision for Mayfield, who say, "I'm in Mayfield. I'm going to stay in Mayfield. I'm going to raise my family in Mayfield. I want it to be a Mayfield that my family will stay in to work and live," and will just get on that bandwagon and get things done, and that's just what it's going to take. You know, we've got to get some young people with vision in our local leadership positions, and that's city

council members, which is very important; county commissioners; judge executives; mayors. All of those, all of those positions need to be filled with visionaries who are young and want it to happen for Mayfield more than they--more than they want to be politicians. (Interviewee 7B)

Discourse of Renewal Analysis

The Discourse of Renewal developed by Ulmer and Sellnow (2002) has four distinctive points that help leaders of a community propel residents toward renewal: organizational learning, ethical communication, prospective rather than retrospective vision, and effective organizational rhetoric. In the initial thematic coding, areas of the transcripts were coded one color to represent any of the four areas of the Discourse of Renewal found to be present in the narrative of a community leader, or an area of a non-community leader's narrative that spoke to the successes or failures of their community leaders in one or more of the four areas. Later, the coded areas were further analyzed to divide the narratives into the four areas as defined by the theory of the Discourse of Renewal. The Discourse of Renewal analysis was the coding that resulted in the answering of RQ2) What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership? and RQ3) At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?

The following are the analyzed results. The interviews will not be labeled before the excerpts with how they were coded as with previous excerpts, since all examples of Discourse of Renewal were initially coded the same color (See Appendix D) and were later evaluated further. Below are examples of the breakdown of the initial coding into the more specific four steps of the Discourse of Renewal.

Organizational Learning

Learning requires an organization, or in this case the totality of the local government, to reach a point during the recovery period when they take stock of how the disaster unfolded and if it was handled properly. Crisis events, such as a natural disaster, can reveal weaknesses within an organization and vulnerable areas that need to be addressed. If an organization is open and transparent about these found weaknesses, they can learn from them to be better prepared for future disasters, as well as being prepared to share their learned knowledge with other organizations.

The meteorologist interviewed first speaks about changes that have been made because of the lessons learned from the December 10, 2021 tornado, as it relates to weather information in the short term:

> The Paducah Weather Service has already started putting out products in Spanish now, so when the warnings go out, for example, they have a Twitter account. Automatically, when a warning is issued, it pops up on your Twitter feed. It used to be in English, it still is, but now they have a second popup that's in Spanish. We're seeing--Mayfield has a large Hispanic community, and so we're seeing outreach now into those sectors. That's a change, that's new. As we talked about earlier, all forecasters have now had to rethink how we communicate each severe weather event…in the short term we've seen rapid changes on that, because we've had to. We've had to adapt quickly on how we discuss storms with people. (Interviewee 6A, CL)

The meteorologist interviewed then talked about his thoughts of the changes that may be implemented long-term from the lessons learned:

> Better radars are coming…there's what we call phased array radar. Right now, radar beams go out…it's a sweep that takes time to complete a circle. The phased array radars send out a pulse that goes in all directions instantly…Right now, we just have radar sweeps, so it's one sweep every two to ten minutes…but with phased array, it's all instant…We're also going to change the way warnings are done eventually…where AI computers are going to help issue the warnings and…within that warning, we're going to have probabilities…and this may make it a little tricky to communicate…but you may have a cone with, the Mayfield tornado would have had a 100 percent chance, and then maybe Symsonia would have had a sixty percent chance. And it would decrease as you got away from the center…You know, nothing's perfect, and we don't want people in the forty percent to think, oh, it's not going to hit me…In the next ten years, this will be rolled out…There are psychiatrists, psychologists, that are worried about that, too…if a warning's issued with only a thirty percent chance of a tornado hitting, will people not take shelter? I think that we've had some great strides after December 10th and we'll keep moving forward from there and building on that. (Interviewee 6A, CL)

Interviewee 2, a Superintendent, discusses a shift in his decision making after the crisis versus pre-crisis. The following are excerpts from his first and second interviews:

> Interview 1: The weather folks actually did a very good job of saying there's a storm coming. You know, and they--that was one of the things that they beat that drum pretty loudly, and I remember pretty vividly working with our transportation people throughout that day because we had several ballgames scheduled. We had buses that were supposed to be out on the roads, and we were trying to make a decision first of all, are we going to

try to play games tonight, or are we not going to play games tonight? And we kind of went back and forth on that, and ultimately we decided to, let's go ahead and play games. Both school systems were good. We thought that the timing of the event at that time when we made that decision was going to either be well before the games started or well after the games ended, and so we felt like we had enough of a window to be able to play the games. (Interviewee 2A, CL)

In the second interview, Interview 2 discusses lessons learned as he reflects upon his decision from 1.5 years earlier and the way he processes decision making now:

Interview 2: We are a lot more cautious than we were on December 10, 2021. We have let out early, we've come in late because of weather and potential weather. The last time…we had a system that was rolling in…I was conversing with some other local superintendents just to kind of see what their thought process was on it. We sat through a call with the National Weather Service. And when they began to talk about timing and what they were thinking could happen, my thought process completely shifted to we probably need to get these kids home just to make sure that we don't happen to run into a situation where we have buses on the road…so we did, we closed school down a little bit early that afternoon and it just so happens that one completely missed us…but, it's one of those situations of I can live with that. Before December 10, 2021, I would not have wanted to do that, and I showed that on December 10, 2021. But after that, I'm okay rolling the dice and nothing happening. I'd rather that be the case than us to do nothing and have something come in and have a student, an employee get hurt. I think that's

something I don't know that I'd ever be able to fully get over, knowing that I could've made a different decision than what I did, so. (Interviewee 2B, CL)

Interviewee 5 reflects on her journey of learning at the 1.5 year mark after the tornado:

> I always preach to people to--if you have an issue or a problem with something, to try to find out. Just like the lost traffic signals for instance, if you feel that bothers you so much, then find out why, what's the reasoning behind it not being fixed. Don't be what they call, you know, the Negative Nancy…everybody always has problems, nobody has solutions. So I always tell people…help us figure out how to do things right because this is all new to everybody…we've not ever been through anything this large and so we're all still trying to figure it out. I have definitely learned a lot in the last sixteen, seventeen months more…than most emergency managers have learned in twenty years. I'm hoping that I will never have to use the majority of what I've learned ever again, but I hope that I can help other people in other regions to understand the process because it was a lot, it was a lot to learn, and I'm still learning… to me the key is that everybody regardless of your position, you should learn something new. (Interviewee 5B, CL)

Interviewee 13, who was working the night shift at a nursing home that took a direct hit from the tornado discusses what she took away from the experience:

> One thing, I think that, moving on…in a nursing home is just making sure that all the residents are safe, and do those practice drills. The nursing home I am at now has actually started making these badges that we'll put around the residents whenever we have a tornado warning, and it has all their information on it, their emergency contacts, their medication lists, because in case they do have to relocate, they actually have some of

> identification and, like, their allergies and all their medications, because when the tornado happened, we didn't have any of that printed off. So that is one thing that we have actually started, moving forward since the tornado, is to provide the information in case another emergency happens. (Interviewee 13A, NCL)

The former Fire Chief for Mayfield/Graves County and the current Chief of Mayfield/Graves County's Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department discussed learning how to balance the recovery with normal operations:

> And we had people from Pennsylvania call us, they'd heard we lost our station and our fire trucks. And so we had people come in and donate supplies, as far as equipment, our hoses, axes, whatnot, even firetrucks. We had some guys from Pennsylvania donate two fire trucks. And like said, we lost three of our main trucks that we used. And here we are, trying to still answer. I mean, we're still answering calls. Believe it or not, we still had our normal stuff; car wrecks, we had house fires, we probably had more house fires because of what happened, and damaged natural gas lines and electricity. We were very busy. But we still responded. We responded to every call that came in and did the best we could. And like I said, the guys never complained, not one time. Of course, in my line, I was the chief, I was already retired, and so I stayed with it as long as I could. And as of this day, I'm still going. We're still helping people, we still get calls…we do what we can to help 'em. That's why we're here. And so, I mean, we--and the guys, they love what they're doing, or they wouldn't be doing it, and they enjoy it…they're not getting paid a cent. And so they're out here doing what a paid fire department would do, which they do get

paid, but we're out here doing it for nothing, and doing the same, exact job. I commend them highly. (Interviewee 14A, NCL)

Ethical Communication

For ethical communication to take place after a natural disaster, organizations must be transparent, honest, ethical, and moral in their communication with both stakeholders and the public. Community leaders must provide up-to-date information about the unfolding crisis and subsequent recovery, as well as share when they have gaps in or a lack of information about aspects of the crisis and recovery.

A local business owner in downtown Mayfield whose business was destroyed by the tornado, has this to say after discussing his choice to move his business outside of the city limits. “And I had a lot of people helping me, don't get me wrong, but it was nothing like a big organization or not even the city. I haven't…heard from anybody from the city” (Interviewee 11A, NCL). Interviewee 8 speaks at the six-month mark after the tornado about the leadership she sees within the community:

> And I commend our leaders here because our mayor and judge…They've been an inspiration and I can't imagine being in their place. And I've talked to the mayor, I've talked to the judge and they're just doing their best--I think all of us are. We're doing our best and anyone that's over anything you do get the criticism of…someone thinks you didn't do as much as you should have or could have. But they're not there in that position either and they don't see what you see and have restrictions that maybe they don't even know about. And then you have the others and they'll come up and they hug you. And they say, "You know if you hadn't been here, we don't know what we would have

done,"...and then I can't go to that courthouse, and I can't go into the mayor's office and talk to her. Or we're not at a city council meeting or Parks Board meeting there. I mean now we move around where we have meetings, wherever we can find an opening. And that's what everybody's doing. And so…it's that type of thing with me and seeing people that, meeting people that have needed help and just being glad you can help them, being real glad you can help. (Interviewee 8A, CL)

As a non-community leader who is involved with several local non-profits but is not involved any decision making, Interviewee 17 speaks of the communication surrounding the rebuilding process this way:

> Not seeing much going on downtown with the government buildings. I kind of wonder how long that's going to be. I know First National Bank, or what they call FNB now, is rebuilding. They're coming up, and we're seeing houses…but that central core north of the courthouse particularly, we just haven't seen much anything happening there. So…there's part of me that's staying fairly cynical…Everybody wants to get rid of the one-way--has anybody done anything? I know the state DOT [Department of Transportation]--or we call it Cabinet in this state--Transportation Cabinet--I was talking to him at the relief center, and he said, "Well, we've got emergency money to spend today." And that was back right after the tornado hit. Seen nothing yet, you know? So what were those steps that are not being taken? And who's not doing--asking the right questions? It's kind of, our mayor and our fairground coordinator were honored by the White House Small Business Administration, and they were out there just, what, two weeks ago and were given honor because of their hard work in trying to solve and

provide for people. But now we're just waiting to see what happens, and it takes longer. The bureaucracy is just unbelievable. (Interviewee 17B, NCL)

Another non-community leader expressed a different view of the progress being made. Interviewee 10 speaks of the rebuilding efforts in this way:

> Oh, I believe they will move forward. From the news reports and everything that I'm seeing, I think the city is doing well and on track…to getting things back in order. And I think that's where I guess it needs to begin. At least they have a real central part in what happens in the next two or three months with the funds and the resources that are available for whatever projects have been deemed necessary or appropriate for…our growth and sustainability. That's the city's job. The mayor and the county government and all of that …they've held those town halls and forums and where the community could come in and say what they wanted to--how they thought it should come back. I went to one of those meetings. I didn't have any suggestions. I just wanted to kind of be there. But yeah, I think things are moving along good…we met over at the Purchase Players, so that's a nice large space, and there were a lot of people there and they had…members of the Long-Term Recovery Group...and then there were people… who were interested and had their questions and input… it was…the kind of meeting that you would want to have, where everybody was welcome to come and say what they wanted to say. (Interviewee 10B, NCL)

Access to Information

Within the stage of Ethical Communication, participants responded to a question during the follow-up interviews that specifically asked where they obtained information directly after the tornado event, and then as the community moved into the recovery stage.

The Superintendent of Graves County Public Schools spoke of his access to information:

> I'm in a position with my job where I do have access to certain boards and things of that nature. I serve on multiple boards where, for instance, the mayors and county judge executives and various people like that are also serving. So, there was a sense where I was able to be fortunate enough to get some information just by being a part of those boards. But as far as just general information, I do know our local paper did a good job of trying to put information out. Again, various civic organizations, I know that they tried to push the word out, as well, on various things that were happening. The Homes for Hope…I learned about that through one of the civic organizations that I'm a part of, and so I think that was a very good avenue for me early on...the Mayfield Messenger does a good job trying to keep up with that and give updates where possible. And I know West Kentucky Star, WPSD, they try to do the same thing when there are stories that need to be discussed. (Interviewee 2B, CL)

The former mayor and current CFO of a local foundation had this to say about her access to information:

> I'm probably in more of a unique position to answer the first part of that question. As having been the former mayor, I can call the current mayor, who's a friend of mine. I can call the current chief of police. I can call the current fire chief. And that's how I had found

> out the information that I needed personally and that I needed as the director of the Annie Gardner Foundation and somebody who was a partner in the recovery. But--and sometimes they called me. Sometimes they called me and said, "We need this, this, this…what do we need to do?" And that made me feel good, that I was still a part of helping them navigate through some areas…so, I sort of cheated in that. And we tried to keep the information that I found out, and we tried to distribute it through Annie Gardner Foundation, to people that would call us. I started out going to the long-term recovery groups' meetings, and I still have connections with them, and I would call them, and I still probably, that's my go-to now. I call the long-term recovery group to find that information out. Now any information that I need, I go through them. (Interviewee 7B, CL)

Interviewee 16, who works for the school system and was displaced after the tornado, has this to say about access to information:

> I think immediately following, it was mainly, word of mouth, through other friends, who were connected to the relief efforts because I was completely absorbed with my own recovery and surviving day to day. Even now…it's been difficult to hear about what's been going on. I hear little things on Facebook or see things people post but… I don't have firsthand knowledge of a lot of that. I know there are some long-term recovery groups…but I don't know that, at least in the circles that I'm in, that it's really been well communicated…and perhaps a lot of that is on me as a citizen, and I should be more proactive in trying to find that information, but I've not heard a lot…I've seen people make comments on Facebook about if you want to be a part of the long-term plan and the

> decisions about what's going to be done around the courthouse…come to the meetings, and, okay, that's been said a lot. Well, where are the meetings and when are the meetings, you know? I've not seen that posted, and again, I'm not going to say that I've sought it out either…and again, that's--probably goes back on the fact that I've been…absorbed in my own survival day to day, because of having to take a second job and all other things I'm doing to be a single mom. (Interviewee 16B, NCL)

Interviewee 12, a lifelong resident of Mayfield, a retired Sheriff, and local historian speaks to the access of information in the community:

> Where I went to get updated information, coffee shops, restaurants, that's where the people are. As I would see someone on the street or in a store from a particular church, I'd say "What are you all doing, what's going on, how close are you?" They'll tell you what they know. And mine is just word of mouth. I have been to one meeting of one of the committees and I was going to try to find out what I could find out. And I'm so sorry, I just was as lost as I was when I left as I was when I walked in there. Now, I can probably find out more by going to these group or committee meetings, but I just haven't been. Whose fault is that? I guess that would be my fault. So if I really wanted to know something I suppose that would be where to go and I'm afraid I would ask too many questions and I don't want to interfere with the job they're doing because I am so pleased. And these are friends of mine that are doing this, and I'm sure they are doing all they can. Do I agree with everything I've heard they're doing? No of course not, but nobody would except the committee, you know? (Interviewee 12B, NCL)

Prospective Versus Retrospective Vision

For a community to move forward toward renewal after a natural disaster, community leaders, and eventually the community itself, must move from a "looking back" rhetoric toward a narrative that is prospective in nature. By leaning into the possibilities of the future, the community can co-construct a new reality and move forward together.

The following will show the analysis of interviewees between their first and second interviews when posed with the same question.

The emergency manager speaks of her hope for the long-term future of Mayfield (15, 11):

> Interview 1, Question 15: Well…COVID everything slowed down. And so the supply is not there. So we're having to get things slowly built back in…I think once we can get some of that back together that's our norm. So our fairgrounds. We use it for monster truck shows. And tractor pulls and stuff like that…Because that's how people--you worry about people's mental health…and to me that's--sometimes that's where people--just their interaction with people. They need that and so even having the Trade Day back. That gets people out of their house instead of just staying home because we were locked up for--I say locked up for two years with COVID and so people were just now starting to get back and doing things and then this happened. So trying to get those what we would consider our normal functions of having the Trade Day on Mondays and having the tractor shows…because we want to still have that. (Interviewee 5A, CL)

Interviewee 2's first interview expressed hope to get back to the same place the town had been before the tornado (retrospective). By her second interview, she expressed both a desire for her hometown back, but also the opportunity for change (prospective):

> Interview 2, Question 11: Well, I hope that we get everything built back. Who knows what it'll look like, but I hope that we get some businesses to come in. And now, I don't want it--and, you know, I personally liked our little hometown feel…I would love to go back to before the tornado, but we needed change before then. So, I think sometimes God gives us…he gives us opportunities, and this is an opportunity for us to do some great things. And so I really hope that everybody, whether city, local, county government, and then the citizens, I really hope that they step up and they help to make Mayfield, Graves County great. And it's up to us because we have to do the work and we have to come together and get things done. (Interviewee 5B, CL)

The mayor spoke about the long-term recovery in this way:

> Interview 1, Question 15: I also hear from people who are still living with children, still living with family. And that's hard… I'm grateful they have a place to go, but I wish they had a better place to go, a less crowded place to go. It is very frustrating…and the governor came in quickly and provided, after two months, he quickly provided to move these people into hotels. And I know the Red Cross, we don't have very many hotels here in Mayfield, so some of them were displaced as far away as the Kentucky Lake and Barkley Lake Region, in the state lodges. Some of them were in Paducah, in hotels. So they had a place to go if they didn't have family to move into…but that is the worst part. I wish I had a magic wand and I could wave it, and say, everybody is now in a home. But we're just not there yet…I can't imagine how it is for the families who are still living like that. (Interviewee 4A, CL)

In a similar fashion to Interviewee 2, Interviewee 4 moves from a desire to get back to the way things were before the destruction of the storm, to a hope for a better Mayfield:

> Interview 2, Question 11: We'll be the same in our heart. We will always be these wonderful people that didn't let this tornado knock them down. It knocked 'em down, but they didn't stay down very long at all. That will never change. That was as true in Thanksgiving of '21 as it was at Christmas of '21 and then Christmas of '22, and for years to come. The people will never change. But as our homes and as our businesses are rebuilt, we realize we're going look better. We're going look updated…So I think we are all rethinking our spaces. What do we need? We'll become certainly more efficient …in the storm resiliency…every home that Samaritan's Purse is building has a storm shelter right in the center of it. So we've learned a lot and we're using what we learned…I think that ten years from now, we'll look back and we'll go wow. But I think fifteen, we will have such a different look. (Interviewee 4B, CL)

Effective Organizational Rhetoric

Organizations in the aftermath of a natural disaster must communicate with those who are affected by that crisis. By creating an environment for open dialogue and a prospective vision for the future, the public can begin to co-create meaning with leaders and trust organizations to work toward solutions in the recovery stage of a crisis. For community leaders to instill confidence in their audiences they must "frame the crisis in a way that inspires, empowers, and motivates" the public and stakeholders regarding the future of the organization (Sellnow and Seeger, 2013). A lack of trust and/or confidence in the rhetoric of an organization during the recovery stage of a

crisis can seriously impact a community's ability to move forward in both the recovery and in the post-crisis stages.

The following are statements of organization rhetoric from community leaders at both the six month and 1.5 year marks after the December 10, 2021 tornado. The first is from the mayor, who was prominently featured in the media in the days, weeks, and months after the crisis:

> I have never in my life, I was a teacher, been in a position that required more time, that totally changed my life, but has been such an honor to serve, to do this…I'm so thankful to be in this position, not because I think I can do it better. I'm sure there are so many people that could've done this job maybe better, maybe worse. Who would know? But to be able to serve a community that has meant so much to me and still does, that I chose to stay here and raise my children after my husband passed away… I chose to stay here. I can't put into words how that honors me to be able to do this. And I see that in everybody who rebuilds, whether it's their business, their home, their life. We have learned so much about ourselves from this. It took two minutes to get from one end of our town to the other. Our blessings are immeasurable. You can't measure the blessings we have got. But I hope everybody feels that same pride in dad-gum-it, we're still here, because I certainly do. (Interviewee 4B, CL)

The former mayor and current CFO of a local foundation has this to say about her work as part of the rebuilding committee during the first interview:

> And it's going to take some convincing for some people, who really just want Mayfield back. Mayfield--that Mayfield's gone. We need to focus on the Mayfield of the future. So I get excited about that. And I get hopeful about that…so that's the plan. And it'll take

years to, you know, see that come to fruition. But I can certainly see that…So as we meet this week, we're going to focus on some other areas, like when you look at that particular map and you see all those bright green little stickers…to fix up some of those (tobacco) barns to be places, venues where people can go and have concerts, you know, plays, activities. We can see that evolving into that, because we've got a lot of history with the tobacco industry in Mayfield and Graves County and being one of the few markets for all three types of tobacco. There's just a rich, rich tobacco history here. So there's lots to be done. And that's not our only focus, but that's what we're presenting now. (Interviewee 7A, CL)

The Superintendent of Graves County School District speaks about renewal in this way:

Well, from a structural standpoint, that's where my mind goes first, I think you're going to see maybe a little more user-friendly set of buildings. I think sometimes if you're going to try to paint anything as glass half-full here, that does give you an opportunity to really make sure that what we're building back is serving the community as best as it possibly can. And I do believe that's part of the reason why some people feel like that process is moving slowly, is because you don't want to just jump back in and necessarily do the exact same thing because maybe we can do this a little bit better than what we did it before. And I think you have a lot of leaders that are really working towards trying to accomplish that, of really looking down the road thinking about how can we best serve our community with this, you don't like to necessarily think of a tornado as being an opportunity, but now that it's happened, now we have this opportunity to do something

different…and so providing those opportunities for families to come back to Mayfield is what I'm eager about and looking forward to. (Interviewee 2B, CL)

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes discussion that expands and clarifies the understanding of crisis narrative and its use in disaster recovery and renewal using the theories and theoretical frameworks of Narratives of Crisis and Discourse of Renewal. The chapter also expands and clarifies the understanding of how leadership can play a part in the move toward or away from renewal, as well as to how these findings and lessons learned can contribute to the applied understanding of practitioners for use in disaster recovery and renewal. The research questions of this discussion are:

R1: How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?

R2: What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?

R3: At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?

Discussion of RQ1

Research Question 1, *How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?* was addressed through the analysis of the thematic framework of Narratives of Crisis (Seeger and Sellnow, 2016). The analysis sought to identify if differences existed in two areas: 1) in the narratives between the first and second interview sessions within the community and 2) between those in a position as community leader (CLs) and residents who do not hold such positions and were considered non-community leaders (NCLs).

Differences Between Community Leaders and Non-Community Leaders

No remarkable differences were found between CLs and NCLs through the coding and analysis using the theoretical framework of Narratives of Crisis, though distinct differences were found through the analysis using the Discourse of Renewal. Though no distinct differences were found between community leaders and the public in the Narratives of Crisis analysis, it can be asserted that lack of a distinction is an interesting finding. Seeger and Sellnow (2016) sought to explore the types of stories people tell after a disaster, but their research did not intend to specifically study how community leaders' stories differ from those who are not considered leaders. In this study, the entire community of Mayfield was compelled to tell their stories in similar ways, no matter what walk of life they were from. Within the group of participants, there were community leaders who were displaced and/or lost loved ones, and non-community leaders who were not displaced, and/or did not lose loved ones in the disaster. For this reason, it can be concluded that themes that emerged in their stories were primarily from their experiences as humans and not from the titles they held.

Renewal as the Central Theme

Several differences were found between the first and second interviews within the community. A major finding was that the theme of Renewal was the overarching theme of all narratives within the group of participants. Renewal was the major theme in every interview, of both the first set of interviews, and subsequent follow-up interviews nearly a year later.

The Intertwining of Themes Around Renewal

During the thematic coding analysis, another interesting finding was the discovery of the intertwining or overlapping of themes throughout the crisis narratives. Without exception, every interview transcript contained the intertwining of themes. Even themes that seemed to be in direct conflict with one another appeared together in the same excerpt of narrative. Themes such as Renewal and Victim often appeared simultaneously, and it was not uncommon for more than two themes to be coded within the same section of a crisis narrative. In addition to the finding of overlapping themes, as coding continued, a consistent thematic pattern emerged of varying combinations of four sub-themes all existing around the larger context of a push forward toward renewal. Figure 1 illustrates the phenomenon found within the analysis of the interviews:

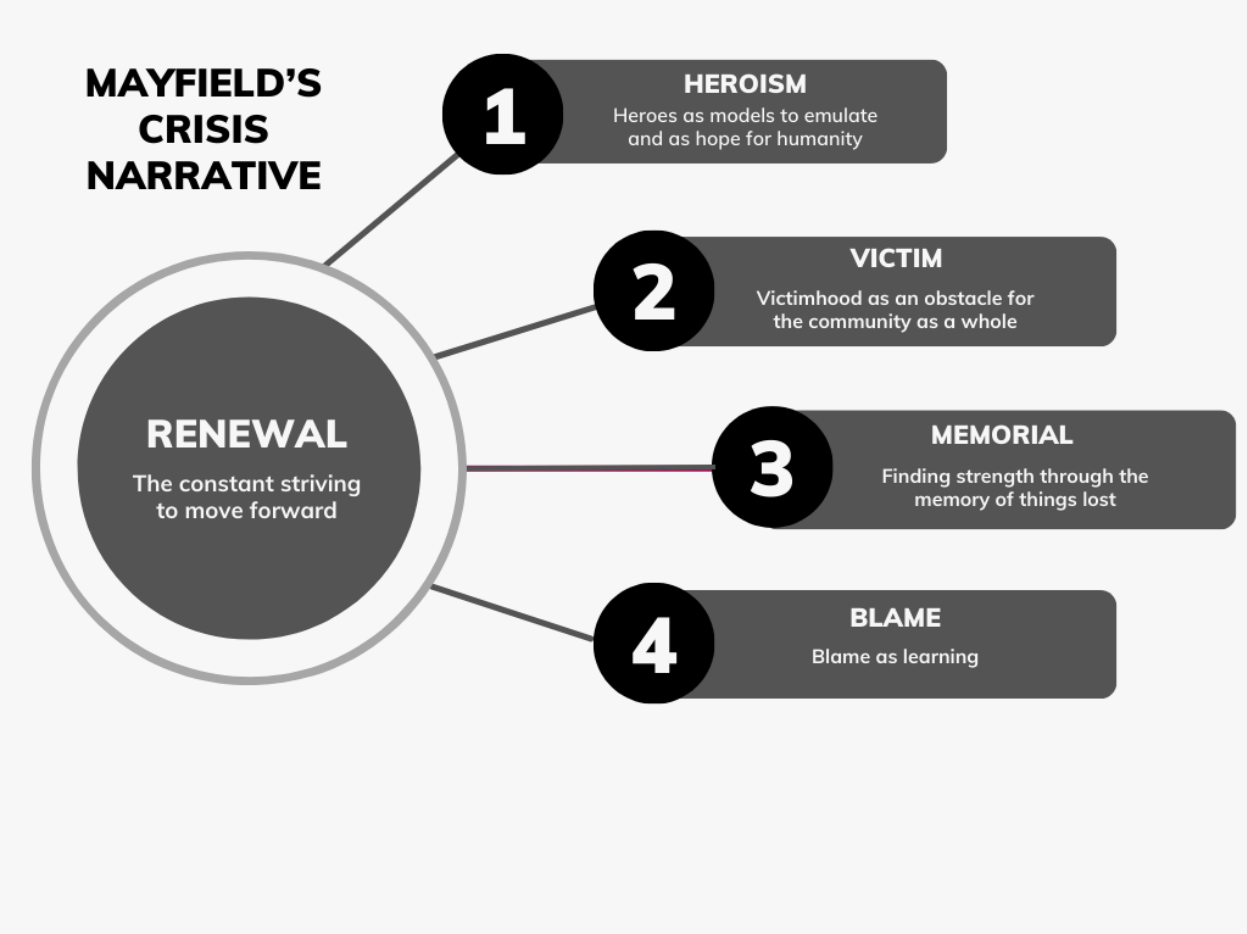

Figure 1: Intertwining of the themes of Narratives of Crisis

Though narratives and narrative components often compete or converge (Seeger and Sellnow, 2016, p.148), in this case, competition and convergence was discovered within narrative stories. Less has been written about how such competing or convergence manifests within narratives accounts. In this study, narrative themes within the stories are intertwined, supporting the greater narrative, but from differing sub-narrative stories. In *Narratives of Crisis*, Seeger and Sellnow explore the implications of macrolevel narratives, such as the competing narratives of blame after a mass shooting incident (p. 74). There is little known about the microlevel of disaster narratives. In the case of Mayfield's interviews, microlevel overlapping of

themes were found in each interview- meaning that the intertwining of themes was discovered consistently within individual narratives, but also were discovered as a trend within the group of participants as a whole. Examining the way narratives intertwine or overlap, and how this type of overlapping changes over the course of a longitudinal study can begin to explore and understand crisis narratives at both the macro and micro levels.

The finding of Renewal as the central theme amongst all participants, with the other four themes intertwining as sub-themes, could be an indication that participants had a desire and hope to move forward, but often struggled to find ways to overcome obstacles or to imagine what the future of Mayfield may look like. Though Renewal was the main theme for all interviews at both the six month and 1.5 years mark, the second interviews had a much stronger presence of renewal than the first, producing a compelling indicator of a move toward renewal for the community.

Resilience as a Component of Renewal

In the work of Seeger and Sellnow (2016), resilience was discovered as a component of many renewal narratives (p.88). Often individuals, and the community, draw from the idea of resilience to cope with the events that have taken place and begin the work of rebuilding, and ultimately renewal. Many participants spoke of the resilience of themselves, their families, their children, and of the community as a component found within the theme of Renewal. As it refers to resilience as a component of the theme Renewal, the first interviews contained a more frequent coding of Renewal and Victim as compared to second interviews, which typically moved toward a sole coding of the theme Renewal. This was especially discovered when participants with children spoke about their children's experiences. In the first interviews, most

narratives about children were coded solely as Victim, whereas they were coded as Renewal or an intertwining of the themes of Renewal and Victim in the second interviews.

It was also noted that the first interviews discussed the idea of resilience as something that was attached to individuals and groups within the community, as well as volunteers and organizations that came to help. Government agencies were rarely mentioned in the first interviews by non-community leaders, but a shift toward the responsibility of the government as the agent for resilience and renewal was discovered in the second interviews. Participants categorized as community leaders mirrored this shift in their second interviews as their narratives moved away from individuals or the community as the agents for change and began discussing government agencies and committees as the catalyst for resilience and renewal. Along with this shift came the idea that renewal must be forged with a willingness to change outdated or ineffective systems. Particularly within the second interviews, the need for change within the community was a common theme toward renewal. By speaking through narratives of what their community came from, the strength of its history and values, and mentioning past successes, participants expressed hope that the future of the community would channel this resilience into positive change, and ultimately, renewal.

The Intertwining of Renewal and Victim

In opposition to the theme of Renewal, Victim was a commonly mentioned theme. As in any natural disaster scenario, initial expressions of fear or victimhood during the crisis would not be uncommon. Participants' expressions of victimhood during the recovery period would typically be considered an anti-renewal narrative, but there were several instances in which participants would insert fear-based or victim-based statements within a renewal narrative. The

finding of fear (Victim) statements wedged between two Renewal statements were found exclusively in first interviews, which could be an indication of a participant processing through their thoughts in real time as they spoke aloud. The assertion that more processing was taking place in the first interviews versus the second interviews a year later could also be based on the finding that most participants responded that they had not processed the reality of the events during their first interviews, but the majority expressed that they had somewhat or entirely processed the reality of the events of that night at the point of the second interviews.

The Intertwining of Renewal and Hero

The trend of Renewal and Hero intertwining during the analysis of transcripts occurred in both the first and second interviews but happened more predominantly in the second interviews. The overlapping of the themes of Renewal and Hero were often found as participants discussed how individuals and organizations, and later government agencies, worked to propel the community forward. The areas in which Hero and Renewal were more heavily coded in the second interviews most often replaced Victim and Renewal coding in response to the same question a year before. This finding shows the release of victimhood, and the choice of including heroism in its place as a way to move toward renewal.

The finding of organizations as heroes throughout the Mayfield interviews is a potential extension of the Narratives of Crisis theory. According to Seeger and Sellnow, there are many types of heroes identified within the Hero narratives, such as first responders, the "Good Samaritan", military figures, political figures, etc. Groups of individuals can also be viewed as heroic, such as a community that works together after a natural disaster (2016, p. 115-116). Though members of an organization may be viewed as heroes, organizations as an entity are not

commonly identified as heroes in crisis narratives. Without exception, every participant mentioned organizations, either non-profit or government entities that were coded Hero within their interviews.

Another unique finding was the combination of the themes of Renewal, Hero, and Victim. This combination only occurred in first interviews and only amongst community leaders and first responders. All instances of this combination of coding dealt with the same topic, which was the attempt to balance the responsibilities of the participant's job with their personal victimhood, concern for family members, and responsibilities outside of their work requirements.

The Intertwining of Renewal and Memorial

The mention of physically erected memorials was found in very few interviews, and only spoke of future planned memorials. Interviewee 1 mentioned bricks being collected by a trusted community member from the rubble of destroyed historic buildings to be used later to construct a memorial wall. The same participant mentioned the use of bricks from a historic black church that was being rebuilt outside the city limits to help restore the historic black church he attended. In this way, both the restored church and the church that donated the bricks, built shortly after the end of the Civil War, would be remembered. All instances of traditional memorials were coded as Renewal and Memorial, in both first and second interviews. According to Seeger and Sellnow, traditional memorials serve to unite a community, to place the crisis into a larger story, and to teach civic virtues (2016, p. 128). In this way, one can understand why the narrator who discusses traditional memorials would speak in the context of both memorialization and renewal.

The memorialization of the loss of life, livelihood, and/or a sense of "home" were themes found within both sets of interviews but were much more heavily discovered and coded within

the first interviews. These themes of Memorial were only coded as Victim in both first and second interviews. At the 1.5 years mark after the tornado, participants who mentioned these types of memorialization were unable to think of these topics with any sense of renewal. This area of coding was the only example within the entire analysis of no change occurring toward renewal over time.

The memorialization of physical buildings, in particular historic buildings, was the most coded area of Memorial. Most of Mayfield's historic district was a complete loss, and with very few exceptions, the buildings could not be saved or rebuilt in a way that resembled the original structures. In the first interviews, most instances of narrative discussing historic buildings were coded as Victim, Renewal, and Memorial. The second interviews overwhelmingly shifted and were coded as Renewal and Memorial. The year period between interviews allowed participants time to consider the opportunity for a new Mayfield, while still remembering and memorializing the buildings lost.

The Intertwining of Renewal and Blame

When considering the presence of the theme of Blame in participants' interviews (see Table 2), it was noted that the narratives of ten participants had transcripts that were coded with the theme of Blame in at least one interview, but only 3 participants had the theme of Blame in both interviews. The trend toward only having blame in one interview brought about additional scrutiny in the coding process, to try to understand this phenomenon. It was discovered that the first interviews contained mostly vague references of blame toward the process or the system, without appointing direct blame. The lack of direct blame often found at the 6 month mark after the tornado is a potential theoretical extension, as only direct blame has been noted in the past

theory and theoretical framework. The second interviews were more direct in assigning blame to a particular group or government entity, and following the more typical pattern of blame narratives. The 3 participants who were coded with the theme of Blame in both their first and second interviews all worked heavily in a social services compacity. Two of the interviewees out of the 3 were community leaders who worked in a non-profit position, and the third was a non-community leader who worked with vulnerable populations through his work volunteering with non-profits. It could be asserted that the continued blame of these 3 individuals could be in part because of their position of advocacy within the community.

Summary of RQ1 Discussion

RQ1 sought to answer the question of: *How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?*

The community consistently shared narratives that included the intertwining and wedging of themes around the central theme of Renewal. The phenomenon of the theme of Renewal surrounded by four sub-themes within the first and second interviews was a major finding of this research study. The discovery of wedging of the theme of Victim within renewal narratives in first interviews was also a remarkable finding. Both discoveries extend the existing theoretical framework of what is known about crisis narratives in general, and the microlevel of crisis narratives specifically.

The importance of resilience as a component of renewal narratives, the discovery of organizations as heroes, and the lack of direct blame found in the first interviews were all also important findings of the Narratives of Crisis analysis.

Discussion of RQ2

Research question 2 was answered through a thematic analysis using the Discourse of Renewal theory. The question of, *What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?* was explored through the initial coding of the themes generally found within the crisis narrative transcripts, and then later by identifying the step(s) of the Discourse of Renewal that were contained within each coded area.

Organizational Learning

The Discourse of Renewal theory about organizational learning can apply to any organization, and community leaders and non-community leaders alike spoke about the learning that occurred within the organizations for which they work during both the first and second interviews. Both community leaders and those not in a position of leadership were found to express learning in the short-term during their first interviews, compared to longer-term learning and implementation in their second interviews. Community leaders expressed their desire to share lessons learned with those within their field and with other communities, and a small number discussed disseminated lessons learned to other practitioners.

Ethical Communication

The step of ethical communication is an integral part of stakeholder engagement to help move a community toward renewal. There are several components of this step, including transparent, honest, ethical and moral communication with stakeholders and the dissemination of

up-to-date information. In the Mayfield interviews there were two major findings around ethical communication.

The first finding was that, amongst non-community leaders, there were differing opinions about whether the leadership of Mayfield was doing everything they could to be transparent and honest. Some interviewees had trust in their community leaders, where others were uncertain about why the recovery process was slow or where the donations and government help was being funneled.

This discrepancy could be explained by the second part of the step of ethical communication, which is to provide stakeholders with up-to-date information. Community leaders had little to no uncertainty about how to best access information. Some of them explicitly stated that they were at an advantage in obtaining up-to-date information because of their position as a leader. Many mentioned, for instance, that if they had a question, they could pick up the phone and call the mayor or the judge executive and have their questions immediately answered. Non-community leaders, on the other hand, expressed much uncertainty about where to best obtain up-to-date information, with most stating that word of mouth and Facebook support groups were their two most trusted sources of information. The uncertainty surrounding access to information improved slightly between the first and second interviews, with many of the NCL interviewees discussing the more recent implementation of town hall meetings and an open-door policy with the Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG) committee meetings. Even though interviewees were slightly less uncertain about how to obtain up-to-date information in their second interviews, most admitted being unwilling or unable to attend town hall meetings

and LTRG meetings. For this reason, most still used word of mouth and Facebook support groups as their major sources of information.

In this way, community leaders heavily differed from non-community leaders. Community leaders had access to up-to-date information and an awareness of both existing information and gaps in information. Non-community leaders did not have access to up-to-date information, and even once some information was available to them, chose to remain with the sources of information that were most accessible to them. For this reason, there was more uncertainty amongst NCLs and they often filled the gaps in their information with speculation or information from non-official sources.

Prospective versus Retrospective Vision

Another step in the Discourse of Renewal involves the ability for the community, and the leadership within it, to move away from retrospective rhetoric toward a prospective vision of the future. The community leaders interviewed in Mayfield were successful in their move from retrospective rhetoric in their first interviews to prospective rhetoric in their second interviews. It must be noted that since a challenge for Mayfield leadership was the ability to effectively communicate with stakeholders, in this case their stakeholders being the general public, it is possible that their prospective vision did not adequately reach its intended audience. There was also a trend amongst non-community leaders in a shift from retrospective rhetoric to prospective rhetoric between their first and second interviews, but very few NCLs mentioned community leaders as a catalyst for the change in their thinking. In this way, the difference between community leaders and non-community leaders was that both were found to be moving forward,

but community leaders were a united front amongst themselves, whereas non-community leaders found unique and differing ways to move forward.

Effective Organizational Rhetoric

The ability of community leaders to speak to stakeholders in a way that "inspires, empowers, and motivates" the community to move forward in a new co-created reality is of utmost importance after a disaster (Sellnow and Seeger, 2013). Leaders must effectively frame a path for stakeholders to travel toward renewal. In a similar outcome as the step of retrospective versus prospective vision, community leaders were found to express words of encouragement, inspiration, and motivation during both their first and second interviews, but it was uncertain if t their rhetoric was easily available to stakeholders. Since non-community leaders were primarily accessing information through word of mouth and Facebook support groups, it is unlikely that many of the positive and uplifting words of the community leaders were entirely received by stakeholders. The town hall meetings that began a few months prior to the second set of interviews were a first step in connecting community leaders to their intended audience, but their success is unknown at the writing of this paper. It was also noted by a small number of interviewees that a hub for both the LTRG and the Mayor's Office had been developed both through a website and a Facebook page. Since the implementation of these new ways to access information occurred relatively soon before the second interviews, it is also to soon at the writing of this paper to know if residents will become aware of these resources and begin to use them to access information.

Summary of RQ2 Discussion

RQ2 sought to answer the question of, *What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?* Through coding and analysis, using the theoretical framework of the Discourse of Renewal, findings were discovered primarily in the second step of the Discourse of Renewal, Ethical Communication. The first finding was the competing narratives among the public (NCLs) about the effectiveness and transparency of community leaders. Since competing narratives amongst non-community leaders reduced slightly in the second set of interviews, it can be asserted that as options to access information from community leaders increased, uncertainty within the public started to decrease. The second finding was the lack of up-to-date information through channels that were easily accessible to the public. This finding of the lack of a bridge of information between CLs and NCLs was remarkable since it negatively impacted the ability of community leaders to reach their intended audiences to share both challenges and successes within all areas of the Discourse of Renewal steps.

Discussion of RQ3

Research question 3 was answered through a thematic analysis using the Discourse of Renewal theory. The question of: *At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?* was explored through identifying the step(s) that were contained within each area coded as Discourse of Renewal (See Appendix D) and considering applied lessons for practitioners.

Applied Lessons Learned

The small community of Mayfield, KY was overwhelmed in the aftermath of a high EF4 tornado that ravaged their small town. John A. Robinson (1981) contended that stories can serve a variety of purposes, including learning from past experiences that impact the way we act or behave in the future. Robinson also asserted that unexpected experiences, such as a natural disaster, are hard to process, and can be easier to process within an instructional context.

Often in their own words, community leaders described their lack of preparedness for such an event. Many leaders expressed that their sensemaking and decision making has been changed by the events of December 10, 2021. An example is the Superintendent of Graves County Public Schools, who watched the weather conditions on December 10 as tornado watches and warnings were being issued, but continued to allow public school sporting events to occur because he felt like they would take place within a safe window of time. In both of his interviews after the disaster, he expressed the lessons learned by that evening, and that his decision making was drastically changed by the tornadic event. He was no longer willing to take risks when it came to severe weather and decided often to err on the side of caution. Overall, community leaders hoped their process of learning (at the 1.5 years mark as of the last interviews) would be useful not only for their own community's journey toward renewal, but to be of help to other communities who needed to better understand the steps to recovery after a crisis event.

Preparedness as a Lesson Learned

No community can be completely prepared for a natural disaster, and many lessons were learned after the Mayfield tornado that have made them better prepared for a future tornadic event. Many community leaders mentioned that preparedness would help their community find

its way toward rebuilding and recovery more quickly if they are impacted by a similar natural disaster in the future.

There were practical steps to prepare for the future weather events, such as the installation of storm shelters in homes without basements, but more discussion about preparedness surrounded the complex system the leadership of Mayfield had to navigate after the storm. No one in the current leadership of the community had experience with how the levels of government worked beyond a surface level, and many mentioned having to learn on the job. More than one community leader discussed the desire to train other communities about the complex processes of disaster recovery. By implementing training within other communities who have not experienced such a disaster, the lessons learned in Mayfield could be communicated to prepare others.

Two-Way Communication as a Lesson Learned

Though most community leaders did not express an understanding of the need for two-way communication with their stakeholders, the lack of communication with the public was a major finding of this study. The absence of access to up-to-date information, as well as communication about leadership's gaps in knowledge, caused a high level of uncertainty among non-community leaders interviewed. Grunig (1989, 1997) argued through his research that there was a lack of adequate discourse in the public arena and recommended the implementation of a two-way symmetrical model of communication. Habermas (1993) provided to a relevant observation by asserting that the only way the public could critically think about an event was through the access to clear reporting of the press and by dialoging with engaged stakeholders.

Community leaders expressed a great deal of care for their community, a prospective vision over time, and inspirational and motivational rhetoric in their interviews. It can be argued that community leaders had all the right ingredients for successful implementation of the Discourse of Renewal. Unfortunately, they did not realize the need to bridge the gap between themselves as community leaders to their stakeholders, the public, who were by-in-large left in the dark about developments in information. By learning and prioritizing the creation a bridge of communication between community leaders and the public early in the recovery stage, the move toward renewal could have happened quickly and effectively.

Sharing Lessons Learned

Though many community leaders discussed their desire to share the hard-earned lessons acquired through the duration of all three stages of crisis after the Mayfield tornado, few had taken steps or described how they would implement their learning into tangible instruction for their own community or others. The struggle to know how to effectively disseminate learning is not something that is unique to the community leaders of Mayfield. In their research, Donahue and Tuohy (2006) discuss the problem of ushering in change in response to lessons learned. There must be a persistent urgency and commitment to implement change through learning, and an understanding that often individuals and organizations outside of an event have trouble making significant changes if they aren't spurred by their own lessons learned, but by someone else's (p.27).

Summary of RQ3 Discussion

RQ3 sought to answer the question of: *At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?* The first finding of lessons learned at an applied level was the lack of preparedness by community leaders for such an event. In addition to disclosing a lack of preparedness, leaders of Mayfield expressed a desire to both be better prepared as a community in the future. The second finding of lessons learned was the need for two-way communication. Though this finding was not expressed through the community leaders in their interviews, it was heavily expressed in the interviews of members of the public, who were often uncertain how to obtain up-to-date information or who to trust as the recovery continued. Bridging the gap of information held by community leaders to the public would have made the public more informed about the up-to-date changes in the recovery efforts, but also would have create an opportunity for CLs to better implement the other steps of the Discourse of Renewal. The third finding was that many lessons were learned through the disaster recovery process, and that community leaders had a desire to share their learned knowledge with those in their respective fields and with other communities.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusions

This study examined the case of the December 10, 2021 tornadic events that heavily impacted the small community of Mayfield, Kentucky. The findings extend the literature on crisis narratives in more than one area. The Narratives of Crisis theory (RQ1) can be extended through this study's findings of the intertwining of the microlevel crisis narratives, the wedging of the theme of Victim into Renewal narratives early in the recovery process, the discovery of organizations as heroes, and the use of a longitudinal study to research how crisis narratives within a community change over time.

The findings also extend the literature on the Discourse of Renewal theory in two distinct ways. The first area is the finding of the lack of a bridge for accessing information between community leaders and non-community leaders (RQ2). When a gap exists for accessing reliable information, all steps of the Discourse of Renewal are at risk of failure, since the recovery actions of leaders may not reach their intended audiences without proper two-way communication and information access. The second finding is a set of lessons learned and related recommendions intended for practitioners to better understand disaster recovery and renewal (RQ3). To reach these research objectives, the following questions were asked:

R1: How do the crisis narratives of a community change over time in the aftermath of a natural disaster?

R2: What differences exist, if any, in the move toward renewal when comparing community leaders versus those not in a position of leadership?

R3: At an applied level, what were the lessons learned for practitioners about disaster recovery and renewal?

RQ1 Conclusions

The research questions developed for this study guided the analysis of data to determine how crisis narratives change over time, and if those changes contribute to or detract from renewal. The use of oral histories in lieu of traditional interviews followed the research of Fischer's Narrative Paradigm (1984), which asserted that the communication of experiences through stories had the potential to be more powerful than traditional rhetoric or argumentation. In addition, Deslandes (2005) added that through storytelling, we employ more of our common sense and that the rationale and emotion that are contained within narratives complement one another in a way that traditional rhetoric does not.

The Narratives of Crisis framework proved highly effective for analyzing the collected the crisis narratives in the aftermath of the Mayfield tornado, with the five major themes of: Renewal, Victim, Hero, Memorial, and Blame. The analysis of first and second interviews amongst the same set of participants found several areas of importance, and this knowledge can add to the understanding of how residents process the events of a crisis over time, especially in cases of natural disaster, when the recovery period can last many years. Two of the more unexpected findings of this study were the discovery of the overarching theme of Renewal in every interview and the intertwining of themes amongst all participants at the microlevel of their recollections.

This discovery of how storytellers weave multiple themes together in an expression of renewal calls for scrutiny in how Narratives of Crisis theory is applied in future studies. The

theory implies that one theme (blame, renewal, victim, hero, or memorial) dominates a post-crisis narrative account. This observation may be the result of Seeger and Sellnow (2016) relying on narratives from a single time period within the crisis recovery process. The longitudinal approach of this study revealed an interaction of narrative themes that evolved toward a dominant theme of renewal. Thus, those applying Narratives of Crisis theory would benefit from a readiness to observe and assess an interaction of themes, particularly during the early accounts of a disaster. Doing so provides a more incusive and perhaps accurate assessment of the narrative account.

RQ2 Conclusions

Understanding how individuals move through the process of the recovery after a natural disaster can help help people and communities in future disaster situations. This study attempts to make such a contribution by ehancing our understanding of how people process disaster events through storytelling. Karl Weick (1995) concluded that initially the process of storytelling is a creation of reality, where people create reality themselves retrospectively. In describing the work of Robinson (1981), Weick asserts that when Robinson writes of "noteworthy" stories, he is trying to explain the way that remarkable stories, such as crisis narratives, differ from everyday stories. Weick explains they differ in that, "the actions described are difficult, the situation poses a predicament that cannot be handled in a routine manner, unexpected events happen in an otherwise normal sequence of events, and something about the situation is unusual in the narrator's experience" (p.127-128). This study chose the collection of oral histories as the means of extracting the remarkable crisis narratives of Mayfield's complete narratives to obtain more substantial narrative data for analysis. In doing so, this study reveals patterns of storytelling

that evolve from an emphasis on victimage to a more optimistic focus on reeovery and renewal. Thus, as the community maneuvered through the recovery process, the stories evolved and emphasized that prospective view.

In addition to analyzing the way crisis narratives change over time, this study also sought to determine the impact a community's leadership can have on the public's ability to move forward after a disaster, and if the crisis narratives of leaders differ from the rest of the community. The Discourse of Renewal theory asserts that four major steps should be followed by leadership of an organization to move stakeholders toward renewal (organizational learning, ethical communication, prospective versus retrospective vision, and effective organizational rhetoric).

This case study, however, uncovered a potential flaw in the process toward renewal. The organization, in this case the community leaders of Mayfield, were effective in every step of the process, but failed in helping the community properly access information. By overlooking this small, but vitally important step, the leadership's successes were by-in-large unknown by the community, as they were not adequately connected in two-way communication, and therefore could not co-create meaning and move fully toward renewal through the help of community leaders.

Interestingly, the failures of the leadership of Mayfield did not prevent the community from moving forward. Without exception, each interview, with both leadership and the public, was coded with the major theme of Renewal. This finding suggests that a community can move forward toward renewal, even if the leadership of that community fails in some or all of their efforts to usher in renewal.

RQ3 Conclusions

Mayfield lessons learned have the potential to provide guidance to practitioners on an applied level who work in emergency management and/or find themselves in a disaster recovery scenario. Once again, the Discourse of Renewal theory was used to consider the lessons learned. Though community leaders were ineffective in using open discourse and a two-way mode of communication with the public, they expressed a desire to share lessons learned amongst themselves, with leaders in their perspective fields, and with practitioners in other communities. Community leaders also discussed an increased need for preparedness, and shifted from a retrospective narrative of the recovery in their first interviews, hoping they could somehow find their way back to the Mayfield of the past, to a prospective narrative in their second interviews, imagining a Mayfield of the future.

Donahue and Tuohy (2006) explored the uphill battle of being effective in sharing lessons learned after a disaster. Identifying areas of needed change, implementing instructional training and practice, and then evaluating the success of change can be time consuming and requires patience and consistency. But the challenges of sharing lessons of disaster to implement change should not be abandoned because the task is difficult. In Donahue and Tuohy's research, they quoted a responder of their study who reminds us of the real consequence of the failure to share and learn through lessons of crisis, saying, "If we don't learn these lessons, people are going to die again, because we failed to fix the problems that killed people the last time" (p. 22).

It is the hope that this research can be used as a case study to serve as a guide to better understand how communities respond in the aftermath of a natural disaster and can ultimately lead communities toward renewal.

Limitations

Several limitations should be noted in the execution of this study. As a longitudinal study, more time was needed to adequately examine if true renewal can be found in Mayfield, KY. Often the recovery period for such significant natural disasters can be 7-10 years or more, so to conduct the second interviews at the 1.5 years mark after the disaster is an incomplete picture of the case study of Mayfield's future.

Another limitation was the lack of equal representation of the demographics of the community. Two major absences were the lack of Hispanic representation, and the lack of candle factory employees. The Hispanic population makes up approximately 15% of the total population of Mayfield. There were ethical and legal concerns, however, since much of the population are undocumented migrant workers. Initially, a Hispanic school employee who works with the migrant population participated in the first round of interviews and was able to speak on behalf of the migrant families that reside in Mayfield. Unfortunately, she declined a second interview and could not be included in this longitudinal study. The candle factory's employees were another area of a lack of representation. The candle factory was directly hit by the tornado on the night of December 10, 2021 and the majority of those who were killed or injured in the disaster within the city limits were in the candle factory at the time of the tornado. Since there were discrepancies between the management of the factory and some employees about whether their jobs were at risk if they left the building during tornado warnings, there is currently much ongoing litigation surrounding the factory. As with the Hispanic population, one worker from the candle factory was included in the first round of interviews, but he declined a second interview and could not be included in this study. Of the four participants who declined a second interview,

all would have been identified as non-community leaders, and two were displaced by the tornado. Though an equal number of CLs and NCLs were represented in the study, a more representative sample was reduced through the declined follow-up interviews of four NCLs.

Lastly, the new findings, and possible theory extensions in this study are limited by the fact that they have not been researched beyond the scope of this study, and could be unique to the story of Mayfield, KY. More research would need to be conducted to see if similar findings are uncovered in other natural disaster recovery scenarios.

Applications and Future Research

The choice to collect crisis narratives using oral histories was a strategic decision that should be considered when entering a community after a natural disaster. Communities that have lost friends, loved ones, and physical structures attached to their history and collective memory can benefit from the collection of complete oral histories. Choosing oral histories over traditional interviews allows residents impacted by crisis to both buy-in to the collection of data, but also allows the healing process to begin as they work through their thoughts and feelings in an open-ended way that differs from traditional journalism. The researcher in this case must be willing to look beyond their own research interests and first think of what is best for the community. This can be accomplished by asking community members to co-create the oral history project and to help decide where the resulting recorded interviews will be indexed and archived. It is then possible later to extract the crisis narratives from much more extensive oral histories. Collaborating with the community in this way is both beneficial as a service project, and as a method of collecting open-ended crisis narratives of a natural disaster event.

It is important for oral history collection and future analysis to continue in Mayfield to get a clearer picture of the journey to or away from renewal as the recovery continues, and to also examine if the trend of intertwining themes continues as time passes. Future research should also include other case studies to test the findings of this study. Only through continued research can it be determined if the themes and phenomena found within Mayfield's interviews are truly a new finding and extension of theory or are a unique response within one community.

The Discourse of Renewal also proved to be a useful tool in examining the response of leadership within Mayfield in several areas. By using the four steps of the theory, the response of leadership could be thoroughly examined and areas of both successes and failures could be identified. The lack of access of information between leadership and the public proved to be the biggest pitfall in the leadership of Mayfield's ability to build a bridge between themselves and the public. Future research should include the creation of instructional materials that could be used by emergency managers and community leaders to be more adequately trained and prepared to respond and recover from a future disaster event.

Conclusion

This study has proven to be a significant first step in better understanding a community's efforts to recover, rebuild, and move forward toward renewal using narrative analysis. The data and analysis of this research project and case study lays the foundation for improvements in disaster recovery management communication strategies and the understanding of crisis narratives and renewal. The story of Mayfield is unique to one place but is also a broader story of a community's recovery and renewal after a disaster that could be told in any town or city across this country.

First, the hope is to return to Mayfield to continue the longitudinal study of their disaster recovery process and to see them reach their full potential toward renewal. Second, is the hope that this research spurs on other risk and crisis researchers to conduct similar work, in other communities, so that this research may continue to be explored and extended. Third, and last, the hope is that this research can lay the foundation for future research to make communities safer, more prepared, and more capable of finding renewal after a natural disaster.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

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UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board
FWA00000351
IRB00001138, IRB00012110
Office of Research
12201 Research Parkway
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

June 21, 2023

Dear Rebecca Freihaut:

On 6/21/2023, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	The Study of Crisis Narratives Over Time: Mayfield, KY in the Aftermath of the December 2021 Tornadoes
Investigator:	Rebecca Freihaut
IRB ID:	STUDY00005683
Funding:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• HRP-251 - FORM - Faculty Advisor Scientific-Scholarly Review Freihaut signed.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval; • Data Analysis Explanation.docx, Category: Test Instruments; • HRP-250 - FORM - Request for NHSR Freihaut.docx, Category: IRB Protocol

The IRB determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination. You can create a modification by clicking **Create Modification / CR** within the study.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Coker
UCF IRB

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First Interview, June 2022

1) Could you tell me your full name?
2) Tell me a little about yourself.
3) Where and when were you born (if not Mayfield: When did you move to Mayfield? and/or What brought you to Mayfield?
4) What type of work do/did you do? (or a family member if their move to Mayfield was because of a job opportunity)
5) Could you talk about your family connections in Mayfield and surrounding areas? (If not: Where are your ancestors originally from?)
6) Could you tell me a little about your community (growing up or after moving to Mayfield)?
7) Tell me about your neighborhood growing up/after moving to Mayfield?
8) Do you mind sharing the traditions you have that are connected to Mayfield? (if yes: How does your family still continue to carry on family traditions?
9) Thinking about the tornadoes of December 10, 2021 that impacted Mayfield, could you tell me your memories of that day? (follow up questions when needed for clarification)
10) What role did you play, if any, in the recovery effort after the tornado?
11) How have these events impacted you and/or your family personally?
12) How have you processed the events of December 10, or do you believe you're still processing the reality of what happened?

13) How have these events impacted your community?
14) Were there any organizations that stand out as being especially helpful after the tornado? This can be federal, state, local, or non-profit organizations.
15) Share with me if and how you believe Mayfield will move forward in the short term? Long term?
16) Is there anything else we haven't discussed that you would like to share?

Second (Follow-up) Interview, May 2023

1) Could you tell me your full name?
2) I know you shared your story with me last summer about the tornado events of December 10, 2021 that impacted Mayfield, would you mind telling me again about your memories of that day? (follow up questions when needed for clarification)
3) What role did you play, if any, in the recovery effort after the tornado since we last met?
4) How have you processed the events of the tornado, or do you believe you're still processing the reality of what happened?
5) When thinking back on the events of the tornado, could you talk with me about how you obtained up-to-date information as the recovery began and continued? (Possible follow up question: what individuals, groups or particular news source do you trust to provide information?)
6) Could you talk with me about how the community has been impacted from the tornado since the last time we spoke in June of 2022?

7) How have the tornado events impacted you and/or your family personally since last summer when we last spoke?
8) How, if at all, have the tornado events of December 2021 changed the way you think about weather events? (Possible follow up question: How, if at all has it changed the way you prepare or take action?)
9) Have there been any organizations that stand out as being especially helpful in the long-term recovery after the tornado? This can be federal, state, local, or non-profit organizations.
10) Share with me if and/or how you believe Mayfield will move forward in the short term?
11) What do you envision the community of Mayfield looking like in the long term?
12) Is there anything else we haven't discussed that you would like to share?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR METEROLOGIST

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR METEOROLOGIST

First Interview, June 2022:

1) Could you please tell me your full name?
2) Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?
3) Could you tell me a little bit about how long your family has lived in this area?
4) Could you tell me how you got into the area of owning your own company within the field of meteorology?
5) Thinking about the tornado events of December 10, 2021 that impacted Mayfield, could you tell me your memories of that day?
6) What role did you play, if any, in the recovery effort?
7) Could you walk me through the process of how you believe these events have impacted both you, professionally, and also your colleagues?
8) And then, was there a point for you, personally, after the events where you had time to reflect and process what had happened and deal with it on a personal level?
9) Were any of your friends or family members personally impacted by the tornadoes?
10) How do you believe the events of that night impacted the larger community?
11) And then, when you're thinking about the way that weather is communicated to the general public, and maybe even to other sectors like the agricultural sector, do believe there will be changes weather will be communicated moving forward in both the shot term? (Follow up: What is your hope for the long term?)
12) Is there anything else we have not discussed that you would like to share?

Second Interview (Meteorologist), in May of 2023:

1) Could you please share your full name?
2) I know you shared your story with me last summer about the tornado events of December 10, 2021 that impacted Mayfield. Would you mind telling me again your memories of that day?
3) And then could you share what role you played, if any, in the recovery effort after the tornado initially, and then if you've participated in the recovery effort since we last talked.
4) Do you believe that at this point, we're almost to the 1.5 year mark since the tornado, that you've processed the events of the tornado? Or do you believe your still processing the reality of what happened that night?
5) If you think back on the events of the tornado, could you talk with me about how you obtained up-to-date information as the recovery began and continued?
6) Could you also talk with me about- this could be about the community as a whole or in your role as a meteorologist- about how the community has been impacted from the tornado since we last spoke in June of 2022?
7) And then if you could talk with me about how the tornado events impacted you and/or your family personally since we spoke last summer.
8) Are there any organizations that stand out as being especially helpful in the long-term recovery after the tornado? This could be federal, state, local, or non-profit organizations.

9) Has the tornado event changed the way that you and/or the community think about tornado events? For example, many of the new construction properties are now being automatically outfitted with storm shelters, and people in some cases are choosing to build storm shelters who didn't previously have them. So maybe in addition to talking about personally how it's changed the way you think, you could talk also about the community- how it's changed or how you believe it should change the way people prepare or take action for weather events.
10) If you don't mind sharing with if and/or how you believe Mayfield will move forward in the short term- so the next six to twelve months.
11) If you could envision a Mayfield of the future, or in the long-term, what would your hope for Mayfield be?
12) Is there anything else we have not discussed that you would like to share?

APPENDIX D: CODEBOOK

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Codebook

Narratives of Crisis:

Victim (code in orange): suffering and recovery of an individual; the feeling of innocence and vulnerability of a person, group of people or organization; those impacted by circumstances largely or entirely beyond their control

Blame (code in blue): accusations of a third party (an individual, organization or group)

Hero (code in green): an attempt to save others from harm while potentially putting themselves at risk; choosing to help others as a civic service or volunteer without expecting recognition or gain; can be citizens, 1st responders, or community leaders

Renewal (code in yellow): generally retrospective in nature; can include themes of growth, learning, rebirth, restoration, rebuilding, recovery, improvement, and the idea of becoming better and stronger

Memorial (code in purple): preserving the memory of victims and/or the loss of other things important to the individual and/or community (historic buildings, homes, livelihoods, community traditions, a sense of community, etc.); teaching lessons learned (the learner becoming the educator)

Mention of Elements of Discourse of Renewal (code in pink):

organizational learning- allowing learned vulnerabilities and corrective plans for the future to be visible to the community.

ethical communication- honest, moral, and ethical communication

prospective rather than retrospective vision- forward-looking with a focus on social responsibility and rebuilding together as a community. Addresses the needs of stakeholders.

effective organizational rhetoric- communicating adequately and effectively with the community, confidently using messaging that inspires, and motivates and empowers stakeholders as they move forward.

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