

PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

---

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

---

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

---

by

REBECCA A. MOORE

Dr. Timothy J. Wall, Dissertation Supervisor

JULY 2020

PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled:

A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND  
ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

presented by Rebecca A. Moore

a candidate for the degree of doctor of education

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, is worthy of acceptance.

---

Dr. Timothy Wall

---

Dr. Nissa Ingraham

---

Dr. Linda Gray Smith

---

Dr. Shelly Hiatt

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, my teachers, my closest friends, my students, and my colleagues, who have always seen the potential in me to live out my dreams. Aspiring to impact the field of early childhood education through my personal and professional work, I credit their unwavering support for fulfilling my passion.

Additionally, I would like to dedicate this work to all early childhood teachers and administrators supporting young children exposed to trauma. Your continued work and selflessness to positively impact the most vulnerable children does not go unnoticed.

To my family, I would like to thank my first teachers: my parents, Mel and Cindy. As a first generation college student, we navigated through the world of academics together. Things were far from easy but their continued support through my desire to quit reminded me I was capable of big things. My loving and most supportive best friend who never turned his back on me is my husband, Dave. You have stood by me, you pushed me, you cared for our children, and you were my biggest cheerleader. Our children, Connor and Raelyn, you will always be worth fighting for. Despite my absence, long days, and constant guilt, I hope that you always remember through perseverance and setbacks you can achieve your dreams. Always remembering your education is the one thing no one can take away from you.

To my colleagues, you are the hardest working individuals I know. Your daily inspiration, check-ins, words, and gifts of encouragement helped push me to the finish line. To my students, thank you for understanding I was a student too and providing encouragement. To Cohort 11, my group 2C and 4B teams, and the Southeast and Northwest Missouri Ed.D cohorts, I feel blessed to have been able to learn alongside you,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

form friendships, and go on this journey with each of you. You have inspired me, and I am forever grateful for each of you. I am a better person, educator, and leader having been a part of the University of Missouri Columbia Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Program. A wise man (my dad) once told me, “You gotta have heart in all that you do.” I gave it everything I had, Dad, and allowed my heart to help me cross the finish line.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Timothy Wall, Dr. Nissa Ingraham, Dr. Linda Gray Smith, and Dr. Shelly Hiatt, for your continued support, guidance, expertise, and encouragement throughout this process. I appreciate you allowing me to share my passion with you despite the heaviness of my topic. I am a better scholar and professional having collaborated with you throughout this experience.

I would like to thank the Ed.D faculty who have influenced my work as a professional and helped me to see things differently during my time in the program. To Dr. Bret Cormier, for the countless articles and resources you sent me to build my literature review. I enjoyed our conversations and sharing the same passion for bringing awareness to young children exposed to trauma. To Dr. Amalia Dache, your dedication and passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion allowed me to become more aware and significantly influenced my work as a professional. To Dr. James Sebastian and Dr. Lee, thank you for minimizing my fear of statistics. To Dr. Sandy Hutchison and Dr. Nissa Ingraham, despite my nervousness beginning the program, your fluidity, high energy, excitement, and support during Summer One helped ease my worries. To Dr. Cindy MacGregor, I have a better perspective of organizational policy having learned from you. To Dr. Tim Wall, thanks for taking a chance on me to join the Northwest School of Education faculty. It is through this program and your belief in me that I made a leap of faith that advanced my professional career.

To the staff and behind the scene individuals within the Ed.D program at the University of Missouri Columbia and Northwest Missouri State University, I appreciate your continued guidance and effective communication through this process.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... ii

LIST OF FIGURES ..... viii

ABSTRACT ..... ix

SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY ..... 1

Background of the Study ..... 1

    Trauma ..... 2

    Adverse Childhood Experiences ..... 3

Statement of the Problem ..... 6

Purpose of the Study ..... 6

Research Questions ..... 6

Theoretical Framework ..... 7

    Bronfenbrenner’s human ecological systems theory ..... 7

        Microsystem. .... 9

        Mesosystem. .... 10

        Exosystem..... 10

        Macrosystem..... 10

        Chronosystem ..... 11

Conceptual Underpinnings..... 11

    Trauma in the United States ..... 11

    Trauma in the State of Missouri ..... 15

        Trauma-Informed School Initiative ..... 16

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Trauma-aware.....	18
Trauma-sensitive.....	19
Trauma-responsive.....	19
Trauma-informed.....	19
Trauma in Rural Northwest Missouri.....	20
Early childhood trauma.....	20
Design of the Study.....	21
Setting.....	22
Participants.....	23
Data Collection Tools.....	25
Data Analysis.....	27
Limitations.....	29
Assumptions.....	30
Design Controls.....	30
Definitions of Key Terms.....	30
Significance of the Study.....	35
Scholarship.....	35
Practice.....	35
Summary.....	36
SECTION TWO PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY.....	37
Introduction.....	37

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

History of the Organizations .....	38
Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) .....	38
Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP).....	39
Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA).....	41
Organizational Analysis.....	43
Structural Frame .....	44
Political Frame .....	50
Leadership Analysis.....	53
Situational Approach.....	53
Adaptive Leadership .....	55
Leader-Member Exchange Theory.....	55
Implications for Research in Practitioner Setting .....	56
Summary.....	58
SECTION THREE SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY .....	60
Introduction to the Problem .....	60
Theoretical Framework.....	60
Bronfenbrenner’s human ecological systems theory .....	60
Bronfenbrenner’s Education .....	61
Bronfenbrenner’s Focus .....	62
Bronfenbrenner’s Impact on Professionals .....	63
Microsystem .....	65

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Mesosystem.....	65
Exosystem .....	65
Macrosystem .....	66
Chronosystem.....	66
Conceptual Underpinnings.....	67
Trauma in the United States .....	67
Trauma in the State of Missouri.....	68
Trauma in Rural Northwest Missouri.....	70
Summary .....	74
SECTION FOUR CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE .....	75
Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution .....	75
Type of Document .....	75
Rationale for this Contribution Type .....	75
Outline.....	76
Presentation.....	77
SECTION FIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP .....	103
Target Journal .....	103
Rationale for this Target .....	103
Outline.....	103
Plan for Submission .....	104
Submission-Ready Article .....	105
SECTION SIX SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION .....	160

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

References.....	165
APPENDICES .....	186
APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL.....	187
APPENDIX B: SURVEY RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR ADMINISTRATORS.....	188
APPENDIX C: SURVEY RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR K – 3 TEACHERS.....	189
APPENDIX D: SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT .....	190
APPENDIX E: MISSOURI ELEMENTARY ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY .....	192
APPENDIX F: KINDERGARTEN - THIRD GRADE TEACHER SURVEY .....	196
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR PRINCIPALS.....	200
APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR K-3 TEACHERS.....	201
APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT.....	202
APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS .....	204
APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR K-3 TEACHERS.....	205
APPENDIX L: TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR DIFFERENCES.....	206
VITA.....	208

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figures

1. Figure 1. 10 types of Adverse Childhood Experiences
2. Figure 2. Adverse Childhood Experiences Pyramid
3. Figure 3. Bronfenbrenner's (1977), Human Ecological System Theory
4. Figure 4. Nationwide and Missouri Comparison of Adverse Childhood Experiences
5. Figure 5. Missouri Trauma Informed School Initiative
6. Figure 6. Data Collection Method
7. Figure 7. Missouri Association of School Administrators Organizational Chart (MASA)
8. Figure 8. Missouri Association for Elementary and Secondary Principals Organizational Chart (MAESP)
9. Figure 9. Missouri State Teachers Association Organizational Chart (MSTA)
10. Figure 10. Differences between teachers and administrators

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this bounded case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was to add to the existing research literature on early childhood trauma in addition to understanding teacher and administrator perceptions on students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools from 2009 through 2019. Survey participants ( $n=31$ ), consisting of kindergarten through third grade teachers and elementary administrators completed surveys on their perceptions of students' ACEs within their school districts. Interview participants ( $n=11$ ), consisting of kindergarten through third-grade teachers and elementary principals, shared their perceptions and lived experiences of students' ACEs.

Teachers and administrators noticed the most adverse childhood experiences K – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade children in rural Missouri elementary schools were exposed to include: (a) divorce, (b) substance abuse, (c) mental illness, (d) physical abuse, and (e) emotional neglect. Three themes emerged from the study: (1) the family system included household dysfunction that may include impactful events such as divorce, substance abuse, and mental illness (2) increase of teachers' and administrators' awareness of trauma, and (3) resources and supports. Teachers and administrators noticed an increase in continued trauma perceived to be because of unstable family conditions systems described by Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1970) human ecological systems theory as the microsystem.

Suggested implications for teachers, administrators included: (1) an increase of teacher and administrator awareness of trauma, (2) trauma-informed training opportunities through the Missouri Trauma Informed School Initiative for teachers and administrators, (3) a curriculum focus on children's social emotional development, (4)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

additional youth mental health resources and support for families and school district personnel, and (5) developing and implementing a mentor program partnering teachers and administrators with families in crisis. Additionally, results from the study could aid in helping the MASA, MAESP, and MSTA consider new evidence related to student trauma in rural public elementary schools. This may lead to an opportunity for these professional organizations to review their structures in order to collaborate to create a more robust and meaningful dialogue about childhood trauma. These educational discussions may lead to compelling evidence suggesting adjustments in legislation to support children impacted by adverse childhood experiences.

**SECTION ONE**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

**Background of the Study**

A foster mother called a childcare center at 8:00 a.m. seeking immediate care for a three-year-old girl placed in her home a few hours prior. The childcare director scheduled an appointment, and the foster parents and girl arrived to visit. A pale little girl held tightly to her foster mother, whom she just had met hours before. The director walked them around the facility, and a preschool teacher stopped to talk to the three-year-old. The teacher interacted with her while the director talked with the foster parents.

The child lived in 15 residences in her first three years of life. Adults would come in and out of the house to purchase and to use drugs. For the girl, going to the closet and putting her hands over her ears was a norm when police arrived. She was removed from the home when her mother was incarcerated, and the girl was terrified of police officers. She experienced panic attacks from the sight of a police car or officer in uniform. She had minimal visits with her dad, who was fading due to a brain tumor and did not remember who she was.

As a result of the exposure to neglect and substance abuse, some concerns the foster parents noticed were the child's lack of impulse control, rationalization, and violent behaviors. The child care center director stated there was an opening in the preschool classroom, and she could start tomorrow. A meeting was scheduled with the director, preschool teacher, and foster parents to set up a plan to ensure adequate support was in place for her. She continued enrollment in the childcare program for two years and

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

remained with her foster parents for 18 months until she was adopted in 2018. This child's story is one of many children in the United States who have experienced trauma.

### **Trauma**

It has been important to understand children's health development across the lifespan through the lens of early childhood trauma and prolonged stress linked to adverse childhood experiences (Bethell, Newacheck, Hawes, & Halfon, 2014). The impact of young children exposed to trauma has been a costly public health issue (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014) that reached beyond children and created consequences for families, communities, neighborhoods, and schools (Sacks & Murphey, 2018). Trauma has had no boundaries (SAMHSA, 2014). Lewis and Ippen (2004) stated what constituted trauma was a phenomenon defined by culture. Cultural context and practices around the world shape how individual's reacted to trauma exposure and provided meaning to the lived experience (Lewis & Ghosh-Ippen, 2004).

The concept of trauma emerged through the field of mental health (SAMHSA, 2014). This research study utilized SAMHSA's definition of trauma, which emphasized the "three E's of trauma," (1) event(s), (2) experience of the event(s), and (3) effect. As SAMHSA (2014) stated:

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, and that have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (p. 7)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences**

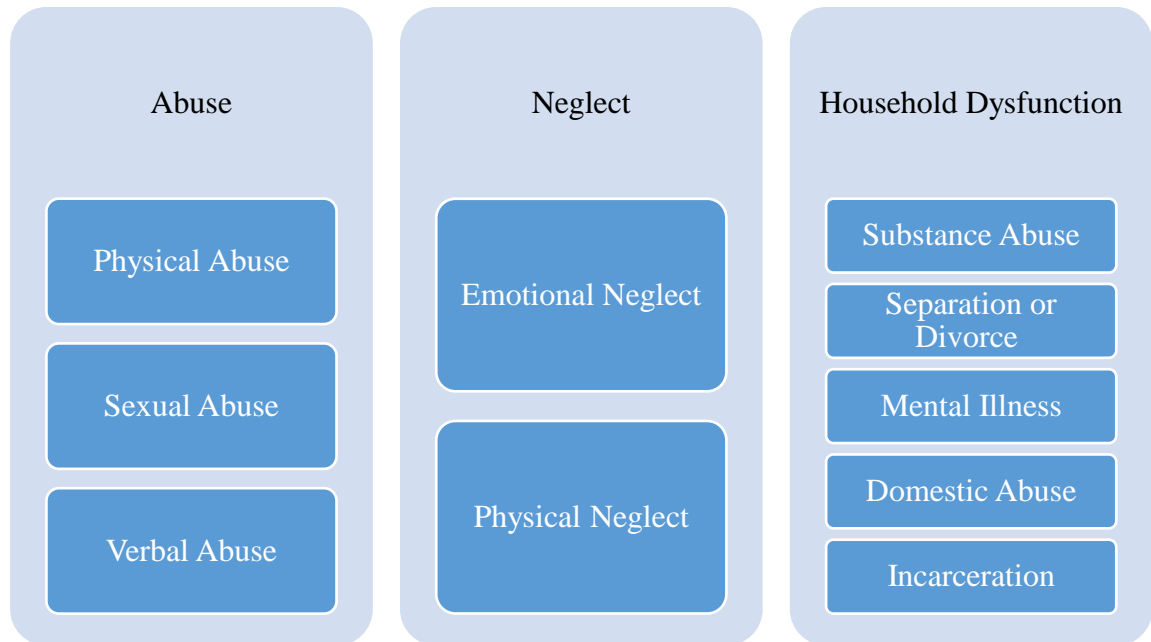
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was a term coined by Dr. Felitti and Dr. Anda in 1995. The term adverse childhood experiences was defined by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as abuse, neglect, or traumatic experiences an individual encounters before the age of 18 (CDC, 2019). The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study was one of the most extensive investigations ever implemented to evaluate connections between childhood maltreatment, health, and well-being (Stevens, 2012).

The ACEs questionnaire was a 10-item self-reporting questionnaire that identified childhood exposure to abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (see Figure 1) before the age of 18 (Burke-Harris, 2014). To obtain an ACE score, participants answered yes to the questions that were true and received a point (Felitti, 2016; Burke-Harris, 2014). Individuals' ACE score ranged between Zero – 10, depending on the number of true responses (Felitti, 2016; Burke-Harris, 2014). The ACEs questionnaire originated following Felitti and Anda's (2016) work with 17,337 middle aged Americans. Participants underwent a physical examination and completed the ACE questionnaire to determine the correlation between adverse childhood experiences and both physical and mental health outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998).

Findings indicated that 40% of participants had been exposed to two or more types of adverse childhood experiences, and 12.5% reported having experienced at least four types of trauma (Felitti et al., 1998). Beyond the original scope of the study, Felitti and Anda (1998) found the results were significant and showed a direct link between the ACE questionnaire and adult chronic illness, depression, suicide, and domestic violence.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Findings showed that the higher the ACE score was, the more increase in health-related complications (Felitti et al., 1998). These findings helped support the need for this research study by understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' exposure to adverse childhood experiences. Figure 1 illustrated the 10 types of adverse childhood experiences included in the ACEs questionnaire (Felitti, et al., 1998).

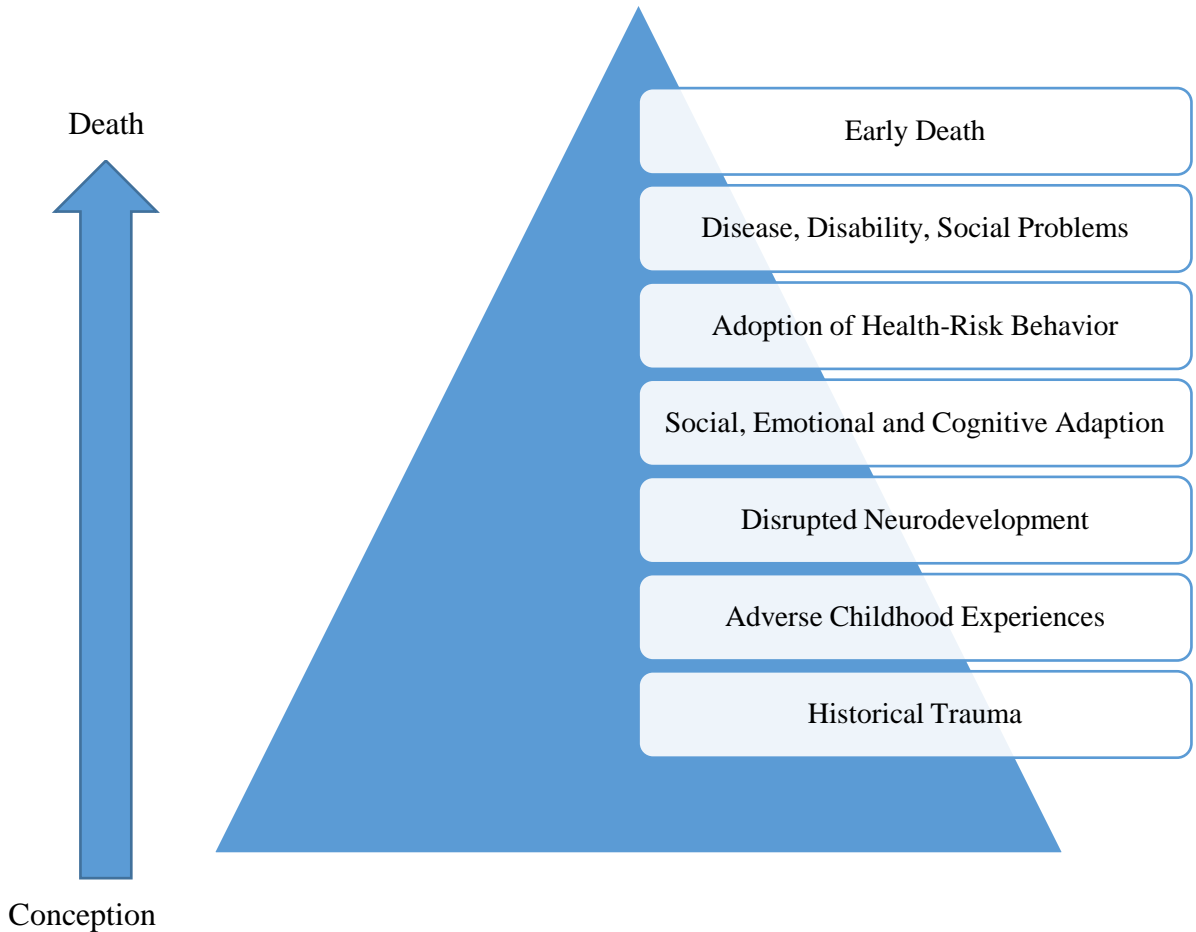


*Figure 1.* A chart displaying the 10 types of adverse childhood experiences measured in the ACE questionnaire (Felitti, 2016).

The ACEs questionnaire consisted of three categories: (1) abuse, (2) neglect, and (3) household dysfunction, which described the 10 types of adverse childhood experiences, according to Felitti (2016). The category of abuse consisted of physical, sexual, and verbal abuse (Felitti, 2016). Emotional and physical neglect comprised the category of neglect within the ACE questionnaire (Purewal et al., 2016). The last category of household dysfunction was comprised of substance abuse, parental separation or divorce, mental illness, domestic abuse, and incarceration (Felitti, 2016; Purewal et al., 2016).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The pyramid seen in Figure 2 (CDC, 2019) represented the ACEs framework for how exposure to ACEs can impact an individual's life from conception until death. The health related outcomes, as seen in Figure 2, were non-sequential (CDC, 2019); however, adverse childhood experiences that happened at the beginning of children's lives increased the likelihood of life-long risks (CDC, 2019).



*Figure 2.* A recreated representation of how adverse childhood experiences can impact an individual's development throughout their life spans (CDC, 2019).

The health-related outcomes of exposure to adverse childhood experiences, as seen in Figure 2, may have ensued immediately or occurred over the life spans (SAMSHA, 2014). Outcomes may have impacted individual's health short term or may have been elongated over time, resulting in lifelong risks (SAMSHA, 2014).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of practice was the lack of information on teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools. While there was some research about national and Missouri trends, information specific to the rural-based county was not yet available.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative, bounded case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was to add to the existing research on early childhood trauma in addition to improving understanding of teacher and administrator perceptions on students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools from 2009 through 2019.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question guiding this qualitative bounded case study was: What are teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third-grade classrooms from 2009 - 2019? Supporting research questions included:

(RQ1): What are administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 to 2019?

(RQ2): What are teacher perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 to 2019?

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

(RQ3): Is there a difference between teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 to 2019?

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecological Systems Theory**

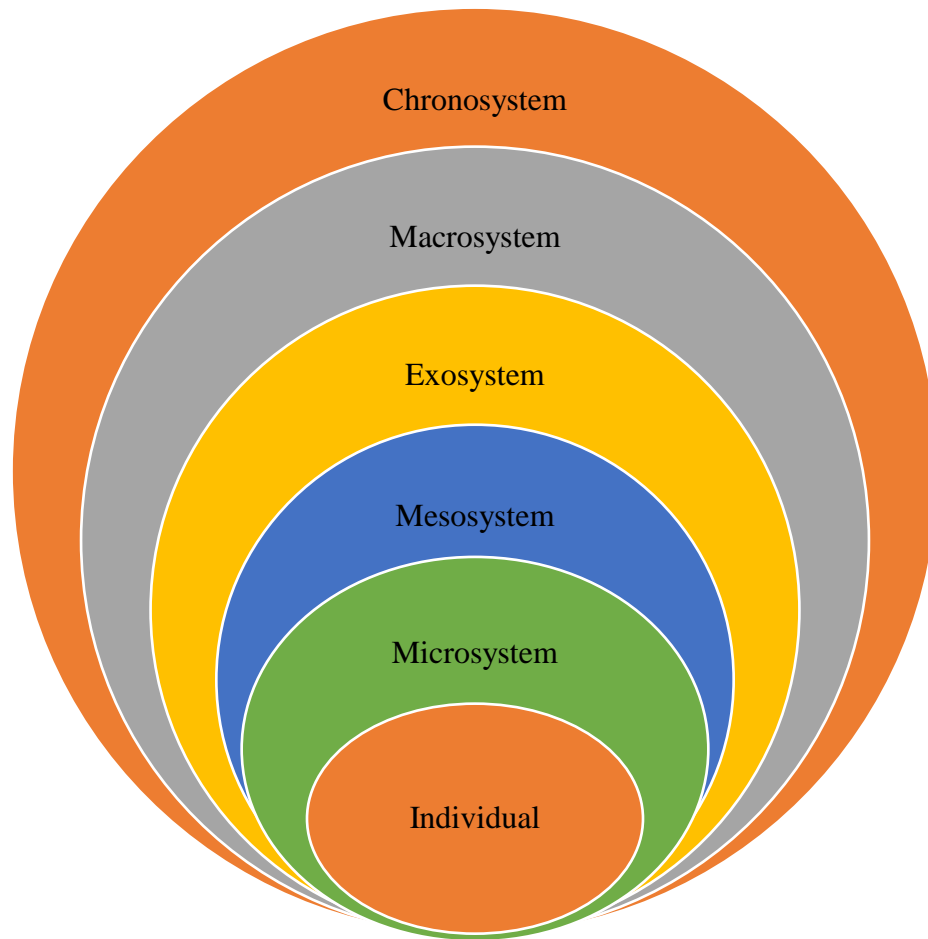
It has been critical that teachers understood how to address students' trauma in their classrooms (Reker, 2016), since nearly half of all children in the United States experienced at least one adverse childhood experience throughout their lifetimes (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, 2013). The literature and research was limited on teachers' knowledge and confidence in providing support for exposed children (Reker, 2016).

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Urie Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The human ecological systems theory emphasized the biological, social, and cultural impact upon individuals' lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The theory helped to explain how children's innate qualities and their environments directly influenced growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The theory stressed the significance of examining children's environments to attempt to understand development. The model was organized into five levels of external influence categorized from the most intimate to the broadest external impact (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified five subsystems in his human ecological systems theory: (1) microsystem (2) mesosystem (3) exosystem (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem. These subsystems helped to describe how an individual develops within

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

the human ecological systems theory by looking at culture, lifestyle, change, and consistency (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The five subsystems provided a lens for understanding students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) within the research study. To fully understand how children developed looking beyond the child and immediate surroundings and viewing the broader environment was imperative (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Individuals' immediate and broader environments, the impact of relationships, communication, and decision making affected development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Figure 3 illustrated the relationship between Bronfenbrenner's five subsystems and how the systems influenced individual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).



*Figure 3.* Representation adapted from Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) five subsystems of the Human Ecological Systems Theory: Microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem and how these systems impacted the holistic development of an individual.

Bronfenbrenner’s human ecological systems theory was a layered system, as shown in Figure 3, which identified the environmental and societal impacts that influenced individual interactions. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized, the path of a person’s development often was the result of the effects of an individual’s surroundings.

**Microsystem.** The first system of the human ecological systems theory identified was microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The structure of this system consisted of an individual's immediate surroundings, such as events, social roles, and interpersonal relationships that formed within the family, school system, neighborhoods, and peer

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

relationships (Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Further refining this system included people closest to the individuals, such as parents, siblings, teachers, and friends (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Within the microsystem, children developed habits and learned by observing, experiencing, and interacting within the relationships they built (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Essential components of the microsystem were bidirectional influences and the impact relationships had both towards and away from children (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

**Mesosystem.** The second system was known as the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem consisted of two-way communication and decision-making between two microsystem components (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers and parents working together for the best interest of children was an example of how the mesosystem impacted children's development (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Analyzing the strength within two microsystems was essential as to not contradict, confuse the child, or provide misleading expectations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Exosystem.** The exosystem was the third system in the human ecological systems theory and involved the influences that indirectly affected children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Indirect influences, such as parents' places of employment, families, social systems, and neighborhoods, were likely to impact children's development (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Also, indirect influences, such as the local community, health, social service policies, and media, could have influenced development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Macrosystem.** The fourth system was the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem involved many different groups, such as children's culture, social

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

classes, ethnic groups, family beliefs, customs, religious traditions, lifestyles, and resources, available to the children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Over time, the macrosystem changed and impacted the children's morals and opportunities in their lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Chronosystem.** The last and largest system within the human ecological systems theory was known as the chronosystem. The changes or consistency taking place over time and impacting children's development, such as the families' socioeconomic statuses, places of residence, and the chaotic or simplistic everyday lives, explained the chronosystem (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). This system was chronological and consisted of the continuity or changes in the pattern of individuals' social interactions, such as friendships, conflicts, and responsibilities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The researcher further refined Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory by looking at trauma through three conceptual underpinnings.

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

The researcher utilized literature related to three conceptual underpinnings to provide support for the framework. Trauma was viewed through the following lenses: (a) United States, (b) the state of Missouri, and (c) Rural Northwest Missouri. The subsequent concept of early childhood trauma was an additional conceptual underpinning that helped refine Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework.

### **Trauma in the United States**

Evidence has shown recently there has been an increase in the percentage of children exposed to trauma in the U.S. (National Survey of Children's Health, 2016). The 2016 National Survey of Children's Health reported 34 million children, almost half of all

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

United States children aged birth through 17, had at least one adverse childhood experience. More than 20% experienced two or more ACEs, while 35% of all children reported having experienced at least one ACE before entry into kindergarten (National Survey of Children's Health, 2016). Other findings from the CDC (2019) indicated ACEs were present in households of all races, socioeconomic, and educational levels. According to the Joining Forces for Children's Organization, (2019), 60% of children under the age of six years had witnessed domestic violence.

An effort to plan, to implement, and to evaluate a nationally recognized trauma-informed approach in the early 2000s was led by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) (Wilson, Fauci, & Goodman, 2015). The National Center for Trauma Informed Care (NCTIC) was formed in 2005 by SAMHSA and was designed to provide consultation and training for organizational leaders wanting to implement trauma-informed practices (Wilson et al., 2015).

Administrators in trauma-informed schools prepared teachers, school personnel, and mental health professionals to understand the prevalence of trauma, recognized the types and symptoms, and utilized programming interventions that helped alleviate re-victimization and provided student support (SAMHSA, 2014; Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013). Trauma-informed schools have been a nationwide movement to create educational environments responsive to the needs of traumatized youth through the implementation of trauma-informed strategies (Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet, & Santos, 2016). In 2015, 17 out of 50 states had established trauma-informed practices (Simon, Compton, & Overstreet, 2020). Additionally, in 2019, 45 out of 50 states

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

reported having information about trauma-informed schools and childhood trauma available on their department of education websites (Simon et al., 2020).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, n.d; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014) addressed seven significant elements of establishing a trauma-informed school system:

1. Screen routinely for trauma exposure and symptoms.
2. Implement culturally appropriate, evidence-based assessments and treatments for traumatic stress and symptoms.
3. Provide resources to children, families, and providers on trauma, its impact, and treatment options.
4. Build on the strengths of children and families impacted by trauma.
5. Address parent and caregiver trauma.
6. Collaborate across child-serving systems to coordinate care.
7. Support staff by minimizing and treating secondary traumatic stress, which can lead to burnout.

The first potential identification point of student trauma related to the education system. Schools lacked resources to provide mental health screenings and programs to support the most vulnerable students (Ko et al., 2008). The challenge has become a balance between the mission of education and helping students who were experiencing traumatic stress (Ko et al., 2008). A study conducted by Alisic (2012) found that although some teachers expressed confidence in working with children, there was uncertainty and an internal struggle with being able to provide support for children exposed to traumatic events. Consequently, Ciuffetelli, Grenville, and Flessa (2011) found schools were

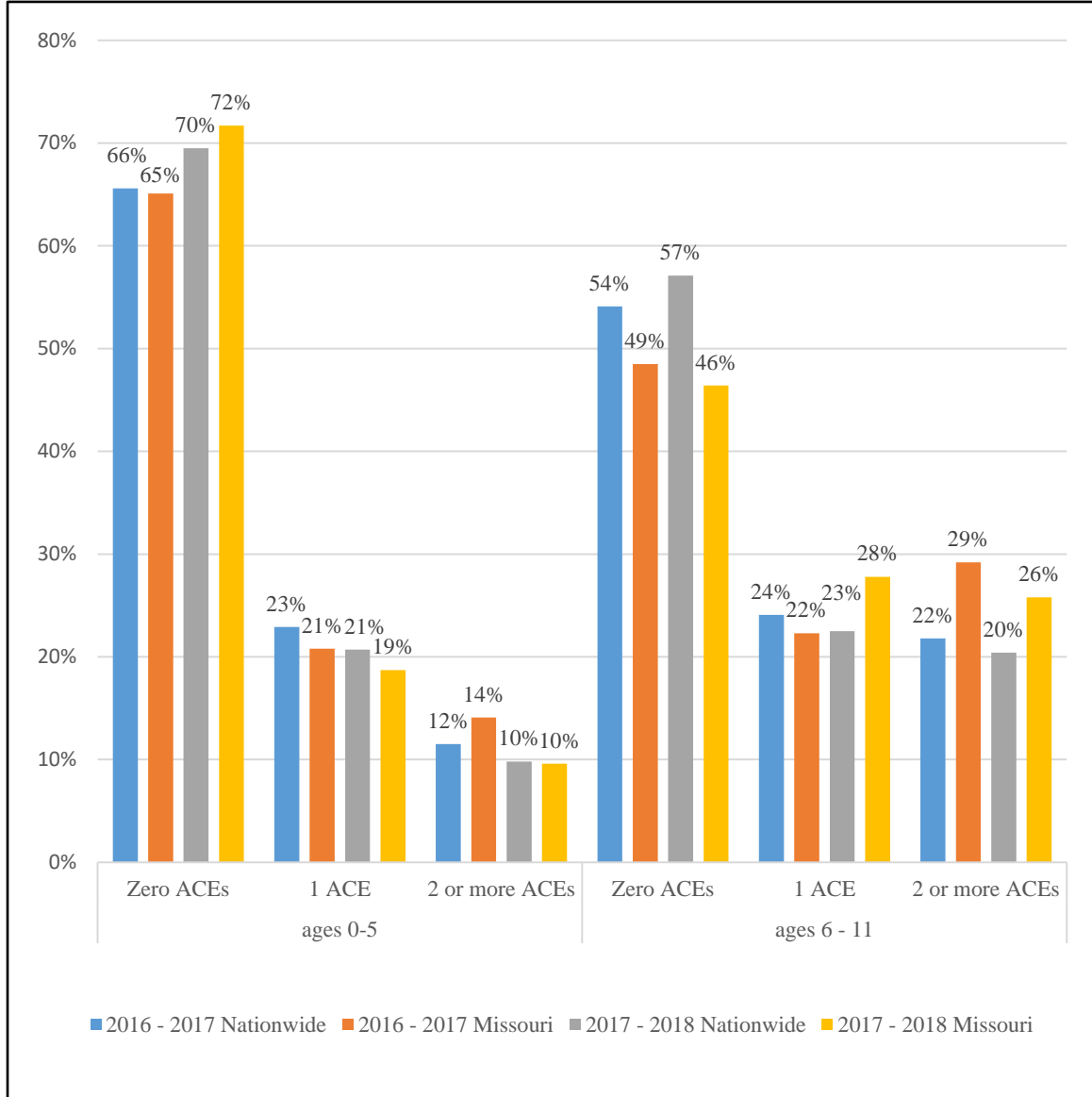
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

meeting the challenges of supporting children exposed to adverse childhood experiences by developing caring, collaborative school environments where all students felt heard and welcomed (Anderson, Blitz, & Saastamoinen, 2015; Capizzi & DaFonte, 2012). School officials have been putting forth efforts to seek best practices to implement strategies that aided in reducing negative health effects to help children thrive despite adverse childhood experiences (Bethell, Davis, Gombojav, Stumbo, & Powers, 2017).

To support children exposed to adverse childhood experiences teachers needed a range of knowledge (Chafouleas et al., 2016). Education laws, federal legislation, and school support program initiatives provided elements and opportunities for school districts to receive funding and grants that supported the development of trauma-informed services (Ko et al., 2008).

Thus, the research study viewed trauma through the national, state of Missouri, and Nodaway County lenses. Figure 4 recreated from the National Survey of Children's Health (2016) most updated data was a comparison of the percentage of children aged birth to 11 years exposed to adverse childhood experiences nationwide in comparison to the state of Missouri from 2016 to 2017 and 2017 to 2018.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 4.* A comparison of the percentage of children aged birth - 11 exposed to adverse childhood experiences Nationwide in comparison to Missouri from 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018.

### Trauma in the State of Missouri

According to the National Survey of Children's Health from 2015 to 2016, the state of Missouri reported 27% of children (362,000 children) had two or more adverse childhood experiences, which surpassed the national average of 21.7% (Martinez, 2017).

The State of Missouri ranked as the fourth highest state in the nation in the number of

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

children exposed to two or more adverse experiences (National Kids Count Data Center, 2016). It was important to recognize trauma in the state of Missouri, as this researcher sought to understand teachers' and principals' perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural Northwest Missouri.

Adverse childhood experiences have led to adversities, including trauma and stress that have impacted children's brain development (Bethell et al., 2017). Adverse childhood experiences also have affected children's social, emotional, physical, mental, behavioral health, and well-being (Bethell et al., 2017). It was critical for teachers and principals to understand the severity of the developmental impact caused by adverse childhood experiences (RV- Banks & Meyer, 2017). A study conducted by Bethell et al. (2014) found children were 2.67 times more likely to repeat a grade in school if they experienced two or more ACEs and were less engaged in the classroom than their peers with no exposure.

**Trauma-Informed School Initiative.** The Trauma-Informed School Initiative, as described by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE, 2019), has been an approach that involved school personnel understanding, recognizing, and responding to the symptoms of student trauma. The Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed School Initiative has been a paradigm shift that has developed over time by implementing school support systems through a continuum; see Figure 5 (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014).

The Trauma-Informed School Initiative was developed after a three-year trauma-informed collaboration between professionals from five Missouri community mental health centers, the Division of Youth Services office, and the Missouri Department of

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

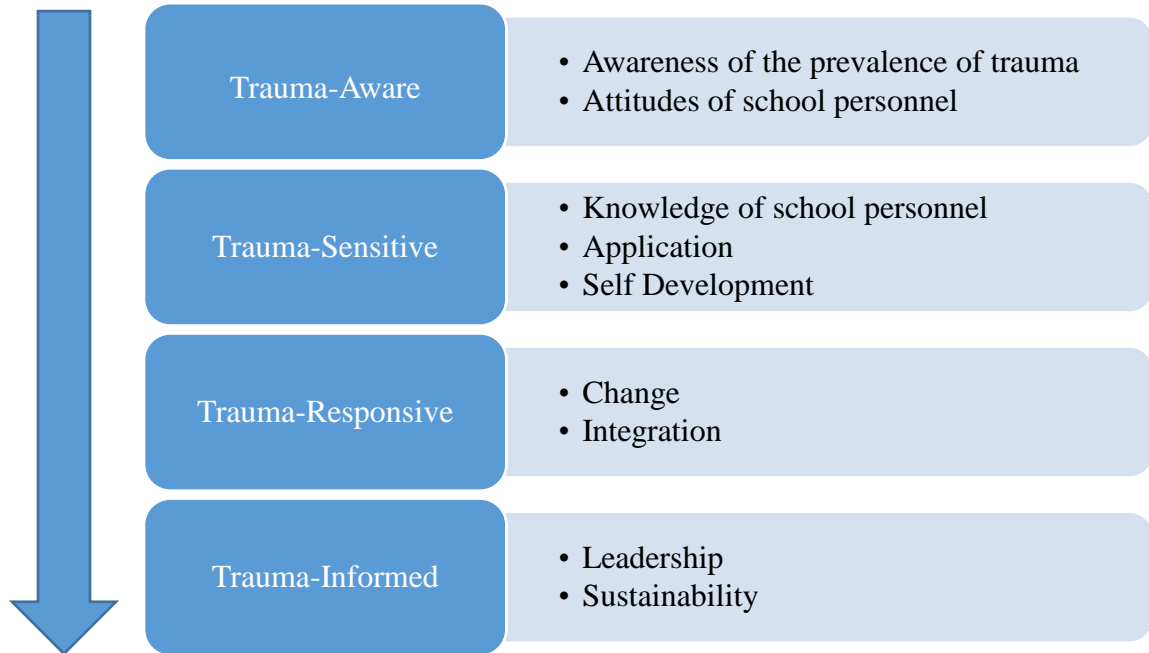
Mental Health (MODMH, 2020) (Carter & Blanch, 2019). A team of colleagues was involved in ongoing consultation and thorough training (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014). Upon completion of the three-year collaboration, the MODMH in 2020 assembled a discussion with other state of Missouri organizations that exhibited leadership in trauma (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

The State of Missouri has not mandated schools to become trauma-informed environments (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014). However, administrators and staff needed to be dedicated and intentional on making the decision to become trauma-informed schools (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014). Although many Missouri schools have chosen to become trauma-informed, the Missouri State Senate Bill 638 passed by Missouri Legislation in 2016 required the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) to provide information on becoming trauma-informed and to offer training to school personnel seeking to become trauma-informed on their websites as a resource for Missouri schools (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014).

A trauma-informed approach was defined as an approach that encompasses an understanding and response to signs of prolonged traumatic stress over a lifetime (MODESE, 2019). Schools that have been identified as trauma-informed have administrators and teachers who understand the following: (a) the impact of trauma on their students, (b) recognize signs of trauma in staff, teachers, and students, (c) seek to prevent re-traumatization, and (d) recognize paths for recovery (MODESE, 2019). The Missouri Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative was a four-step approach that allowed school district officials to learn strategies to becoming a trauma-informed school. The

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

four approaches, as seen in Figure 5, were: (a) trauma-aware, (b) trauma-sensitive, (c) trauma-responsive, and (d) trauma-informed (Missouri Model, 2014). Schools began the process by becoming trauma-aware and working towards becoming a trauma-informed school through implementing policies and procedures through resources offered by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019).



*Figure 5.* Representation of the Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative progression. A continuum for trauma-informed approaches (Missouri Model, 2014).

**Trauma-aware.** Administrators in trauma-aware organizations, as stated by the Missouri Model (2014), were aware that trauma existed in their schools and that trauma significantly impacted their students and staffs (Carter & Blanch, 2019). Trauma-aware staff defined trauma and held informal conversations with others (Carter & Blanch, 2019). (Carter & Blanch, 2019). Another characteristic has been that they were aware that organizational change occurred through training opportunities (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

**Trauma-sensitive.** Trauma-sensitive organizational leaders understood and identified principles of trauma-informed care: (a) safety, (b) choice, (c) collaboration, (d) trustworthiness, and (e) empowerment (Missouri Model, 2014). Staff valued instilling a trauma-informed approach within their organizations and implemented trauma-sensitive mission statements (Carter & Blanch, 2019). Also, the organization engaged in a self-assessment to identify strengths and barriers to change (Carter & Blanch, 2019). A trauma-sensitive team was formed within the organization to lead personnel through change, and leadership began to work with staff impacted by trauma (Missouri Model, 2014; Carter & Blanch, 2019).

**Trauma-responsive.** A trauma-responsive organization reviewed all policies and procedures and developed trauma supports for staff (Carter & Blanch, 2019). Processes were established to recognize and to respond to trauma while changing the culture of the organization (Missouri Model, 2014; Carter & Blanch, 2019). All levels within the organization integrated plans and took action toward self-care, staff development, staff performance, and practice (Missouri Model, 2014).

**Trauma-informed.** Trauma-informed approaches have been adopted throughout the entirety of the organization (Missouri Model, 2014). All staff members have been trained and the center focus within the organization was trauma-informed (Missouri Model, 2014; Carter & Blanch, 2019). The staff have become advocates of trauma-informed practices throughout the community and have measured the impact and success through clientele (Missouri Model, 2014). The organization hired employees with knowledge of trauma informed practices. Processes were put into place to review

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

dependability over time, and organizations and staff worked to eliminate the stigma of trauma (Missouri Model, 2014; Carter & Blanch, 2019).

The Missouri trauma-informed schools initiative has encouraged a shift in how educators and school districts understood trauma, increased services, and supported students (Missouri Model for Trauma-Informed Schools, 2014). The model was a continuum of four stages that organizations moved back and forth through over time as they began to comprehend and to address students' trauma (see Figure 5) (MODESE, 2019; Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014).

### **Trauma in Rural Northwest Missouri**

There has been a lack of information available on student trauma in rural Northwest Missouri, therefore, substantiating the need for this research study. An example of absence of information was found within various outreach programs and lack of information provided to assist families with trauma related issues (personal communication, 2020; Nodaway Children's Division, 2020).

### **Early Childhood Trauma**

The researcher provided insight into the early childhood trauma underpinning by focusing on children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the impact ACEs have had on children's learning, health, and development. Van der Kolk (2005) wrote that childhood trauma was the single most significant health challenge in the United States. Research by Van der Kolk (2005) found that most trauma occurred in the students' homes, reporting that nearly 80% of individuals responsible for mistreating children were the child's parents. DeYoung, Kenardy, and Cobham (2011) stated young children were the most vulnerable population. Children had limited coping skills and

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

were strongly dependent on their primary caregivers to protect them (DeYoung et al., 2011). Children did not have the capabilities to report, move away, or protect themselves from predators (DeYoung et al., 2011).

As psychiatrist Perry (2014) stated approximately five million children experienced some type of traumatic event in the U.S. every year. More than two million of these children were physical or sexual abuse victims (Perry, 2014). Although millions of young children were exposed to trauma each year, early childhood was the population largely neglected (DeYoung et al., 2011). A significant gap has remained in the research related to early childhood trauma and understanding how trauma impacts development over the children's lifespan (DeYoung et al., 2011). DeYoung et al. (2011) continued that there has been a societal stigma associated with diagnosing a young child with mental health issues because of limited availability of early childhood screening tools.

Consequently, young children exposed to abuse and neglect has increased illegal behaviors and adult misconduct overall by 29%, as discovered through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) research study (as cited in Wisdom & Maxfield, 2011). Risks factors for the leading causes of death, such as drug abuse, poor health, smoking, and suicide, were strongly linked to adverse childhood experiences (Anda et al., 2009) Each year more than 30,000 individuals died by suicide (Dube et al., 2001) Research led by Dube et al. (2001) found 67% of suicide attempts were directly related to traumatic childhood experiences (Dube et al., 2001).

### **Design of the Study**

The bounded case study (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) provided a detailed explanation and examination of trauma-informed schools in rural Northwest

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Missouri. Yin (2014) described a bounded case study as a study that investigated a current phenomenon (case) within a real-life setting (context). The researcher chose to utilize this design as the goal for the study was to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools from 2009 to 2019, while honoring the life experiences, professional wisdom, and unique voices of practitioners.

Three sources of data collection were used to validate results of the study (Creswell, 2014). Guided by Creswell (2014), a survey, semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013), and document analysis of school district websites were used for triangulation. Triangulation allowed the researcher to cross-validate and assess information from multiple sources of data to minimize limitations (Creswell, 2014).

### **Setting**

The data collected were from rural Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 12 elementary schools. Rural, as defined by Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, and Fields (2016), were areas not as well populated. The region was defined by farmlands, few housing options, and small town settlements (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). The researcher chose to use kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings as early intervention with young children was imperative to preventing long-term consequences (Shonkoff, 2009). Three rural Northwest counties were chosen for the study. The researcher chose these counties, because they were the three most Northwest regional counties in the state of Missouri. Survey data regarding administrators' and teachers' experiences with and knowledge of ACEs were gathered from Missouri kindergarten through third grade teachers and administrators from 12 elementary schools

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

located in the Northwest Missouri region (University of Missouri Extension, 2019). The teachers and administrators selected from the 12 schools were chosen based on the researcher's focus of the study.

Purposeful sampling was used for the study. The researcher used purposeful sampling when disseminating the survey to all Missouri elementary administrators and K-3 teachers in 12 elementary schools in the rural Northwest Missouri region. The researcher used purposeful sampling when contacting kindergarten through third grade teachers and principals from the 12 elementary schools to ask for their interest in participating in interviews with the researcher. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and/or telephone (Seidman, 2013). The researcher scheduled distant interviews with six K-3 teachers, and five principals and began to see saturation among the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling was utilized for website and document analysis of the 12 elementary schools located in the Northwest Missouri counties selected for the study.

### **Participants**

The participants in the study were Northwest Missouri elementary administrators and kindergarten through third grade teachers from rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools. Purposeful sampling, as described by Fink (2017), was selecting participants based on the purpose of the study and knowledge of the population. The researcher utilized purposeful sampling when sending a recruitment email (see Appendices B and G) prior to disseminating a survey via Survey Monkey to 23 Missouri elementary administrators (see Appendix E) and 62 teachers (see Appendix F) from the three Northwest counties' school districts chosen for the study (Fink, 2017).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Contact information for the Missouri schools' elementary administrators was obtained through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) School Directory on its website at <http://www.MODESE.mo.gov> and the 2019–2020 Missouri School Directory (Doerhoff, 2019) and the participating school districts websites. Contact information for Northwest Missouri K-3 teachers was obtained through their school districts websites.

The researcher utilized purposeful sampling when sending a recruitment email (see Appendices B and G) to 12 principals and 62 teachers (K-3) for interest in participating in an interview from the three Northwest counties chosen for the research study (Fink, 2017). The researcher interviewed five principals with a response rate of 42% ( $n=5$ ) and six teachers with a response rate of 9% ( $n=6$ ) via Zoom through the Internet and telephone.

Contact information for the Missouri schools elementary principals was obtained through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) School Directory on their website at <http://www.MODESE.mo.gov> and the 2019 – 2020 Missouri School Directory (Doerhoff, 2019), and participants' school district websites. Contact information for Northwest Missouri K-3 teachers was obtained through the school districts' website.

The methods, surveys, interview questions, and consent forms within the study were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri-Columbia to protect participants and support quality research protocol (see Appendix A). As such, survey and interview participants were provided forms that stated the potential risks and benefits of study participation and secured their informed consent, which

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

signified their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendices D and I). The researcher collected participants' emails agreeing to the interview process. This served as their informed consent. The following collection methods were used to provide the researcher with a holistic account of teacher and administrators perceptions of students' ACEs in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools from 2009 through 2019.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Fink (2017) noted surveys often have been used in research to obtain information such as background, perceptions, values, and demographic characteristics from the participants at specific points in time. This research used an electronic, cross-sectional survey. The survey was disseminated to 23 Missouri elementary administrators (see Appendix E) and 62 teachers kindergarten through third grade (see Appendix F) in 12 elementary schools located in the three rural Northwest counties chosen for the study via email distribution through Survey Monkey (Fink, 2017). In addition to the surveys, the researcher analyzed the 12 elementary school websites chosen for the study. The document analysis was completed to determine if the school districts had information on their websites pertaining to trauma-informed practices and approaches within their districts.

The researcher conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (see Appendices J and K) via Zoom and telephone that took approximately 40 minutes with Missouri principals and kindergarten through third grade teachers employed at 12 elementary schools in the three rural, Northwest Missouri counties chosen for the study until saturation was met (Seidman, 2013). Saturation, as defined by Seidman (2013), was when the researcher began to hear the same information from the participants. The

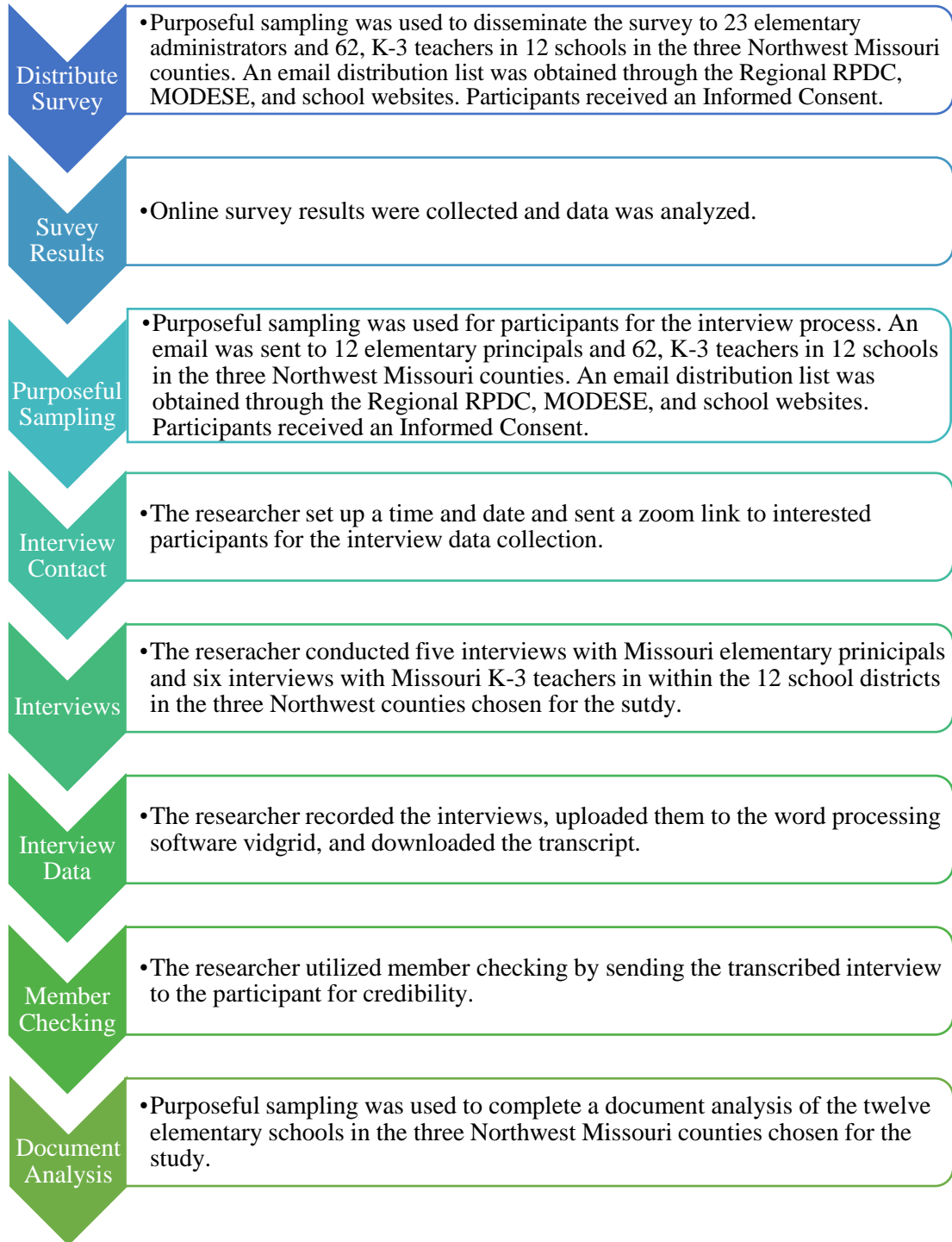
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

researcher chose to utilize interviews rather than focus groups so that participants were comfortable to express their perceptions honestly without feeling pressured by other participants.

The participants' interviews were recorded and transcribed (Seidman, 2013), using the Vidgrid word processing software in the CANVAS learning management course platform. To ensure interview credibility, the researcher utilized member checking, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Member checking occurred to support study validity. The researcher sent transcribed interviews to the participants and asked participants them to verify accuracy. The researcher received multiple responses confirming the accuracy of the transcripts.

The researcher engaged in triangulation for data quality by utilizing survey data, document analysis of the school district websites, and interviews of principals and teachers. An illustration of the data collection method the researcher used for the study was represented in Figure 6. This illustration described the step-by-step process supporting data collection. As seen in Figure 6, the data collection process and analysis of the data occurred in a tiered system, allowing the researcher to disseminate the survey to participants, to complete a document analysis of the school websites, and to conduct Zoom and telephone interviews. The researcher continued data collection until saturation was reached (Seidman, 2013).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 6.* The methodology of the research study was represented through the progression of data collection and data analysis.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher completed a document analysis of the 12 elementary schools. Information on their websites related to trauma-informed awareness, trauma-informed resources to families, and engagement in trauma-informed approaches was documented by the researcher through published school websites. Once interviews were completed and transcribed, the data were organized, sorted, and coded (Fink, 2017). A qualitative codebook was used. Creswell (2014) defined a qualitative codebook as a table of predetermined codes, making it easier for the researcher to code the data. The codebook allowed the researcher to establish categories and maximize coherent patterns and themes (Creswell, 2014). Figure 6 provided further explanation of the data collection process for the research study.

The researcher utilized a constant comparative method for data analysis first developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) to make sense of the data collected. The constant comparative method allowed the researcher to understand the data by arranging material into common categories and themes for interpretation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Axial coding, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a qualitative research technique that connected data by categories and subcategories was used to help interpret the interview transcripts.

Descriptive statistical analysis from the survey began once the researcher received a 48% ( $n=11$ ) administrator response rate and 32% ( $n=20$ ) teacher response rate was obtained. According to Field (2018), a 30% minimum survey response rate retrieval allowed for valid data collection. Analysis of the school districts' websites and descriptive statistics were used to help inform survey and interview results. The evidence

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

from the document analysis of the websites showed minimal trauma-informed resources and approaches available to families. Thus, these findings were similar to participants reporting their perceptions of the lack of supports and resources available to assist children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. A review of the 12 school district websites revealed seven schools provided hotline numbers for reporting child abuse and neglect. Six schools had a counselor's page with minimal resources for families, such as social emotional videos, bullying prevention, suicide prevention, and mindfulness resources. One school district provided the link to the Missouri Model Trauma-Informed School Initiative. There was no website that listed robust trauma-informed resources.

### **Limitations**

Due to the nature of the qualitative research study, participant responses were limited to their perceptions and experiences. There was a chance the participants of the study were dishonest with the researcher in fear of embarrassing the schools or school districts where they were employed; however, the researcher ensured confidentiality of information through the survey and interview informed consents (see Appendices D and I). The chance participants were dishonest may have hindered the ability to trust the findings of this study. Another limitation was that the participants may not have had the knowledge of early childhood trauma, and there could have been a variance in the administrators' and teachers' understanding of trauma. Additionally, the COVID-19 Pandemic during the time of the research study may have limited survey and interview participation as data was being collected at the same time teachers and administrators were transitioning to online distance learning.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Assumptions**

In the research study, the researcher assumed the participants were forthcoming with the researcher, providing accurate information in the survey and responded throughout the interviews. The assumption that early childhood principals and teachers selected for the study had an understanding of early childhood trauma was another assumption.

### **Design Controls**

The researcher chose to exclude Missouri elementary principals and early childhood teachers who were located outside of the three Northwest Missouri counties selected for the study, as the focus of the research study was on teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings. The researcher was only interested in studying teacher and administrator perceptions of the students in these chosen demographics, therefore, eliminating the areas of preschool, middle school, and high school-aged children.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

The researcher utilized terminology from the education and medical professions; the following definitions of terms have been detailed for elucidation.

*ACEs Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).* Traumatic events that occurred in childhood before the age of 18, such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, witnessing violence in the home, or having a family member to attempt or to die by suicide (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

*Bronfenbrenner human ecological systems theory.* A theory to help explain how innate qualities of children and their environments directly influenced how they grew and developed. The theory stressed the significance of examining children's environments to attempt to understand their development. The model was organized into five levels of external influence categorized from the most intimate to the broadest external impact (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

*Center for Disease Control (CDC).* The leading national public health institute of the United States (CDC, 2019).

*Community Teachers Association (CTA).* A teachers' association in each local school district (MSTA, 2019).

*Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE).* A service organization that works with educators, Missouri representatives, government agencies, community leaders, and citizens to maintain a robust public education system in Missouri assuring that all individuals had access to high-quality public education (MODESE, 2019).

*Early Childhood.* A developmental stage from birth to age eight in which brain development was at its highest, and children's growth was significant. Children were greatly influenced by the environment and interactions with the individuals that surrounded them during early childhood (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2020).

*Ecological Systems Theory (EST).* Another name for Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

*Early Trauma Inventory (ETI)*. The ETI is an instrument used to measure childhood trauma and developed based on the need for a thorough and reliable assessment of childhood trauma for research purposes (Bremner, Bolus, & Mayer, 2007). The ETI measures physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, in addition to overall trauma and assessed the frequency and emotional impact (Bremner et al., 2007).

*Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX)*. The LMX is a theory established in the 1970s focusing on the relationships between leaders and their team members (Northouse, 2016).

*Missouri Association of Elementary and Secondary Principals (MAESP)*. The MAESP is an organization in Missouri, serving 11 regional networks assisting the needs of elementary and middle school principals, assistant principals, and educators interested in becoming principals. The MAESP is an affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (Missouri Association of Elementary and Secondary Principals, n.d).

*Missouri Association of School Administrators (MSTA)*. An association that exists to serve school superintendents and administrators who were interested in superintendency in the state of Missouri (MASA, 2020).

*The Missouri Academics for Child Trauma Study (MoACTS)*. A program operated by Missouri's Department of Mental Health that focused on training professionals working with young children throughout the state of Missouri (MoACTS, 2020).

*Missouri Department of Mental Health (MODMH, 2020)*. A department that serves the citizens of Missouri by working to stop and treat mental disorders, educate,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

and enhance individuals understanding of attitudes toward mental health conditions and disorders (MODMH, 2020, 2020).

*Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA)*. The MSTA is the oldest and largest organization focusing on public education in Missouri (MSTA, 2020).

*National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)*. A professional organization established in 1921 that has served elementary and middle school principals and additional educational leaders throughout the U.S., Canada, and overseas (NAESP, 2020).

*National Center for Trauma Informed Care (NCTIC)*. A center committed to building awareness of trauma informed care and encouraging implementation of trauma informed practices (SAMHSA, 2014).

*National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)*. A network throughout the United States to improve access for support and resources for traumatized children, families, and communities (NCTSN, 2020).

*National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)*. The NIMH was defined as the leading scientific organization worldwide dedicated to research focused on understanding and treating mental illness. The NIMH is the leading federal agency for research on mental disorders and is part of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (NIMH, 2020).

*Psychological trauma*. Experience of an event or consistent situations in which individuals' capacities to understand their emotional hardships impacted their abilities to cope (Giller, 2009).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

*Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC).* The RPDC was defined as a regional center designed to provide professional development opportunities to educators and school district officials to enhance school and student performance (Northwest Regional Professional Development Center, 2019).

*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).* An agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to improve the nation's behavioral health and to lessen the impact of substance abuse and mental illness in America's communities (SAMHSA, 2020).

*Trauma.* Trauma was defined as an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the development of an individual (SAMHSA, 2020).

*Trauma-Informed Care.* A developmental framework for trauma-informed (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2019). Trauma-informed care is an ongoing change process within an organization (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2019). A paradigm shift in the knowledge, perspective, attitudes, and skills that continued to deepen over time through a continuum of a three-stage implementation: trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, and trauma-informed (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2019).

*The United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS).* An agency that aimed to protect the health of all Americans by providing essential services (USDHHS, n.d.).

*Victimization.* Three types of victimization have been defined: (a) pandemic, (b) acute victimization, and (c) extraordinary (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Victimization was an individual exposed to sibling assault (pandemic), physical abuse

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

(acute victimization), or experiencing a homicide (extraordinary) (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994).

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Scholarship**

This study was significant because, as McInerney and McKlindon (2014) stated, two-thirds of school-aged children were exposed to one or more adverse childhood experiences. According to a study by Slovak and Singer (2001), the percentage of rural youth was as high as urban adults for violent victimization. The exposure to youth gun violence was significant in rural settings and linked to symptoms of psychological trauma (Slovak & Singer, 2001). Findings also indicated rural youth faced barriers to receiving appropriate mental health services as well (Kelleher, Taylor, & Rickert, 1992).

#### **Practice**

Similarly, this study contributed to the knowledge of the perceptions of Missouri administrators and K-3 teachers on students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest, Missouri. The study enhanced the practice of educational leaders and allowed teachers and administrators to examine support services within their school districts. Additionally, the researcher allowed teachers and administrators to understand the phenomena of student trauma better and provided a baseline of inquiry in how widespread trauma was in the Northwest Missouri region.

Lastly, this research study provided useful information to improve practice for early childhood instructors and professors in teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions. The information from the study helped professors to prepare

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

future, early childhood teachers to recognize children who were exposed to adverse childhood experiences.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, the researcher gathered and analyzed information about early childhood trauma by examining teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools. The researcher utilized a qualitative study by conducting surveys, document analysis of school districts websites, and interviews consisting of Missouri elementary principals and kindergarten through third-grade teachers in elementary schools in the three counties chosen for the study. The data was coded using descriptive statistics, axial coding, and document analysis of the 12 rural Northwest Missouri elementary schools' websites.

Also, in the study the researcher examined trauma through a national, state, and regional lens to provide meaning to early childhood trauma. The study informed the reader about Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecological Systems Theory consisting of the five subsystems: (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Lastly, the study added to the existing literature on understanding the impact adverse childhood experiences have made on young children and the perceptions of Missouri administrators and teachers on student trauma.

## SECTION TWO

### PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

#### Introduction

The bounded case study focused on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural Northwest Missouri Kindergarten elementary schools. The researcher viewed trauma through the national lens, the state of Missouri, and rural Nodaway County.

This section will provide information on three organizations, the Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA), the Missouri Association of Elementary and School Principals (MAESP), and the Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA), within the state of Missouri that benefit from the results of the research study. In this section, the researcher explained the history and structure of each organization. Also, the researcher provided details of the organizations through Bolman and Deal's (2013) political frame and structural frame, while also using Northouse's (2016) leadership analysis by viewing the organizations through the situational approach, adaptive leadership, and leader-member exchange theory.

Collaboration and support have been tools that most teachers and administrators strived for throughout their school years (Huxham, 1996); however, the term collaboration may have carried a negative connotation to some which date back to the Second World War when the term was used to describe individuals who worked with the enemy (Huxham, 1996). In the education system today, there was value in working collaboratively for the common good and best interest of children while finding support among colleagues (Huxham, 1996).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Organizations, committees, and associations were formed to provide a place of support to individuals with commonalities, while working together to change, to implement, or to improve policy and practice at the local, state, regional, or national levels (Huxham, 1996). Huxham (1996) used the term "collaborative advantage" to describe the benefit of organizations working together (p. 3). The MASA, the MAESP, and the MSTA were three organizations that have provided a safe place for teachers, superintendents, and administrators to find support, while increasing the quality of practitioners in the field of education and becoming a voice and advocate for young children in the state of Missouri (MSTA, 2019.).

The structural organization of the MASA, MAESP, and MSTA have helped support how Missouri teachers and administrators, were provided the opportunities to be a voice for young children, granted access to resources, provided spaces to discuss comparable issues, and networking opportunities with other teachers and administrators from around the state (MAESP, 2019; MSTA, 2019; MASA, 2020).

### **History of the Organizations**

#### **Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA)**

The Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) is the only association in the state of Missouri that exists to serve superintendents and administrators interested in superintendency (MASA, 2020). As of 2020, MASA continued to grow with over 600 superintendents and administrators involved in the association (MASA, 2020). The purpose of MASA is to develop and to support Missouri public school leaders to significantly impact the lives of students (MASA, 2020). The association believes the success of students was impacted largely by leadership development and required a wide

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

range of individuals committed to strengthening public education as public education was the foundation of success in the state of Missouri and nation (MASA, 2020).

The MASA includes eight Missouri districts: (1) Northwest, (2) Greater Kansas City, (3) West Central, (4) Southwest, (5) South Central, (6) Southeast, (7) Greater St. Louis, and (8) Northeast (MASA, 2020.). Six MASA memberships are offered: (1) active, (2) group, (3) individual education associate member, (4) business associate member, (5) emeritus member, or (6) honorary member (MASA, 2020). The active membership included any individual who served as a superintendent, public school central office administrator, a teacher preparing individuals for educational administration careers, or university or education agency administrator (MASA, 2020). The group membership is available to central office administrators whose superintendent was an active member of MASA (MASA, 2020). The individual education associate membership includes any individual interested in educational administration within Missouri public schools (MASA, 2020). The business associate membership is available for any business that marketed products to serve public schools and supported superintendents. An emeritus membership is available to individuals retired from the Missouri public school system and an active, MASA member (MASA, 2020). The final membership MASA offers is the honorary member, which is appointed by the executive committee (MASA, 2020). MASA offers active members professional development opportunities, legal advice, conferences, and services to school districts (MASA, 2020).

### **Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)**

The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) is a statewide organization established to serve the needs of elementary and middle school

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

principals, assistant principals, and educators interested in seeking principal employment (MAESP, 2019). The MAESP is an affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), founded in 1982, which has been a professional association serving more than 25,000 administrators and educators in the United States and overseas since 1921 (MAESP, 2019). The NAESP improved quality, innovation, and equity in schools by providing guidance and learning for principals to better serve young children (MAESP, 2019).

The purpose of the MAESP organization has been to form closer relationships with individuals concerned with the education of young children (MAESP, 2019). In addition, MAESP works collaboratively to unite elementary and middle school principals of Missouri, to understand issues principals were facing, and to improve and to implement action for school education (MAESP, 2019). The members of the organization sought to foster activities that promoted an increased professional growth of all elementary and middle school Missouri principals (MAESP, 2019).

There are 11 active regional networks within the MAESP organization, with each region conducting regular meetings (MAESP, 2019.). The 11 regional networks included: (a) Central, (b) Clay-Platte, (c) Kansas City Suburban, (d) Jefferson County, (e) Northwest, (f) Northwest, (g) St. Louis Suburban, (h) South Central, (i) Southeast, (j) Southwest, and (k) Springfield (MAESP, 2019). There were over 1,100 school administrators from across the state associated with MAESP (MAESP, 2019).

The MAESP (2019) offers four membership classes within the organization: (a) active principal or assistant principal, (b) aspiring, (c) associate, and (d) retired (MAESP, 2019). The active membership was restricted to licensed individuals with a binding

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

elementary or middle school principal's certification or had a primary responsibility for supervising elementary and/or middle school (MAESP, 2019). Individuals who were actively engaged in educational research or professional education were also active members of MAESP (MAESP, 2019). The aspiring membership was for individuals aspiring to enter the profession and/or to be enrolled in a recognized administrator preparation program but were not currently serving in an administrative or supervisory position (MAESP, 2019).

The MAESP associate membership is for individuals who were licensed but not currently practicing administration, for instance, a retired principal working in education, a college professor, or a post-secondary educator (MAESP, 2019). The last membership available through the MAESP organization was a retired membership (MAESP, 2019). This membership included individuals who had retired from public or private schools as administrators (MAESP, 2019).

### **Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA)**

The Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA) leads the way for Missouri's educators since 1856 (MSTA, 2019). The MSTA helps its members build relationships with teachers across the state and grow within the profession of education (MSTA, 2019). The primary focus of MSTA is to concentrate on the issues that affected public education in the state of Missouri, to empower educators, and to give them a voice with legislators, policy makers, and stakeholders (MSTA, 2019).

There are 10 regions within the MSTA organization (MSTA, 2019). The 10 regions included: Central Region, Greater Kansas City, Greater St. Louis, Jefferson County, Northeast, Northwest, South Central, Southeast, Southwest, and St. Joseph. The

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

MSTA is made up of the local Community Teachers Associations (CTA) in Missouri school districts and serves more than 47,000 educators dedicated to helping Missouri's children (MSTA, 2019). The MSTA had a Board of Directors made up of at least one classroom teacher from each of the 10 regions. The MSTA had five committees currently composed of at least one representative from each of the 10 regions. The five current MSTA committees were: (1) education policy, (2) articles, bylaws, and rules, (3) communication awards, (4) reading circle, and (5) retired members and student members (MSTA, 2019).

The MSTA offers four memberships within the organization: (a) certified members, (b) associate, (c) retired teacher, and (d) student. The cost of membership was set up in a tiered system (MSTA, 2019). The certified membership included returning MSTA members, new members, first year, and part-time teachers (MSTA, 2019). The associate membership was comprised of individuals who were in support roles within school districts, such as bus drivers, substitutes, teachers' aides, secretaries, custodians, and bus drivers (MSTA, 2019). The retired teacher membership has included retired teachers who were returning to the classroom (MSTA, 2019). The final membership the MSTA offers are to students majoring in education on Missouri colleges or university campuses (MSTA, 2019). The policies and urgency of the professional association to meet the ongoing needs of Missouri educators are established annually by the MSTA members (MSTA, 2019).

The organization offers member benefits that included a phone number to call and to speak directly to legal representatives, free legal workshops conducted by attorneys on topics, such as contracts, tenure, board policies, federal and state regulations,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

and employment (MSTA, 2019). The MSTA has offered professional liability insurance protecting its members in their classrooms and other school-related activities (MSTA, 2019). In addition, the organization provided a variety of professional development opportunities for its members (MSTA, 2019). Professional development benefits were essential to allow teachers to gain new skills, ranging from several topics, such as how to support children exposed to trauma (MSTA, 2019.). The MSTA subscription provided members with the MSTA's *School and Community Magazine* that featured four publications a year (MSTA, 2019). Members also received access to the Missouri salary schedule and benefits report (MSTA, 2019).

### **Organizational Analysis**

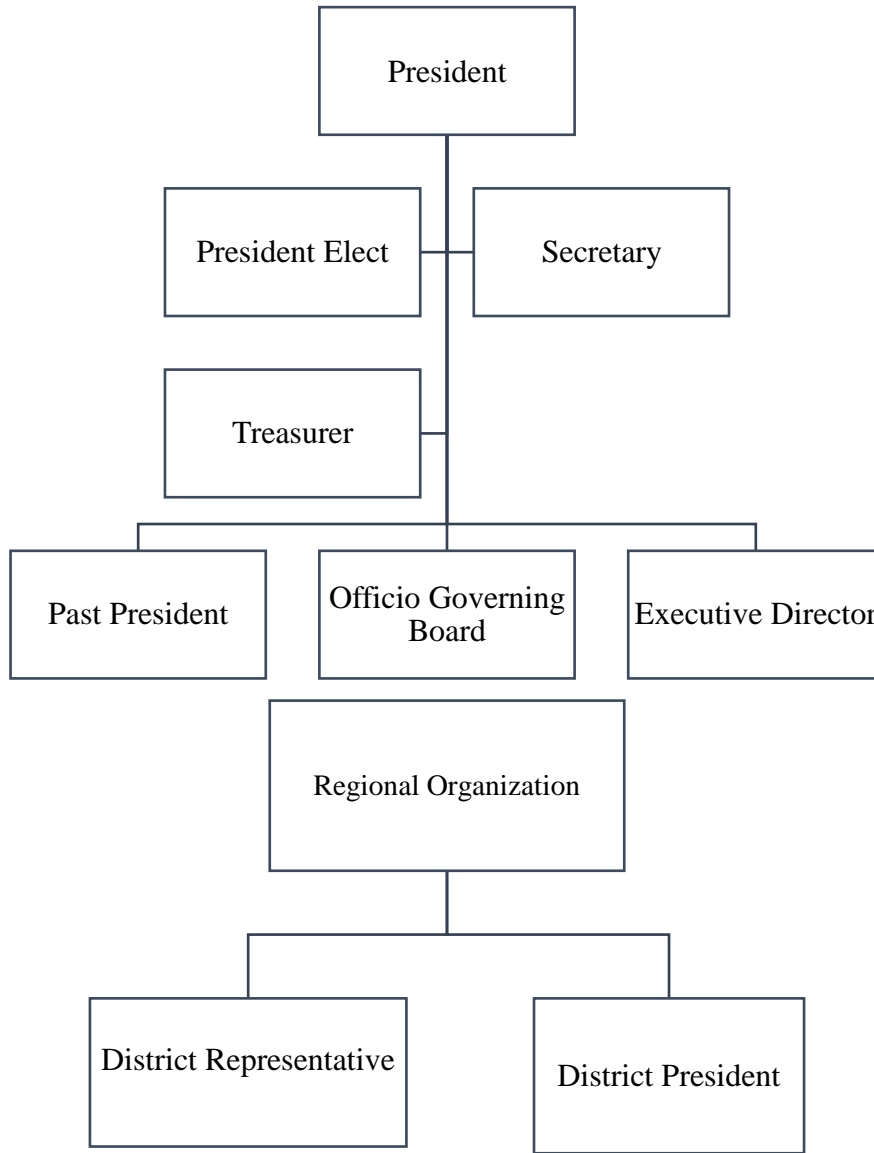
Four lenses were used to provide a holistic understanding and analysis of how the Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA), Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA), and the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) organizations were formed. Bolman and Deal (2013) offered four conceptual lenses to analyze an organization: (a) structural frame, (b) political frame, (c) human resource frame, and (d) symbolic frame. These frames allowed individuals to develop their own understanding of how organizations were formed and managed (Bolman & Deal, 2013). There were advantages and disadvantages of each frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013); however, individuals viewed their organizations through their own perspectives. Bolman and Deal (2013) recommended individuals use a multifaceted thinking approach by looking at how each of the four frames were displayed within their organizations rather than focusing on a single frame. The two frames in which the MASA, MSTA, and MAESP organizations were viewed for this research study: structural and political frame.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Structural Frame**

**Missouri Association of School Administrators.** The MASA has been an association that has supported and served the needs of Missouri public school superintendents, central office administrators, and individuals interested in educational administration (MASA, 2020). Within the MASA organization, there has been a hierarchy of power (see Figure 7) that included a president, president elect, secretary, treasurer, past president, governing board, and executive director (MASA, 2020). There has been eight districts within the MASA organization, and each district had a president and representative (MASA, 2020).

PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 7.* The organizational chart of the Missouri Association of School Administrators association (MASA, 2020).

Analysis of the organizational structure as shown in Figure 7, detailed the multi-layered system that occurred within the MASA association (MASA, 2020). All members who held positions of power within their organizations worked collaboratively to provide support to Missouri superintendents, central administrators within the public school

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

system, and those individuals interested in entering into educational administration (MASA, 2020).

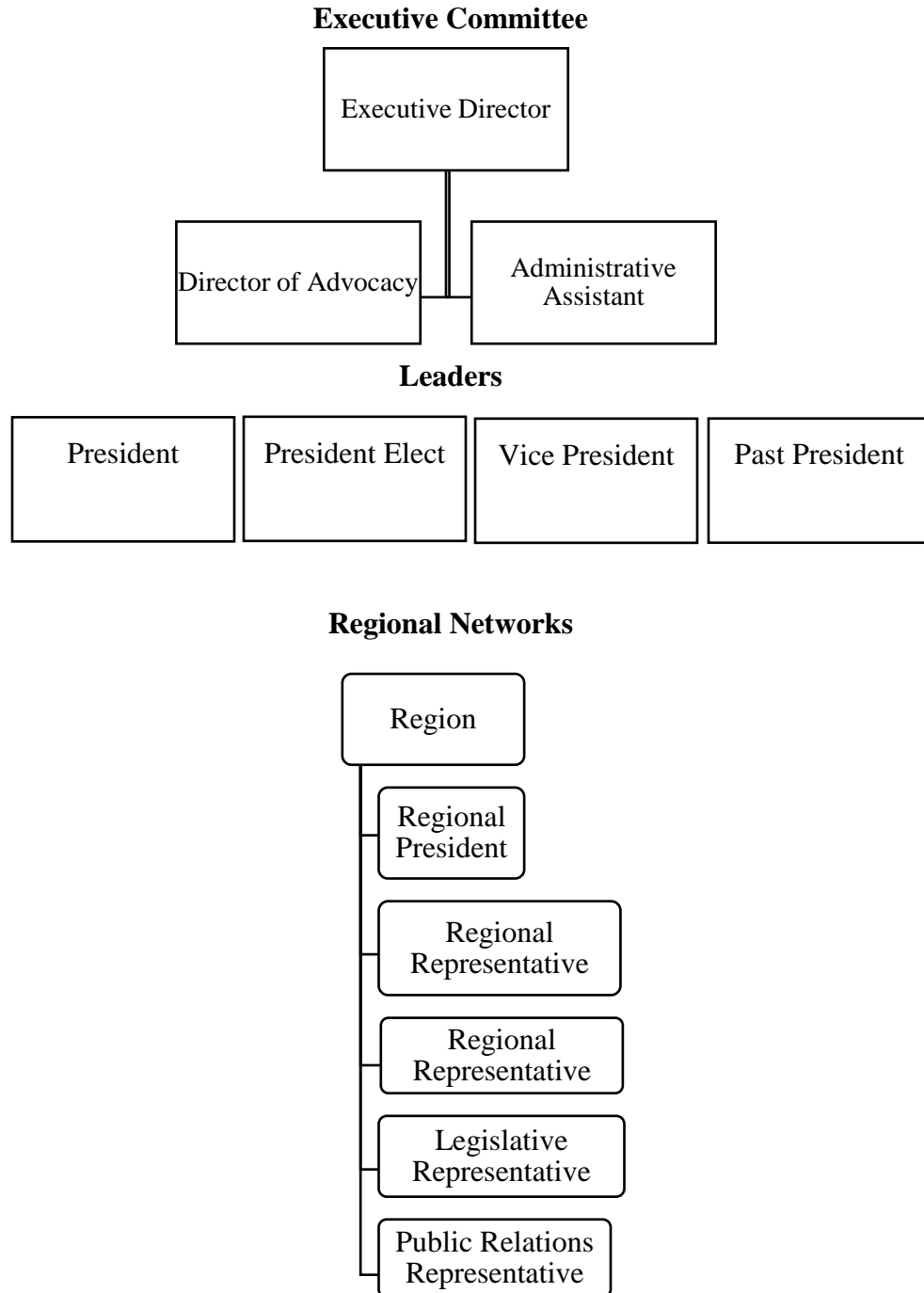
**Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals.** The MAESP has been an organization that supported and served the needs of elementary and secondary principals, those interested in becoming principals, and those who believe all children should have equal access to quality public school education (MAESP, 2019). The organizational structure focused on seeking to work collaboratively with members to solve educational issues in public education: high quality teacher shortage, bullying and harassment, assessments, funding, mental health, and trauma (MAESP, 2019).

Within the MAESP organization, there has been hierarchy of power that existed, as seen in Figure 8 (MAESP, 2019). The MAESP executive committee is made up of an executive director, director of advocacy, and an administrative assistant (MAESP, 2019). MAESP leaders were elected by the organizations' members to serve two-year terms (MAESP, 2019). The leaders consisted of the following: president, president-elect, vice president, and a past MAESP president (MAESP, 2019). Each of the MAESP regional networks elected five representatives for their regions (MAESP, 2019). The representatives were as follows: (a) regional president, (b) regional representative, (c) regional representative, (d) legislative representative, and (e) public relations representative (MAESP, 2019).

The organizational structure of MAESP was similar to both Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural configuration of the divisions and "one boss arrangement" (p. 99). With this configuration, it enabled authority figures to relinquish control, which freed time to focus on the organization's mission and approaches, while still having control over

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

decision-making and overseeing the whole organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The divisionalized and “one boss configuration” can be seen in Figure 8.



*Figure 8.* The organizational chart of the MAESP organization consisted of 12 regional networks associated with MAESP organization, and each regional area has a regional president, two regional representatives, a legislative representative, and a public relations representative (MAESP, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

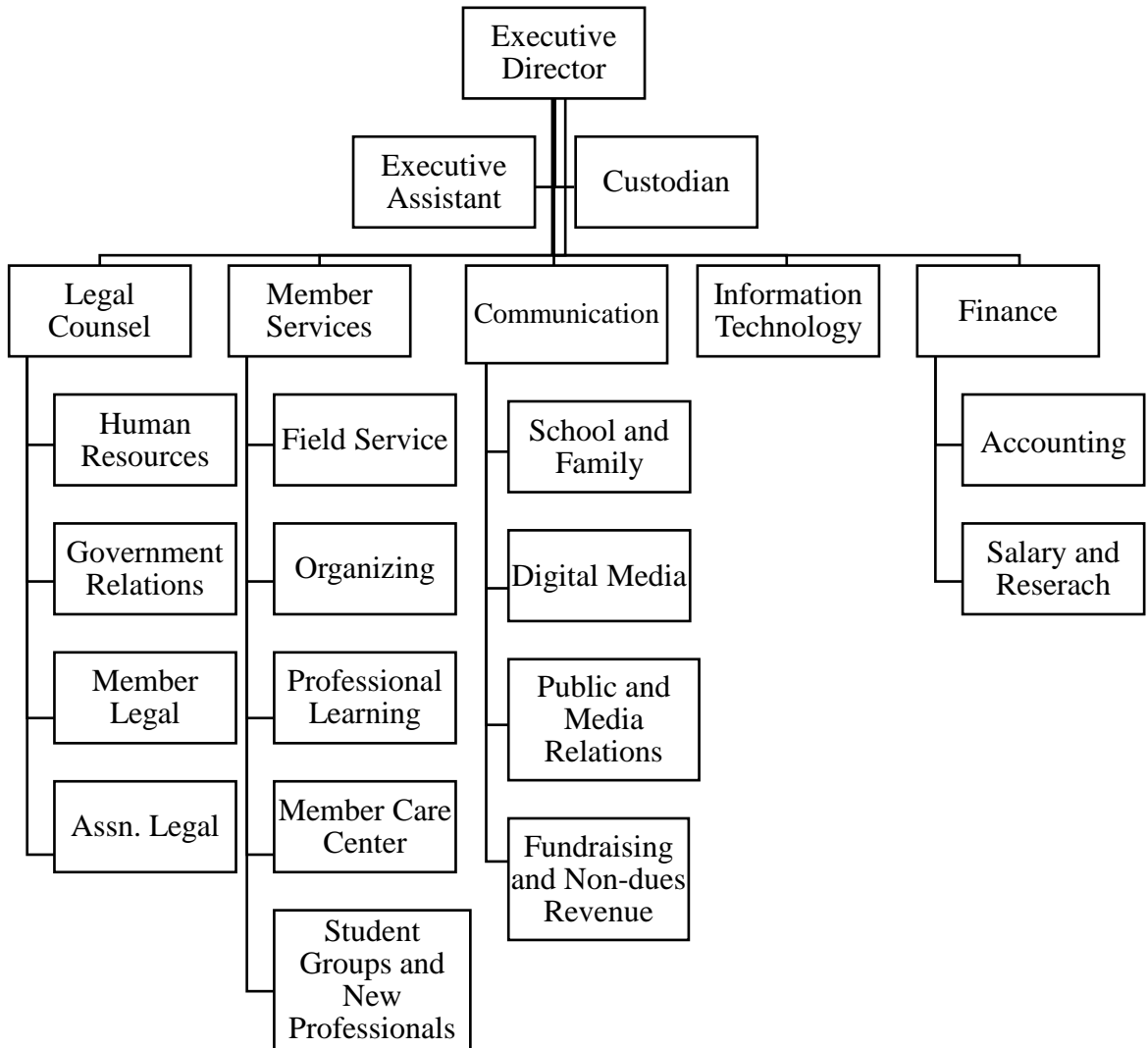
Viewing the MAESP organization through Bolman and Deal's (2013) hierarchy, as seen in Figure 8, showed a multilayered system that allowed many individuals to have responsibility within their organizations. This could have become a challenge to ensure all divisions were informed of issues and moving towards the same goals (Bolman & Deal, 2013). It was essential to understand the flow of communication within the organizations, so all individuals were informed of issues (Bolman & Deal, 2013). One example relevant to this study would have been ensuring that all individuals were communicating on the types of trauma-informed supports offered within schools and understanding the significance of students' exposure to adverse childhood experiences.

**Missouri State Teachers Association.** The structure of the MSTA organization has been essential to its members (MSTA, 2019). Division of labor and delegation were cornerstones to the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The MSTA implemented a vertical organizational chart in a top-down approach that informs members of the level of authority and roles assigned; see Figure 9 (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This has allowed the organization to divide tasks among members (MSTA, 2019).

The structure of the MSTA organization was configured similarly to Mintzberg's (1979) simple structure model. Mintzberg's simple structure model was set up primarily with two levels: strategic apex and operating level (Mintzberg, 1979). The strategic apex, as described by Mintzberg (1979), represented the individuals who were at the top of the organizational chart and held power over the group. Within the MSTA, the executive director, executive assistant, and custodian were in the strategic apex (Mintzberg, 1979). Members beyond the strategic apex was known as the operating level (Mintzberg, 1979);

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

see Figure 9. The operating level, as defined by Mintzberg (1979), were individuals who produced the products and the services to customers. The MSTA's operating core was extensive with many individuals serving in different roles, such as legal counsel, member services, communication, information technology, and finance (MSTA, 2019). These five roles then broke down further into subcategories within each operating core (MSTA, 2019).



*Figure 9.* The Missouri State Teachers Association's organizational chart showed the many different responsibilities of the organization (E. Burham personal communication, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The MSTA organizational chart, shown in Figure 9, detailed the complexity of the many roles within the organization. Working together has helped to ensure organizations were moving in the same direction of supporting Missouri's teachers and improving the nation's public educational systems (MSTA, 2019).

### **Political Frame**

**Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals.** The MAESP (2019) organization has been governed by elected board members (MAESP, 2019). There were 12 elected members as a part of the organizational hierarchy (MAESP, 2019). The MAESP was a large organization serving 1,100 schools of elementary and middle school administrators annually (MAESP, 2019); therefore, with the numbers of members increasing, the political frame was represented through members having differences and challenges coming to a consensus on the benefit of the whole group and organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). With a large organization, such as MAESP, the position of power was seen as a chance to create a more significant impact with the group rather than individual authority (MAESP, 2019).

The MAESP organization has been a member of the School Administrators' Coalition (SAC), providing members' voices on educational issues in the Missouri General Assembly (MAESP, 2019). This allowed members to advocate for legislation that supported and reinforced the principal's role and other relevant educational problems in Missouri (MAESP, 2019). Some educational issues that have been currently on the priority for legislators were as follows: (a) state-mandated assessment, (b) increasing funding for Parents as Teachers, which was early childhood education and educator professional development, (c) the shortage of high-quality teachers across the state of

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Missouri including the need to increase salaries, (d) clarifying the definition of bullying and revising the policy of reporting harassment to law enforcement, and (e) the increasing number of children and families impacted by trauma (MAESP, 2019).

The political framework, as stated by Bolman and Deal (2013), placed emphasis on developing strategies for improvement rather than on conflict resolution. After understanding the issues the MAESP organization listed as priorities, finding organizational resources to support those particular issues may have been difficult because of (Bolman & Deal, 2013) minimal government funding (MAESP, 2019). Organizational conflict and challenges have been significant throughout instances of the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013); however, problems have empowered members' creativities, innovation, and generated social change (Heffron, 1989).

**Missouri State Teachers Association.** The MSTA has been an organization that gave power and a voice to Missouri educators on issues that impacted public education, giving them opportunities to partner with legislative officials in Jefferson City, MO (MSTA, 2019). The 10 MSTA regions held visits to the Missouri State Capital during each legislative session. This allowed Missouri educators a chance to share the great things happening in public schools across the state (MSTA, 2019). As Bolman and Deal (2013) explained, politics were at the core of decision-making within organizations.

When educators have had the opportunities to meet with legislatures face-to-face, they have discussed many aspects of education, such as the a) discussing the importance of funding education, b) sharing real stories of things happening in the classrooms, and c) providing insight into issues that arose (MSTA, 2019). As described by Ezell (2013),

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

advocacy was an approach individuals used to implement change. Individuals viewed advocacy as their professional responsibilities for activism (Ezell, 2013).

Policy implementation, change, decision making, and allocating resources were found through Bolman and Deal's (2013) political frame. Within the political frame, power was a critical resource in making things happen (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The opportunity of MSTA was to meet personally with legislatures provided the opportunities to negotiate and to bargain for resources (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

The MSTA (2019) have had a government relations team who attended and provided insight at the State Board of Education meetings, served as connections to governmental agencies, and offered workshops on issues (MSTA, 2019). Those selected to be on the MSTA Legislative Impact Committee were voted in by MSTA members (MSTA, 2019). The Legislative Impact Committee, LIC, was composed of 10 regional directors - one from each MSTA region forming the board of directors (MSTA, 2019). The committee was comprised of educators who put forth efforts of public education interests in the Missouri Legislature (MSTA, 2019). These members served as advocates for Missouri's public education (MSTA, 2019).

Bolman and Deal (2013) suggested that organizations formed alliances with those having similar interests. It was through partnering and creating partnerships that more could have been accomplished than working independently or against one another (Bolman & Deal, 2013). They recognized that conflict was present within the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This was due in part to the scarcity of resources available (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

### **Leadership Analysis**

Leadership was a multi-faceted process that involved individuals, groups, goals, and influences (Northouse, 2016). Leadership occurred in group settings in which all individuals shared common purposes (Northouse, 2016). The MASA, MAESP, and MSTA organizations were examples of how leadership influences a group. It could have been challenging to see how individual leadership skills impacted an organization as a whole (Northouse, 2016); however, it was the impact of each member's leadership traits that supported the group in accomplishing everyday tasks (Northouse, 2016).

The Missouri Association of School Administrators, the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Missouri State Teachers Association were viewed through Northouse's (2016) situational approach and adaptive approach, as well as leader-member exchange theory.

### **Situational Approach**

The situational approach, a recognized approach to leadership developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), focused on how leadership varied in different situations. This approach required individuals to adapt to situations and to move along a continuum within a group being able to recognize members' competences and commitments and adjust their own leadership skills to compensate where needed (Northouse, 2016).

The MASA, MAESP, and MSTA organizations were aligned to allow for members to benefit from the situational approach (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). The field of education has been evolving, and new issues arose frequently (MSTA, 2019); therefore, members were forced to adapt their skills to assimilate to what was needed and of higher precedence (MAESP, 2019; MSTA, 2019). For instance, the MAESP had a

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

priority list for legislators to have a discussion on specific issues that impacted Missouri principals and public education (MAESP, 2019). Issues, such as assessments, lack of funding, the shortage of teachers, mental health, and trauma, have developed over time and remained on the priority list for discussion (MAESP, 2019). Members built off each other's strengths for the best interest of the organization (MAESP, 2019). However, they may have found problems that arose and were dealt with quicker than more challenging issues that may have required more extended discussions, planning, and implementation (MAESP, 2019). Thus, individuals were forced to move along the continuum of utilizing different leadership skills, which involved being flexible (Northouse, 2016).

The situational approach to leadership has been effective in helping to train practitioners in becoming effective leaders (Northouse, 2016). This approach has been useful within the MAESP organization as they worked to train and to prepare individuals interested in becoming elementary and middle school principals (MAESP, 2019). In addition, this approach has benefited the MASA organization, as it worked to help administrators prepare to become superintendents.

The MSTA organization has focused on serving and supporting more than 47,000 educators and continually, working to improve education for young children (MSTA, 2019). The situational approach has helped teachers understand how to be effective in different situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Teachers have found that no two days are the same (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). This approach provided ways for leaders to adapt to the challenges of particular situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). A strength with applying the situational approach within large organizations like MASA, MAESP, and MSTA was that the approach was practical and easy to use (Northouse, 2016) and

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

gave educational leaders a sense of empowerment and skills needed to become effective leaders (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

### **Adaptive Leadership**

Adaptive leadership, as Northouse (2016) described, was an approach that encouraged individuals to adapt to handle challenges, changes, and issues effectively. Change has been inevitable within the field of education, and leaders must have the skills needed to process change effectively in a professional manner (Northouse, 2016). When leaders successfully encouraged effective change within themselves, others, the environment, organization, and society, they had the skills necessary for adaptive leadership (Northouse, 2016).

The MASA, MAESP, and MSTTA has offered members opportunities to engage in adaptive leadership skills (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTTA, 2019). These organizations frequently adapted to the changes that presented themselves in the field of education, such as students' exposure to adverse childhood experiences (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTTA, 2019). This practice allowed members to help each other view issues through a different lens and to encourage each other to grow and to find new ways of dealing with problems (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTTA, 2019). Adaptive leadership allowed individuals opportunities to encourage, to organize, to adjust practice, and to help others improve practice (Northouse, 2016).

### **Leader-Member Exchange Theory**

The leader-member exchange theory (LMX), as defined by Northouse (2016), focused on the interactions between leaders and followers and the positive impact high quality and effective communication exchanges had on organizational performance

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

(Northouse, 2016). The prominent component of the leader-member exchange theory was the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers.

The leader-member exchange theory was present in the MASA, MAESP, and MSTA organizations (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTA, 2019). There were leaders and followers within both organizations, as some held higher powers than others (Northouse, 2016). It was equally vital the reciprocal relationships were present within the organizations, however (Northouse, 2016). Both organizations had partnerships with Missouri legislators, which required them to obtain skills necessary to have meaningful, high-quality conversations.

### **Implications for Research in Practitioner Setting**

This bounded case study of understanding teachers' and administrators' perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences could aid in helping the MASA, MAESP, and MSTA consider new evidence related to student trauma in rural, public elementary schools. This may lead to an opportunity for these professional organizations to review their structures in order to collaborate to create a more robust and meaningful dialogue about childhood trauma. These educational discussions may lead to compelling evidence suggesting adjustments in legislation to support children impact by adverse childhood experiences (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTA, 2019). Viewing the organizations through the structural and political frames has helped the members of the organizations to give meaning or perhaps restructure the way they created their organizational charts (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTA, 2019). This could allow them an opportunity to revisit their clarification and delegation of tasks to ensure they are getting the most out of their organization.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The situational approach, adaptive leadership, and leader-member exchange theory can help members of MASA, MAESP, and MSTA to understand the importance of building effective teams, engaging in high-quality conversations, and developing and empowering each other to work towards the common good of the organization (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTA, 2019). The situational approach and adaptive leadership could help members of MASA, MAESP, and MSTA to recognize the skills needed to become flexible leaders who adapt to challenging situations, while also gaining a better understanding of their qualities as leaders (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTA, 2019).

First, the researcher suggests that rural Missouri public elementary school administrators should embed trauma-informed approaches and increase awareness of Missouri trauma-informed schools initiative for all teachers. This could take the shape of annual on-boarding and professional development on trauma impacting students in rural Missouri public settings, along with evidence of potential solutions and how to implement them to support students experiencing ACEs. Second, for teachers who work directly with elementary aged children who have experienced ACEs, the data suggests teachers would benefit from increased resources and supports.

Educator preparation programs hold a measure of responsibility to infuse the best practices for understanding and responding to trauma in elementary settings by augmenting awareness of ACEs and their impact on student learning. Teacher preparation has lagged in addressing the importance of student trauma, but the data suggested it was a persistent equity issue warranting the attention of the field. Carello and Butler (2015) stated higher education has yet to move forward in educator preparation programs focusing on training future professionals on trauma-informed approaches despite a

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

movement and growing realization teachers should be practicing what they are taught. Supporting this finding a teacher stated, “Our jobs go far beyond teaching academics. We have many hats to wear and cannot teach our students’ if we are lacking the resources and supports to do so.” By preparing prospective and future teachers to support students who have experienced ACEs, more resources will be brought to bear to support rural public elementary students as well as their teachers and administrators. This recommendation is supported by Jones (2013) study, which found when teachers were trained and prepared in trauma-informed approaches they are better equipped to meet the needs of student’s exposed to adverse childhood experiences.

### **Summary**

The MASA developed and supported Missouri public school leaders to significantly impact the lives of students (MASA, 2020). The association has believed the successes of students impacted largely by leadership development and required a wide range of individuals committed to strengthening public education as public education was the foundation of success in the state of Missouri and the nation (MASA, 2020).

The MAESP (2019) included leaders from 11 regions around the state of Missouri dedicated to improving practice and professional development opportunities for elementary and middle school principals. Their goal is to work collaboratively to understand issues facing principals and to work towards implementing action for improvement (MAESP, 2019). Through viewing the MAESP organization by looking at the different approaches, leaders have continued to achieve their missions, while understanding and recognizing new ways to see their approaches (MAESP, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The MSTA's mission is to focus on the issues affecting public education in the state of Missouri, while empowering educators to have a voice in Jefferson City with problems affecting education in Missouri (MSTA, 2019). Through viewing the MSTA organization by looking at the different approaches provided support to their existing and current works (MSTA, 2019).

The problems affecting education in Missouri, such as children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences, was continually to be researched throughout this bounded case study because of the lack of literature within students' adverse childhood experiences in rural Northwest Missouri. In this study, the researcher will explain how Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory helped to refine this research study and to provide insight on the effects of external and internal support or lack thereof on children's development over a lifespan.

### **SECTION THREE**

#### **SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY**

##### **Introduction to the Problem**

The scholarly review addressed the purpose of the research study, identified the theoretical framework and conceptual underpinnings of the research, and summarized the current literature related to the problem of practice. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to add to the existing research on early childhood trauma in addition to understanding teacher and administrator perceptions on students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools.

Teachers have chosen to teach vulnerable students impacted by trauma, because it has given their work a purpose (Pines, 2002). Teachers and classroom environments may have been the only consistent and safe learning atmosphere students experienced, leaving teachers solely responsible for implementing interventions for social, emotional, and academic supports (Brunzell, Stokes, & Waters, 2018). A study conducted by Alisic (2012) found that although some teachers expressed confidence in working with children, there was uncertainty and struggles with being able to provide support for children exposed to traumatic events. Therefore, teachers and principals needed to understand how children developed (Alisic, 2012). Urie Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory (1970) provided one overarching lens to understand this development.

##### **Theoretical Framework**

###### **Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecological Systems Theory**

The framework the researcher utilized for the study was the human ecological systems theory, also known as the ecological systems theory (EST), developed by

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

psychologist Bronfenbrenner in 1979 (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner was born on April 29, 1971, in Moscow, Russia (Brendtro, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's family came to the United States of America when he was six years old, first moving to Pennsylvania, then settling in New York (Brendtro, 2010). His father's work as a neuropathologist for the developmentally disabled at a hospital in New York influenced Bronfenbrenner (Brendtro, 2010). He observed his father's continued frustration when the juvenile court system placed healthy children in institutions, which led his desire to become a scholar on understanding children and families in various cultures (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). Bronfenbrenner and his wife were married for 63 years and parents of six children (Brendtro, 2010; Ceci, 2006).

### **Bronfenbrenner's Education**

Bronfenbrenner received a bachelor's degree in psychology and music from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, in 1938 (Ceci, 2006). He earned a master's degree from Harvard in 1940 with a focus in education and completed a doctorate in 1942 from the University of Michigan in developmental psychology (Brendtro, 2010). Upon completion of his doctoral studies, he entered the U.S. military, serving as a psychologist during World War II (Bronfenbrenner, 1970; Brendtro, 2010; Ceci, 2006). Bronfenbrenner obtained a brief job as an assistant chief clinical psychologist for the Veterans Affairs Clinical Psychology Training Program in Washington, D.C., after his service in the war (Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, 2019). He went on to serve a two-year term as an assistant professor at the University of Michigan until moving to Cornell University in 1948, serving as an assistant professor with a focus on child development (Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, 2019). Bronfenbrenner was

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

inspirational in improving the field of education up until his death on September 25, 2005, at the age of 88 in Ithaca, NY, due to complications with diabetes (Ceci, 2006).

### **Bronfenbrenner's Focus**

The focus of Bronfenbrenner's work at Cornell University was on developing theory and research designs that led the way of developmental science, providing understanding to the implications of developmental theory for policy and practice, and communicating with the public through lectures, ongoing discussions, and publication of articles (Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, 2019). The federal Head Start program was established in regard to Bronfenbrenner's work and the emphasis he placed on providing interventions that enhanced early childhood education through programming, benefiting generations of low-income children (Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, 2019; Thompson, 2018).

The human ecological systems theory was developed in relation to Bronfenbrenner's work in developing Head Start Programs for preschool-aged children in the U.S. in 1965 that served as an intervention program, serving 1 million low-income American children (Thompson, 2018). Through his work with the Head Start program, Bronfenbrenner (1979) determined children's development was not impacted solely by biological features but also outside influences.

The human ecological systems theory proposed human development was seen as a nested set of systems that nurtured or hindered children's development, understanding the set of systems involved social, economic, cultural, and political elements (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, 2019). Also, Bronfenbrenner emphasized the significant circle of influences within children's

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

development as being families, peers, and schools, in addition to neighborhood connections (Phelan, 2004; Brendtro, 2010). He stated one must accurately understand the influences of children's life experiences to fully gain an accurate depiction of their development (Phelan, 2004). It was essential to understand the ecology of a child changes over time-based on their interactions, maturity, new challenges, family dynamics, unplanned events, and biological factors (Lewis, 1995).

### **Bronfenbrenner's Impact on Professionals**

As of 2020, researchers continued to apply Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory to studies to help understand the context of the influences that impacted children's development (Brooks, 2007). A study conducted by Trisnadi-Rages (2007) used the human ecological systems theory to understand how layers of children's environmental systems reduced children's encounters with online pornography through the societal, legal, community, and individual influences. Trisnadi-Rages (2007) found the layers of the ecological systems theory seriously influenced each other. Bronfenbrenner (1979) acknowledged often many families were doing the best they could with their circumstances; therefore, the environmental contexts families were living in must have changed to protect young children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Additionally, Turbin et al., (2006) utilized the multi-layered human ecological systems theory by investigating individual influences against social factors on the health behavior of the U.S. and Chinese adolescents. The findings indicated that family and peers were more influential among United States teens, while peers and school were most significant in Chinese adolescents (Turbin et al., 2006).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory has transformed professionals in the field of education as he was rooted in the belief no child was disposable (Brendtro, Ness, & Mitchell, 2005). Based on the assumption that individuals interacted with five environmental systems, Bronfenbrenner (1979) coined the five systems as the following: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem which impacted a child's life and relationships. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory helped practitioners understand how the environment affected human development and how social programs assisted in supporting individuals to overcome challenges.

Bronfenbrenner's studies were much like a study conducted by Corcoran, Franklin, and Bennett (2000), which used the ecological systems theory to compare challenges teens who were pregnant and parenting faced among non-pregnant and non-parenting teens. The researchers utilized the microsystem in the study by including factors, such as: (a) depression, (b) stress, and (c) self-esteem (Corcoran et al., 2000). The mesosystem was viewed in relation to understanding teenagers' family structures, neighborhoods, and schools (Corcoran et al., 2000). Additionally, teenagers' macrosystems were evaluated by following their household incomes and parents' occupations (Corcoran et al., 2000).

According to Brooks (2007), it was essential to recognize and to understand individuals' development, one must have considered the various social contexts individuals' experience. A brief explanation of each of the five human ecological systems theory was described in relation to understanding Bronfenbrenner's framework for this research study.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Microsystem**

The first system of the human ecological systems theory was the microsystem (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). This system was made up of individuals' immediate environments, such as events, social roles, and interpersonal relationships that formed within their families, school systems, and peer relationships (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Further refining, this system was made up of the people who were closest to the individual, such as parents, siblings, teachers, and friends (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Within the microsystem, children developed habits and temperaments and learned by observing, experiencing, and interacting within the relationships they were building (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An ecological system transition occurred when individuals moved from one microsystem to another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); therefore, it was essential to understand that this caused complexities of understanding individuals' microsystems (Kotchick, Shaffer, Forehand, & Miller, 2001).

### **Mesosystem**

The second system was known as the mesosystem, and was formed when individuals moved into new settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem included two-way communication and decision making between two microsystem components, such as a family and school relationship or teacher and parents working together for the benefit of the children (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). The mesosystem was vital for children's development and analyzing the strength within two microsystems as not to contradict or to confuse children or provide misleading expectations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Exosystem**

The exosystem was the third system in the human ecological systems theory and comprised of the influences indirectly affecting the child (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

Indirect influences, such as parents' places of employment, family and social systems, and the neighborhoods in which they lived, were likely to impact children's development (Gauvain & Cole, 2005); however, the child was not an active role in the immediate environment (Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013). The local community, health, social service policies, and media could have negatively or positively impacted development and were out of children's control (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Macrosystem**

The fourth and broadest system was the macrosystem and were contexts that indirectly influenced the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem evolved over time and encompassed many different groups, such as children's culture, social classes, ethnic groups, family beliefs, customs, availability of resources, religious traditions, and lifestyles (Gauvain & Cole, 2005; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). Over time, the macrosystem changed and impacted the children's morals and opportunities in life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Chronosystem**

The last and largest system within the human ecological systems theory was the chronosystem. The chronosystem focused on the changes or consistency that took place over time and impacted children's development, such as the families' socioeconomic statuses, places of residence, and the chaotic or simplistic everyday life (Martinello, 2019). This system was chronological and time-based and consisted of the continuity or

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

changed in the pattern of individual's social interactions, such as friendships, conflicts, and responsibilities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

The researcher used literature related to three conceptual underpinnings to provide support for the framework. Trauma was viewed through the following lens: (a) the United States, (b) the state of Missouri, and (c) Rural Northwest Missouri. The subsequent concept of early childhood trauma was an additional conceptual underpinning that helped to refine Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework.

### **Trauma in the United States**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) statistics showed from 2012 through 2017, the number of children maltreated nationally was high and continued to fluctuate (USDHHS, 2013). Child maltreatment, as defined by MacMillian (2000), was physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and/or neglect. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (2012) report indicated 678,810 children were maltreated compared to the 2013 and 2014 reports being nearly 700,000 children (USDHHS, 2015). The average lifetime costs of child maltreatment in the United States was \$210,012 per child (Austin-Morris, 2018), and a total economic burden of \$585 billion (CDC, 2014). The USDHHS's reports from 2015 through 2017 showed an estimated 680,000 children were maltreated, proving a five-year trend of minimal decrease in child maltreatment (Lieberman, Chu, Van Horn, & Harris, 2011).

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2014 reported more than three million incidents of children exposed to adverse childhood experiences (CDC, 2014), understanding that cases were both nonfatal and fatal. A study conducted by Fang,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Brown, Florence, and Mercy (2012) conveyed that annually an estimated 579,000 cases were nonfatal, where 1,742 cases were reported fatal in 2012, and 80% of those fatalities were children younger than age four years (USDHHS, 2010). According to the USDHHS (2010), an average of 772,000 children were exposed to adverse childhood experiences in 2008, and the average age for children exposed was age six years. Beard (2014) stated that as children became older, the probability of them experiencing victimization decreased.

In 2018, boys had a higher fatality rate than girls did, showing a national average of 2.87 compared to 2.19 (USDHHS, 2018). It was also essential to understand who was perpetrating young children (USDHHS, 2018). In 2018, 77.5% of perpetrators were parents of the victims. Additionally, 53.8% were female, and 83.3% were between the ages of 18 and 44 (USDHHS, 2018).

Teachers and principals have been pivotal components of reporting child abuse and neglect to authorities (Nurcombe, Wooding, Marrington, Bickman, & Roberts, 2000). As a direct point of contact within the school system, early identification and prompt intervention were vital to support and protect the most vulnerable children (Nurcombe et al., 2000). A study conducted by Walsh, Farrell, Schweitzer, and Bridgstock (2005) found 98.9% of teachers stated having a moral obligation and 93.3% ethical responsibility to report child abuse and neglect to authorities.

### **Trauma in the State of Missouri**

Referral for reporting child abuse and neglect in the state of Missouri was through a hotline reporting system that categorized the reports into either families' assessments or investigations (USDHHS, 2018). An investigation with law enforcement

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

presence would have been considered if the report contained criminal violations, such as sexual, physical, medical, or emotional abuse or neglect, which would have led to the removal of the child from home (USDHHS, 2018). A family assessment would have been conducted for a well-child check and offering of family services, if there was a suspected maltreatment incident, such as a first-time noncriminal report of abuse or neglect (USDHHS, 2018).

The Missouri Academics for Child Trauma Study (MoACTS), an extension of the Children's Advocacy Services of Greater St. Louis at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and a recognized program operated by Missouri's Department of Mental Health, was an academy focused on training professionals working with young children throughout the state of Missouri and the Midwest Region (McACTS, 2020). Dunn head of MoACTS, stated, Missouri's children were being exposed to traumatic experiences at a high level (Cambria, 2013). Childhood trauma has been affecting 70% to 90% of children in Missouri's protective systems, such as foster care, detention centers, prisons, and mental health facilities, and, on average, these children have been exposed to three different types of adverse childhood experiences by the age of 12 (Cambria, 2013; MoACTS, 2020).

The Administration for Children and Families (2017) reported 92% of children in the Kansas City area in 2015 experienced one adverse childhood experience, 79% experienced two adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and 69% experienced three or more ACEs. The Missouri Department of Social Services (2020) reported Missouri had 46,376 substantiated investigations and family assessments in 2006, compared to 63,203 substantiated investigations and family assessments in 2015. Substantiated investigations

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

through the Missouri Children's Division were classified as clear evidence, indicating child abuse or neglect had occurred (USDHHS, 2018). Family assessment reports were categorized as potential abuse or neglect that had happened (USDHHS, 2018).

Teachers and principals have had direct contact with children and families each day (Briggs & Hawkins, 1997). They have had the opportunities to intervene with at-risk children and to assist families to access support services allowing them to better address issues of adverse childhood experiences within the school communities (Walsh et., 2005).

### **Trauma in Rural Northwest Missouri**

There has been evidence of children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences in rural Northwest Missouri (Missouri Department of Social Services, 2020). The Missouri Department of Social Services (2020) reported 227 substantiated investigations involving criminal violations and evidence of sexual, physical, medical, emotional abuse and neglect, or family assessments in three rural Northwest counties in 2006 compared to 240 reports in 2015. The following table explained the breakdown of substantiated investigations and family assessments per county (see Table 1).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Table 1

*Substantiated Investigations and Family Assessments in Rural Northwest Missouri*

<b>County</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2015</b>
Atchison	69	30
Holt	38	30
Nodaway	120	180

*Note.* A table showing the number of substantiated investigations and family assessments in the rural Northwest counties of Atchison, Holt, and Nodaway from 2006 to 2015 (Missouri Department of Social Services, 2020).

### **Early Childhood Trauma**

Early childhood trauma served as an additional lens for understanding this study providing refinement to Bronfenbrenners' human ecological systems theory. An estimated 90% of children have experienced some type of traumatic event in their lives, according to Heinzlmann and Gill (2013). Traumatic experiences included, but were not limited to, exposure to violence, living in poverty, and child maltreatment (Horner, 2015). The NIMH defined trauma as a person's reaction to a traumatic event that may have included physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, in addition to adversities like addiction, parental divorce, or incarceration of a parent (National Kids Count Data, 2016). Young children exposed to traumatic events had a higher risk of developing adverse health complications in adulthood, such as cancer, asthma, autoimmune disease, depression, and cardiovascular disease (Garner et al., 2012)

Trauma did not exist from the traumatic experience, itself, but rather the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings surrounding the traumatic event that significantly impacted

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

individuals' health (SAMHSA, 2014). The SAMHSA (2014) stated the neurological, physical, cognitive, and emotional effects from individuals' experiences were critical indicators of recognizing and assessing the impact of their response to trauma.

The Early Trauma Inventory (ETI) was an instrument used to measure childhood trauma and was developed based on the need for a complete and dependable assessment of childhood trauma for research purposes (Bremner, Bolus, & Mayer, 2007). The ETI measured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, in addition to the overall injury, and assessed the frequency and psychological impact (Bremner et al., 2007). The ETI was used as a 56-item, a semi-structured interview that measured the domains of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and the overall experience of traumatic events individuals experienced before the age of 18 (Bremner, Vermetten, & Mazure, 2000).

Felitti, head of Kaiser Permanente's Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego CA, developed another instrument used to measure childhood trauma that originated from his obesity clinic in 1980 (Felitti et al., 1998). Felitti could not understand why over half of his participants in the obesity clinic dropped out (Felitti et al., 1998). He developed a series of questions and interviewed participants, discovering 286 people with whom he interviewed had been sexually abused as a child. Intrigued with his findings, he developed a series of trauma-related questions, along with colleague, Anda, that focused on three types of abuse: (a) sexual, (b) verbal, and (c) physical, in addition to two types of neglect—emotional and physical (Felitti et al., 1998). In addition, five types of household dysfunction: (a) mentally ill or alcoholic parents, (b) incarcerated family member, (c) loss of a parent, (d) domestic violence victim, and (e)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

abandonment. These 10 types of trauma coined the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study (Felitti et al., 1998).

The adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) study was one of the most extensive investigations ever implemented to evaluate connections between childhood maltreatment and health and wellbeing (Stevens, 2012). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was a term defined by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to describe abuse, neglect, or traumatic experiences that individuals encountered before the age of 18 (Stevens, 2012).

According to Van der Kolk (2003), there were four critical stages of significant structural change in brain development when trauma exists: (a) early childhood, (b) late childhood, (c) puberty, and (d) mid-adolescence. When individuals experienced persistent traumatic events, it was detrimental to their brain structures (Van der Kolk, 2003).

Teicher, Anderson, and Polcari (2002) stated the areas of the brain that become altered were the amygdala, hippocampus, limbic system, midbrain, brain stem, and the cerebral cortex, resulting in significant challenges with impulse control, cognition, aggression, and emotional regulation. Teachers and administrators must have been aware of the impacts of childhood trauma on children's learning and overall development (Downey, 2007). A study conducted by Alisic (2012) reported teachers throughout the country wondered at which point their responsibilities as teachers ended and those as social workers or psychologists began. The teaching profession has been moving away from teaching academics and have become more focused on helping support children's social and emotional development (Alisic, 2012). The boundaries in education have become ambiguous (Alisic, 2012). School leaders working in communities of poverty stated they

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

find it challenging to meet the needs of their students because of the students' exposure to stressors and trauma within their family and environments (Wadsworth et al., 2008).

Teachers who were unable to recognize and/or to understand the significant impact of childhood trauma on classroom behavior often confused the behaviors for disobedience and inattentiveness (Terrasi & De Galarce, 2017), therefore, misdiagnosing young children as defiant. Children who experienced trauma often lacked executive functioning, as the U.S. Department of Education described as the ability to regulate attention, resist distraction, control frustration, consider consequences for disruptive behaviors, and reflect on past experiences (Zelazo, Blair, & Willoughby, 2016). Instead, these students reacted to their emotional impulses, lacked self-regulation and challenges that affected academic achievement, and impacted how early childhood teachers effectively managed their classrooms (Terrasi & DeGalarce, 2017).

### **Summary**

In conclusion, by applying Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory to the conceptual underpinnings of looking through trauma in the United States, in the State of Missouri, and through rural Northwest Missouri, in addition to the subsequent underpinning of early childhood trauma, helped to provide a framework and to better understand the research study. Although the has included varying definitions of what early childhood was, the significance of early childhood trauma, and the impact trauma exposure had on young children's development was consistent.

**SECTION FOUR**

**CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE**

**Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution**

The Trauma-Informed School Conference (TISC) was held annually in St. Louis, MO, every year in July, and in Denver, CO, every November. The attendees of the conference include teachers, administrators, and other professionals in the education system and those working with children exposed to trauma. A presentation proposal was submitted in December 2020 for the July, 2021, conference in St. Louis, MO.

**Type of Document**

A Power Point Presentation will be presented at the Annual Trauma-Informed School Conference in 2021. The slideshow presentation will inform participants of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the results of a study on students' adverse childhood experiences in rural Northwest Missouri elementary schools. The presentation will highlight the background of the study, methods, participants, theoretical framework, conceptual underpinnings, and results of the study. In addition, the presentation will show how Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory was present in the holistic development of a child.

**Rationale for this Contribution Type**

The Trauma-informed School Conference (TISC) was a comprehensive two-day conference that was designed for educators, administrators, school personnel, mental health professionals, and community partners. The annual conference has had an average attendance of 1,500 individuals. The conference provided attendees with understanding, knowledge, and tools needed to successfully create a trauma-informed learning

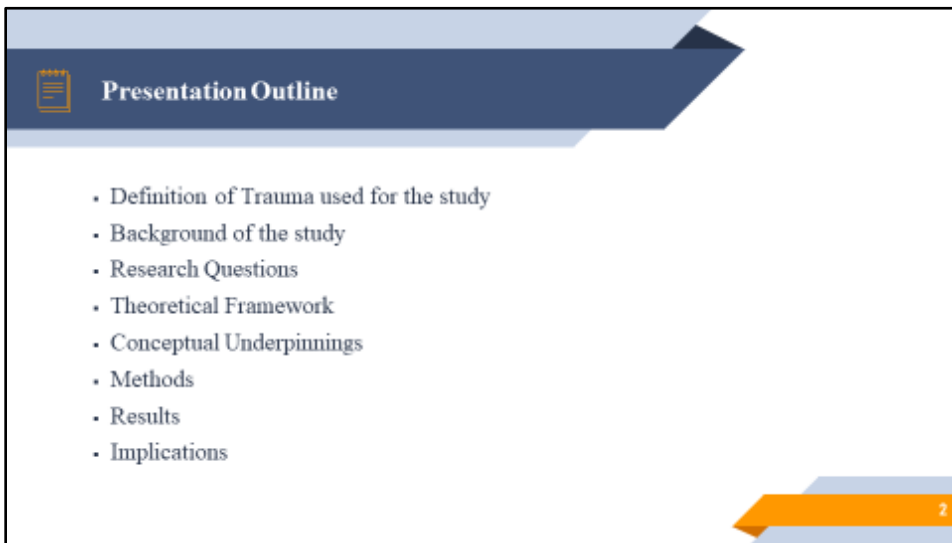
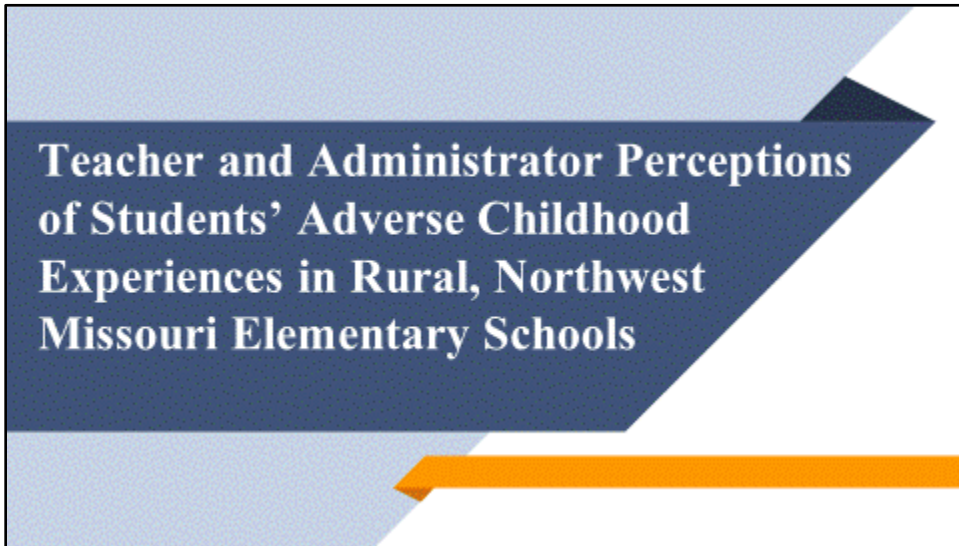
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

environment. The conference had two tracks for attendees to participate in considering their line of work. The first track was the administrative/school wide track with the other track focusing on classroom strategies for trauma-informed. The research study could fit into both the administrative track and classroom strategies for teachers.

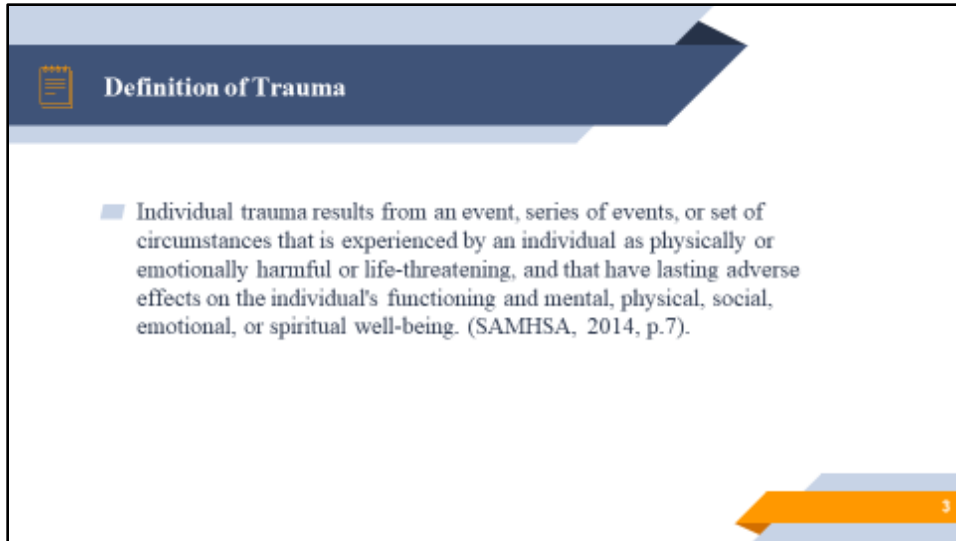
### **Outline**

- Background of the study
- Research Questions
- Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Underpinnings supporting the study
  - Urie Bronfenbrenner's Human Ecological Systems Theory
  - Three Conceptual Underpinning
    - Trauma in the United States
    - Trauma in the state of Missouri
    - Trauma in rural Northwest Missouri
    - Subsequent underpinning: Early Childhood trauma
- Methods
- Results
- Implications

**Presentation**



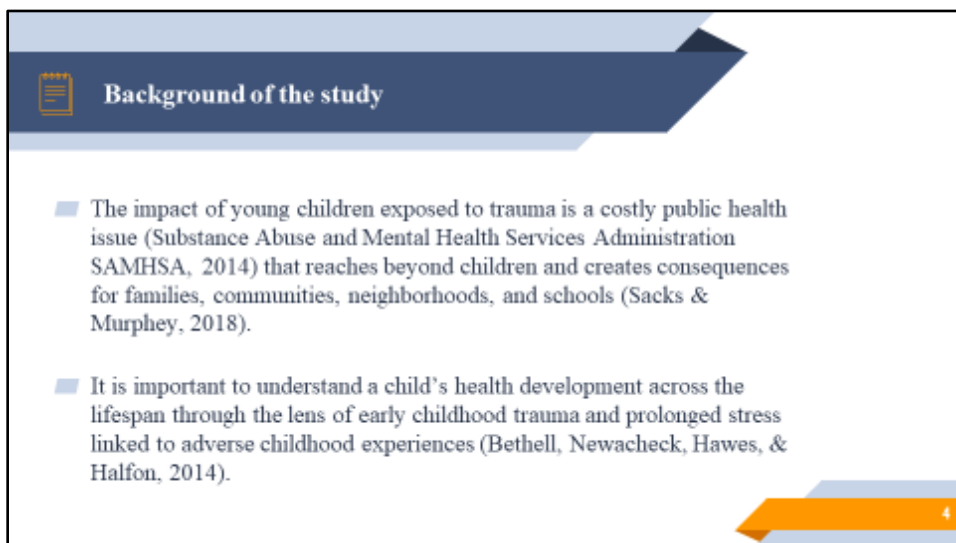
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



**Definition of Trauma**

- Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, and that have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (SAMHSA, 2014, p.7).

3



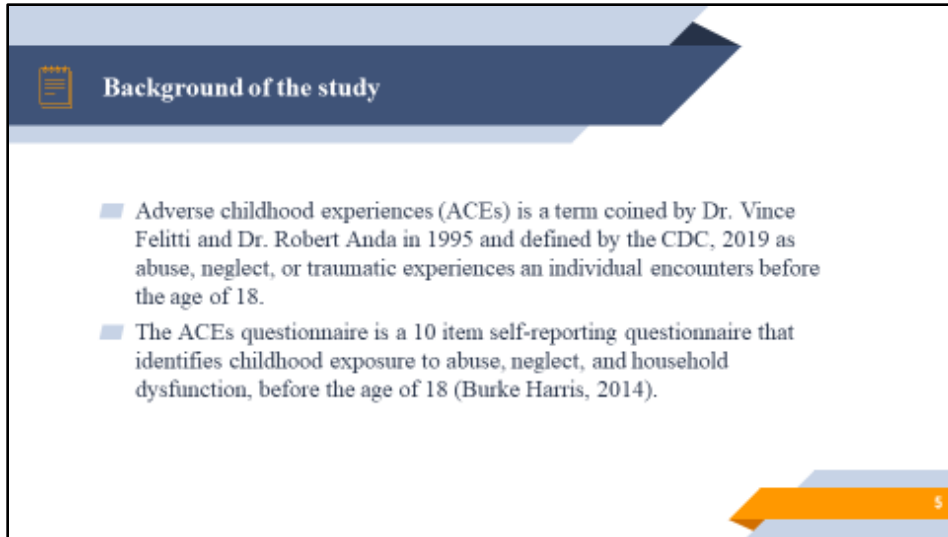
**Background of the study**

- The impact of young children exposed to trauma is a costly public health issue (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA, 2014) that reaches beyond children and creates consequences for families, communities, neighborhoods, and schools (Sacks & Murphey, 2018).
- It is important to understand a child's health development across the lifespan through the lens of early childhood trauma and prolonged stress linked to adverse childhood experiences (Bethell, Newacheck, Hawes, & Halfon, 2014).

4

Note: My personal experiences being raised by my father who was a foster child, severely physically and verbally abused as well as emotionally and physically neglected and the sole caregiver of his five younger siblings along with my professional work as a preschool teacher and Director of a Child Development Laboratory School in Missouri.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

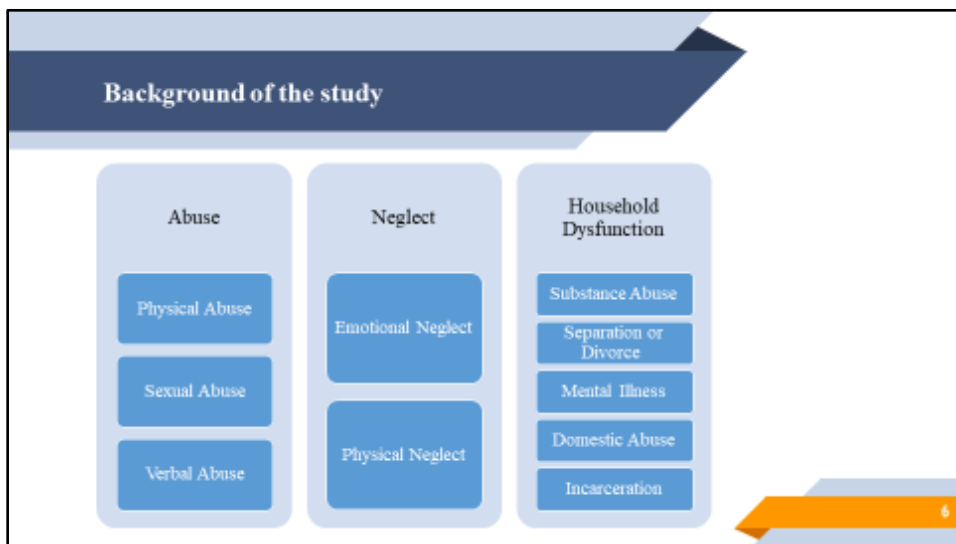


**Background of the study**

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is a term coined by Dr. Vince Felitti and Dr. Robert Anda in 1995 and defined by the CDC, 2019 as abuse, neglect, or traumatic experiences an individual encounters before the age of 18.
- The ACEs questionnaire is a 10 item self-reporting questionnaire that identifies childhood exposure to abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction, before the age of 18 (Burke Harris, 2014).

5

Note: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study was one of the most extensive investigations ever implemented to evaluate connections between childhood maltreatment, health, and well-being (Stevens, 2012).



**Background of the study**

Abuse	Neglect	Household Dysfunction
Physical Abuse	Emotional Neglect	Substance Abuse
Sexual Abuse	Physical Neglect	Separation or Divorce
Verbal Abuse		Mental Illness
		Domestic Abuse
		Incarceration

6

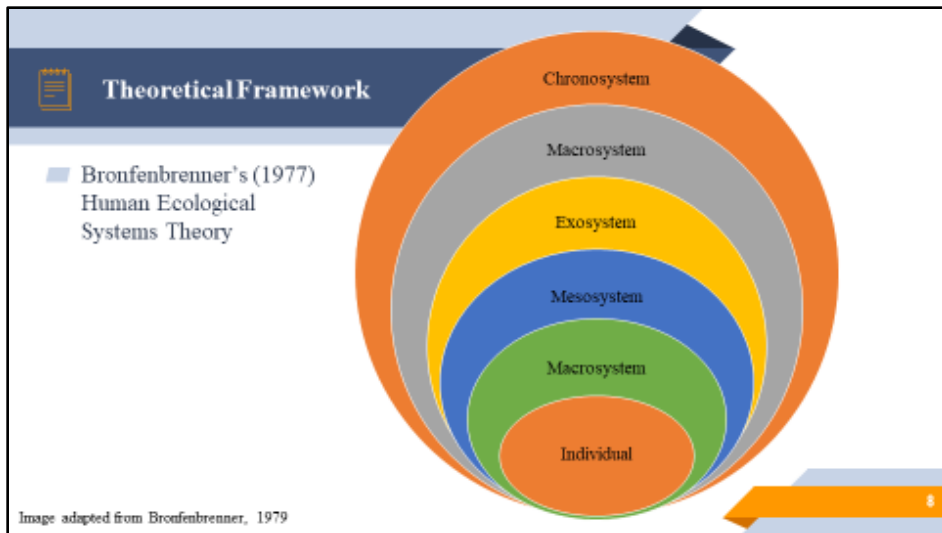
Note: The 10 types of adverse childhood experiences included in the ACEs questionnaire were under the categories of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

**Research Questions**

- (RQ1): What are administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 - 2019?
- (RQ2): What are teacher perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 - 2019?

Note: The overarching research question for the study was: What are teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classrooms from 2009 - 2019?



Note:

- Emphasizes the biological, social, and cultural impact upon an individual's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Environments directly influence a child's life. Five levels of external influence categorized from the most intimate to the broadest external impact.

1. Microsystem : The structure of this system is made up of an individual's immediate surroundings, such as events, social roles, and interpersonal relationships that form within the family, school system, neighborhoods, and peer relationships (Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

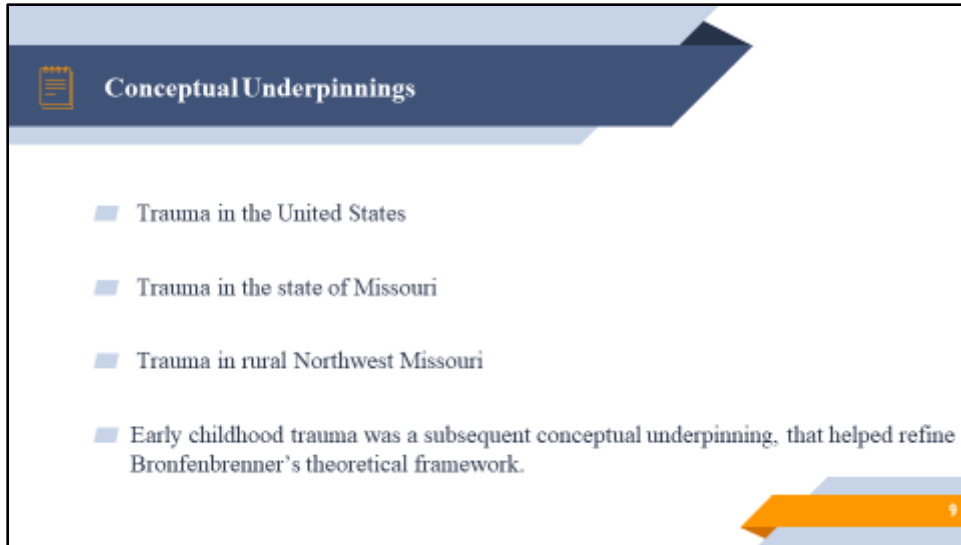
2. Mesosystem : Comprised of two-way communication and decision making between two microsystem components (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

3. Exosystem : The influences that indirectly affect the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Ex. a parent's place of employment, family, social systems, media, local community, and neighborhoods are likely to impact a child's development (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

4. Macrosystem : involves many different groups such as a child's culture, social class, ethnic group, family beliefs, customs, religious tradition, and lifestyle (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

5. Chronosystem : The changes or consistency that takes place over time and impacts a child's development, such as the family's socioeconomic status, place of residence, and the chaotic or simplistic everyday life, explains the chronosystem (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

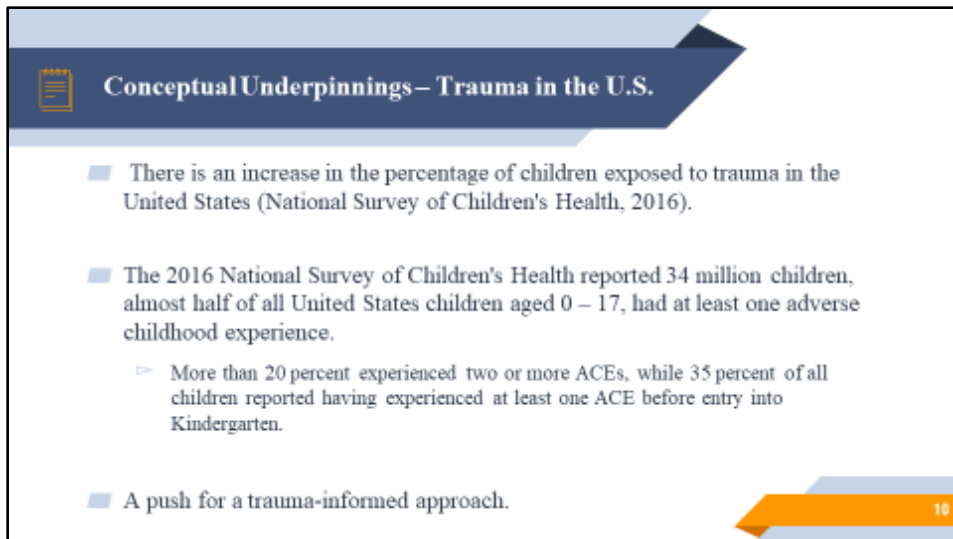
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



**Conceptual Underpinnings**

- Trauma in the United States
- Trauma in the state of Missouri
- Trauma in rural Northwest Missouri
- Early childhood trauma was a subsequent conceptual underpinning, that helped refine Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework.

9



**Conceptual Underpinnings – Trauma in the U.S.**

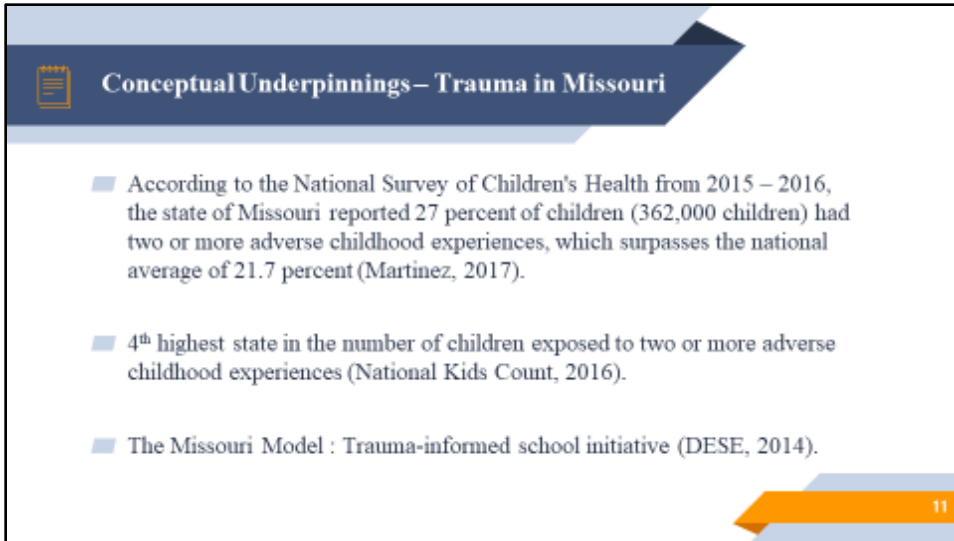
- There is an increase in the percentage of children exposed to trauma in the United States (National Survey of Children's Health, 2016).
- The 2016 National Survey of Children's Health reported 34 million children, almost half of all United States children aged 0 – 17, had at least one adverse childhood experience.
  - ▷ More than 20 percent experienced two or more ACEs, while 35 percent of all children reported having experienced at least one ACE before entry into Kindergarten.
- A push for a trauma-informed approach.

10

### Note:

- Trauma is present in households of all races, socioeconomic, and educational levels (CDC, 2019).
- An effort to plan, implement, and evaluate a nationally recognized trauma-informed approach in the early 2000s was led by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) (Wilson, Fauci, & Goodman, 2015).
- Trauma-informed schools are a nationwide movement to create educational environments responsive to the needs of traumatized youth through the implementation of trauma-informed strategies (Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet, & Santos, 2016).
- Trauma-informed schools prepare teachers, school personnel and mental health professionals to understand the prevalence of trauma, recognize the types and symptoms, and utilize programming interventions that help alleviate re-victimization and provide student support (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2014; Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013).
- In 2019, 45 out of 50 states had reported having information about trauma-informed schools and childhood trauma available on their department of education websites (Simon, Compton, & Overstreet, 2020).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



**Conceptual Underpinnings – Trauma in Missouri**

- According to the National Survey of Children's Health from 2015 – 2016, the state of Missouri reported 27 percent of children (362,000 children) had two or more adverse childhood experiences, which surpasses the national average of 21.7 percent (Martinez, 2017).
- 4<sup>th</sup> highest state in the number of children exposed to two or more adverse childhood experiences (National Kids Count, 2016).
- The Missouri Model : Trauma-informed school initiative (DESE, 2014).

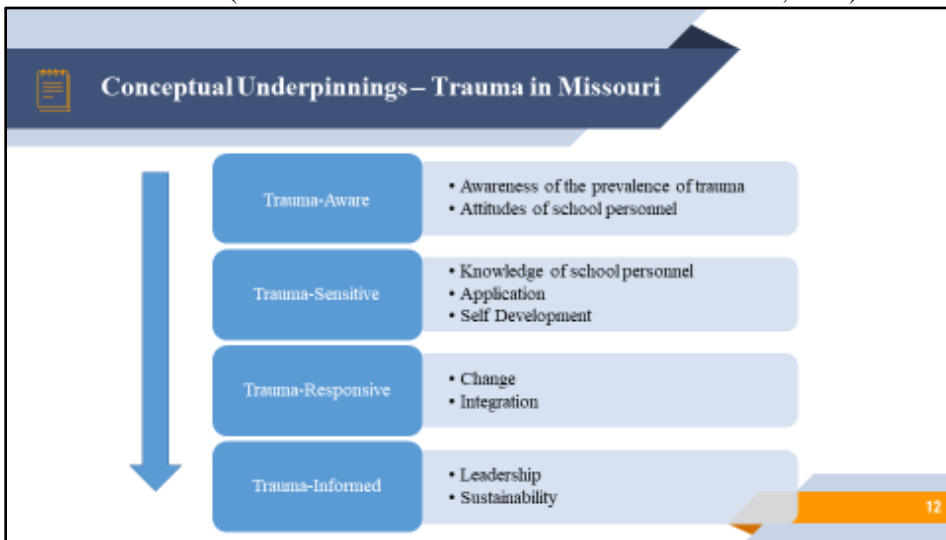
11

Note: -The trauma-informed school initiative as described by MODESE is an approach that involves school personnel understanding, recognizing, and responding to the symptoms of student trauma (MODESE, 2019).

A paradigm shift that developed over time by implementing school support systems through a continuum.

-The initiative was developed after a three-year trauma-informed collaboration between professionals from five Missouri community mental health centers, the Division of Youth Services office, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health (MODMH, 2020) (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

-Missouri schools can choose to become trauma-informed, the Missouri State Senate Bill 638 passed by Missouri Legislation in 2016, requires (MODESE) to provide information on becoming trauma-informed and offer training to school personnel seeking to become trauma-informed on their websites as a resource for Missouri schools (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014).



Note:- The initiative is a four-step approach that allows school districts to become a trauma-informed school. - Continuum of four stages that organizations move back and forth through over time as they begin to comprehend and address trauma

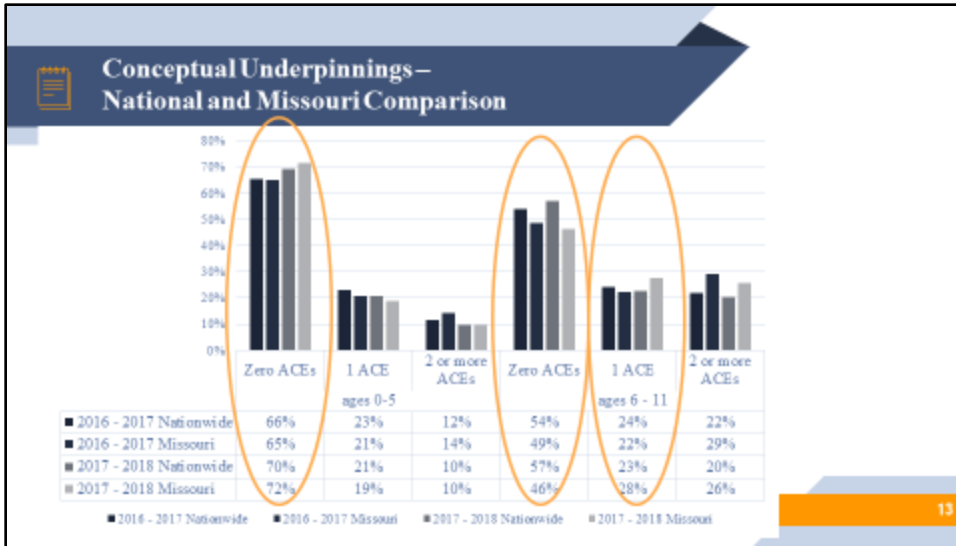
-Trauma-Aware: aware that trauma exists in their schools and it could significantly impact their students and staff. (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

-Trauma-Sensitive: schools can understand and identify the principles of trauma-informed care, safety / choice / collaboration / trustworthiness / empowerment (Missouri Model, 2014).

-Trauma-Responsive: the organization reviews all policies and procedures and develops trauma supports for staff and begins to change the culture (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

-Trauma-Informed: Trauma-informed approaches have been adopted throughout the entirety of the organization (Missouri Model, 2014).



Note: A comparative table recreated from the most updated data from the National Survey of Children’s Health (2016) that represents the percentage of children aged zero – 11 exposed to adverse childhood experiences Nationwide in comparison to the state of Missouri from 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018.

The data shows:

- A 5.5% increase is shown from 2016 to 2018 of Missouri children between the ages of six-11 experiencing 1 adverse childhood experiences compared to a 1.6% decrease of children ages six-11 Nationwide from 2016 to 2018.
- The number of Missouri children ages six – 11 reported having zero aces has decreased by 2.1% since 2016 compared to a Nationwide increase of 3% of children ages six – 11.
- The number of Missouri children ages zero – five reported having zero ACEs has increased by 6.6% from 2016 to 2018 and an increase of Nationwide children ages zero – five having an increase by 3.9%
- You can imply from this data that Missouri children ages six – 11 are experiencing more ACEs compared to Missouri children ages zero – five and overall children ages zero – 11 nationwide.

**Conceptual Underpinnings – Trauma in rural Northwest Missouri**

There was a lack of information available on trauma in rural Northwest Missouri; therefore, substantiating the need for this research study. An example of absence of information is found within various outreach programs and lack of information provided to assist families with trauma related issues (personal communication, 2020; Nodaway Children’s’ Division, 2020).

14

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

**Conceptual Underpinnings – Early Childhood Trauma**

- Approximately five million children experience some type of traumatic event in the United States every year (Perry, 2014).
- Most trauma occurs in the home, nearly 80 percent of individuals responsible for mistreating a child are the child's parents (Van der Kolk, 2005).
- Diagnosing young children

15

### Note:

- There is a stigma associated with diagnosing a young child due to limited screening tools available for early childhood mental health, and resistance to the idea of mental health in early childhood (DeYoung, Kenardy, & Cobham, 2011).
- Young children exposed to abuse and neglect increase illegal behaviors and adult misconduct overall by 29 percent, as discovered through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) research study (Wisdom & Maxfield, 2011).
- Each year more than 30,000 individuals die by suicide and 67% of suicide attempts are directly related to traumatic childhood experiences (Dube, Anda, Fetlitti, Chapman, Williamson, and Giles, 2001).
- As participants commented and the research data shows children's homes are broken systems. Children are living in homes with continuous dysfunction.
- The data shows the evidence of the rise in ACES impacting Missouri children on the rise. A 5.5% increase is shown from 2016 to 2018 of Missouri children between the ages of six- 11 experiencing 1 adverse childhood experiences compared to a 1.6% decrease of children ages six -11 Nationwide from 2016 to 2018.
- This is why it is so important for early intervention and providing support and resources to young children who are exposed to trauma.
- If we don't support children early on we find them continuing in the system as adults who engage in illegal behaviors, have behavioral challenges, experience continued trauma and sometimes die by suicide. They can't escape the system without supports and resources which often leads to a generational cycle of trauma.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

**Methods**

- This is a bounded case study (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) providing a detailed explanation and examination of a bounded system, trauma-informed schools in rural Northwest Missouri.
- Yin (2014), describes a bounded case study as a study that investigates a current phenomenon (case) within a real-life setting (context).

16

**Methods**

- Survey
- Semi-structured interviews :
  - ▷ Tell me when you became a school principal / K-3 teacher?
  - ▷ How long have you served at your current school?
  - ▷ Tell me how familiar you are with the Missouri Trauma-Informed School Initiative?
  - ▷ Tell me what level you feel your school is at?
  - ▷ Can you elaborate on the specific types of adverse childhood experiences students' have encountered?
  - ▷ What are your thoughts on if the incident rate of students' ACEs has changed?
  - ▷ What is the nature of trauma you are seeing?
  - ▷ Describe how you are informed of students' trauma?
- Document Analysis: An analysis of the 12 school district websites within the three counties were reviewed to see if any trauma-informed approaches or resources were available.

17

Note: Research was gathered from three rural Northwest Counties. .

-Rural defined by farmlands, few housing options, and small town settlements (Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, & Fields 2016).

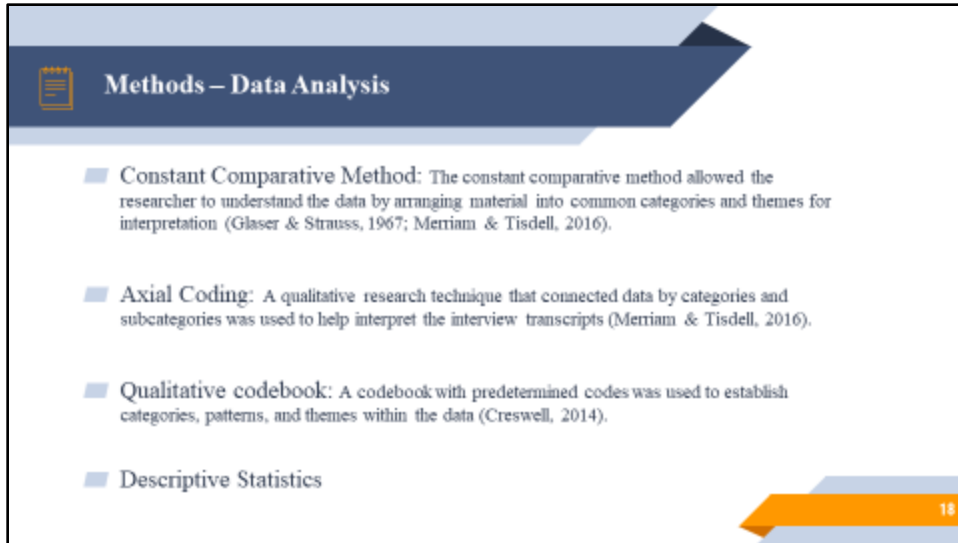
-This method was chosen because of the strength of drawing from multiple sources of data, minimizing limitations, comparing different perspectives, and developing different measurement instruments.

-Survey: An electronic, cross-sectional survey as defined by Fink (2017) as a survey disseminated at a specific point in time.

-Semi-structured interviews: The researcher conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews via zoom and telephone that took (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) approximately 40 minutes until saturation was met (Seidman, 2013).

- Document Analysis : The researcher analyzed 12 elementary school websites in the three Northwest counties chosen for the study. The analysis was completed to determine if the school districts have information on their websites pertaining to trauma-informed practices and approaches within their districts.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

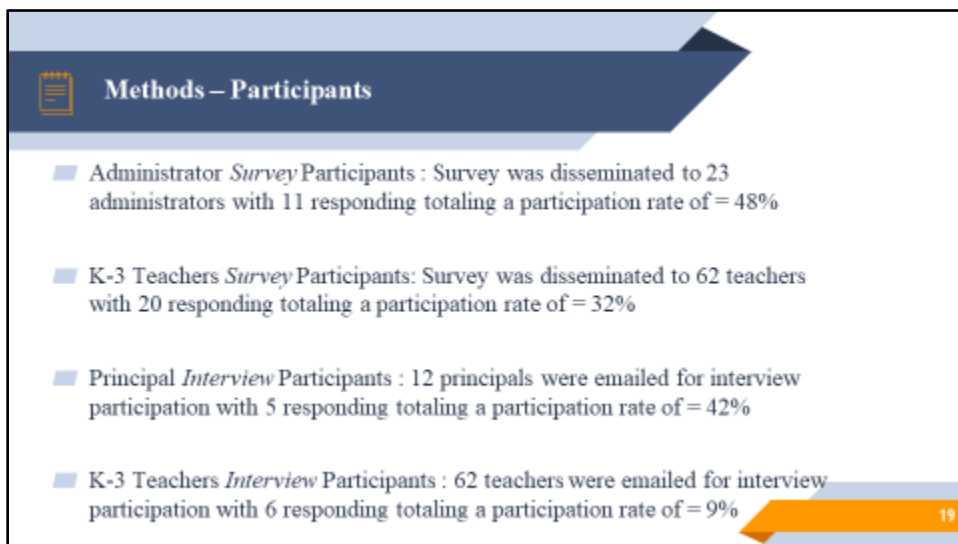


**Methods – Data Analysis**

- **Constant Comparative Method:** The constant comparative method allowed the researcher to understand the data by arranging material into common categories and themes for interpretation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
- **Axial Coding:** A qualitative research technique that connected data by categories and subcategories was used to help interpret the interview transcripts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
- **Qualitative codebook:** A codebook with predetermined codes was used to establish categories, patterns, and themes within the data (Creswell, 2014).
- **Descriptive Statistics**

18

Notes: -The data collection process and analysis of the data occurred in a tiered system allowing the researcher to disseminate the survey to participants, complete a document analysis of the school websites, and conduct zoom and telephone interviews. The researcher continued data collection until saturation was reached.



**Methods – Participants**

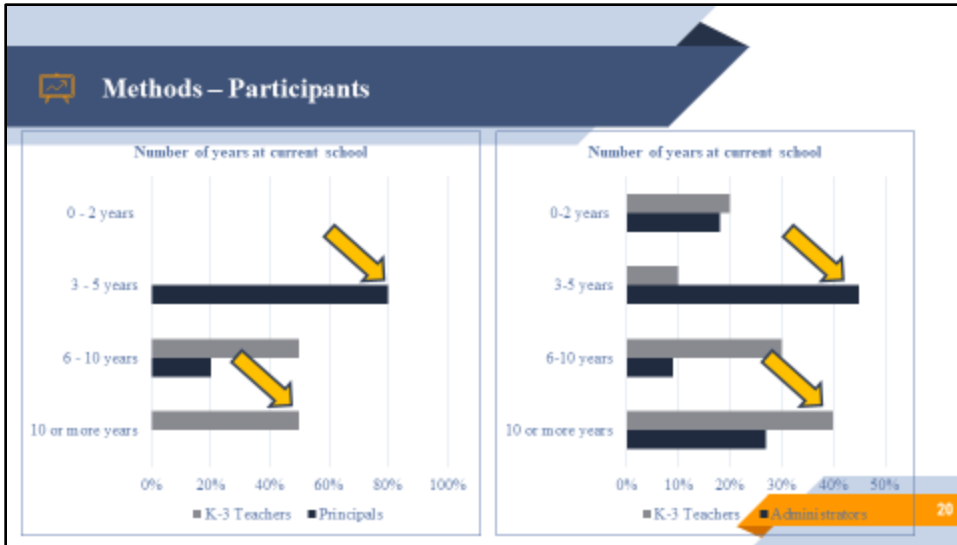
- **Administrator *Survey* Participants :** Survey was disseminated to 23 administrators with 11 responding totaling a participation rate of = 48%
- **K-3 Teachers *Survey* Participants:** Survey was disseminated to 62 teachers with 20 responding totaling a participation rate of = 32%
- **Principal *Interview* Participants :** 12 principals were emailed for interview participation with 5 responding totaling a participation rate of = 42%
- **K-3 Teachers *Interview* Participants :** 62 teachers were emailed for interview participation with 6 responding totaling a participation rate of = 9%

19

Note:

- All administrators from the three counties were chosen to participate in the survey; however, only principals were chosen for the interview process as the researcher was interested in speaking with those closest to working with children exposed to trauma.
- The researcher excluded teachers who were not teaching grades kindergarten through third as the researcher was interested in the perceptions of teachers in Early Childhood.
- The COVID-19 pandemic during the time of the research study may have limited survey and interview participation as data was being collected the same time teachers and administrators were transitioning to online distance learning.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



Note:

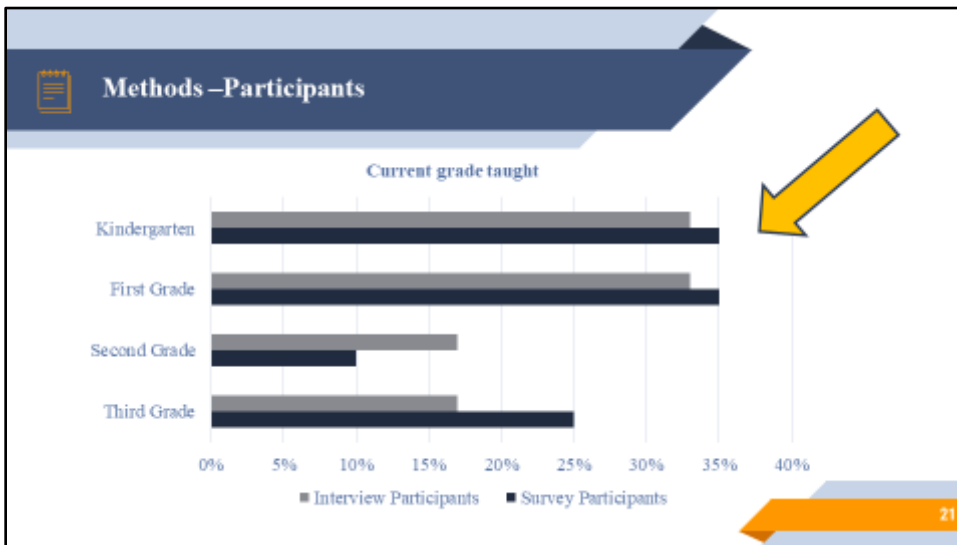
Interview Participants (left side of slide)

- Half of the teachers interviewed had been at their current school for six – 10 years and the other half had been at their school for 10 or more years.

- Four principals interviewed had been at their current school for three to five years and 1 principal that had been at their current school six – 10 years.

Survey Participants (right side of slide)

- Most administrators had been at their current schools for three to five years where as the most of the teachers had been at their current school for 10 or more years.



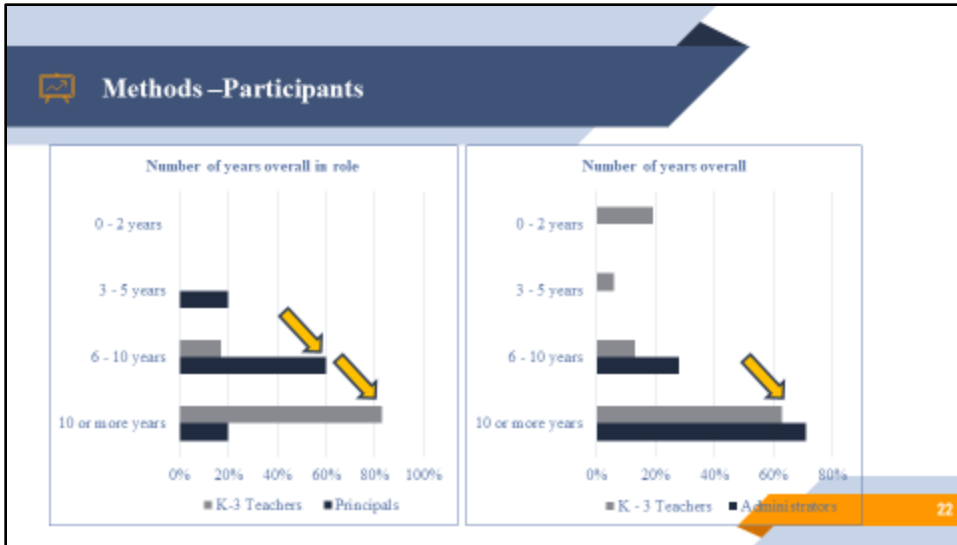
Note:

-Most teachers participating in the survey and interview were kindergarten and first grade teachers.

-The K-3 interview participants consisted of two kindergarten teachers, two first grade teachers, one second grade teacher and one third grade teacher.

-The K-3 survey participants consisted of seven kindergarten teachers, seven first grade teachers, two second grade teachers and five third grade teachers.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



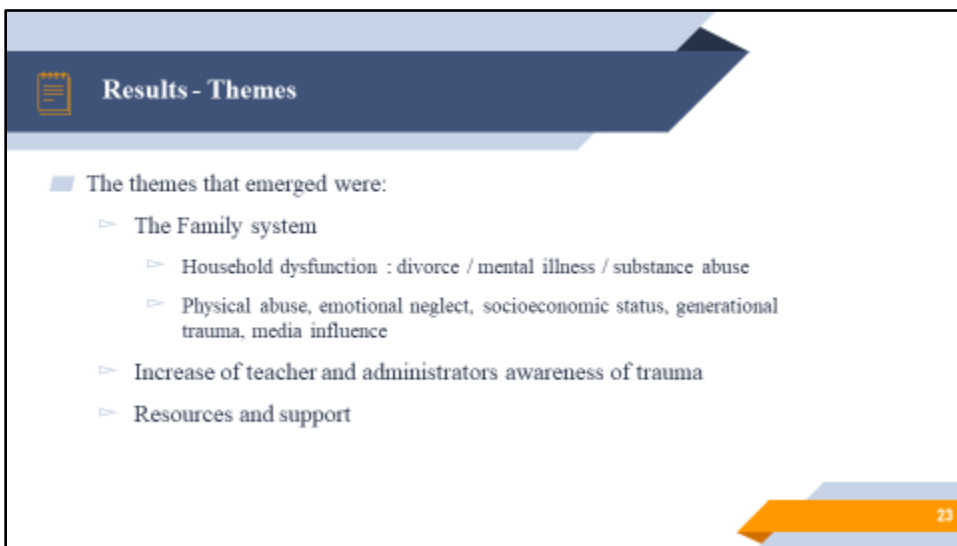
Note:

Interview Participants (left side of slide)

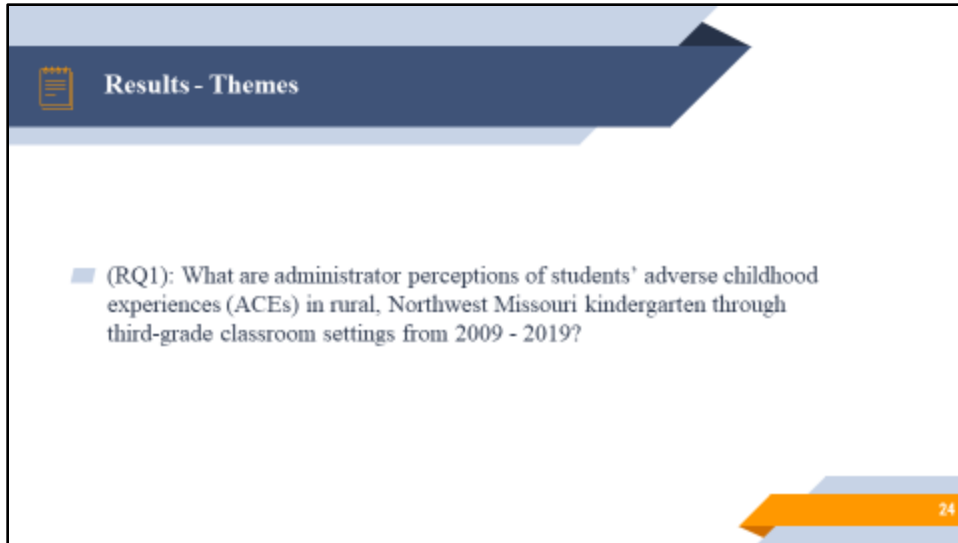
- Most of the teachers participating in the interview have been a kindergarten through third grade teacher for 10 or more years.
- Most principals participating in the interview have been a principal for six – 10 years.

Survey Participants (right side of slide)

- Most teachers participating in the survey had been a kindergarten through third grade teacher for 10 or more years.
- Most administrators participating in the survey had been an administrator for 10 or more years.



## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



**Results - Themes**

(RQ1): What are administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 - 2019?

24

Note: Administrators perceived mental illness, emotional neglect, substance abuse, and divorce as being the most observed ACEs seen in their school districts.

-Participants commented:

“Households are broken. Parents are putting other needs and wants in front of the care of their children.”

“We are not teaching the same children we taught 10 years ago.”

“There is a break in children’s home. There isn’t a core parent anymore like there used to be causing more parents to abuse drugs.”

“It is rare to see a two parent home anymore due to drug use and divorce.”

“Families are living more in poverty than they used to which causes children to be in unsafe homes, lack the emotional support they need, and parents are abusing drugs more which leads to a decrease in parents mental health.”

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

**Results - Themes**

(RQ2): What are teacher perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 - 2019?

25

Note: - Teachers perceived mental illness, emotional neglect, substance abuse, physical abuse, and divorce as being the most observed ACEs seen in their school districts.

-Participants commented:

“Parents are having children because it is the status quo. They spend more time on their phones and social media and do not focus on their children leading to emotional neglect and physical abuse.”

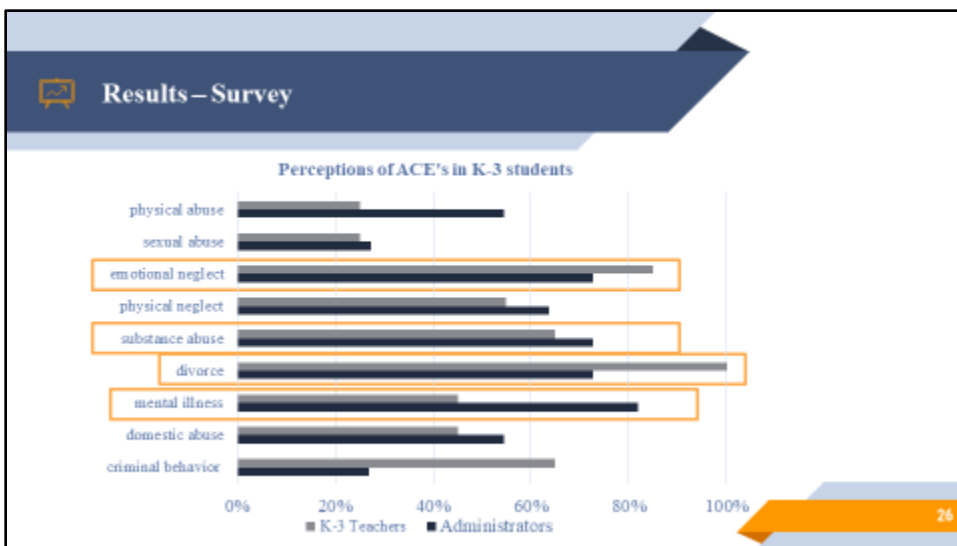
“Children are coming from divorced families more now than they used to.”

“Families are living in poverty more. They are low income and parents are making bad decisions such as abusing drugs. It becomes a generational behavior.”

“It is very rare to have two parents married and living in the same household. Children are jumping around and there is no stability or emotional support.”

“Parents are struggling mentally because of substance abuse and then abuse their children and it’s a hamster wheel approach.”

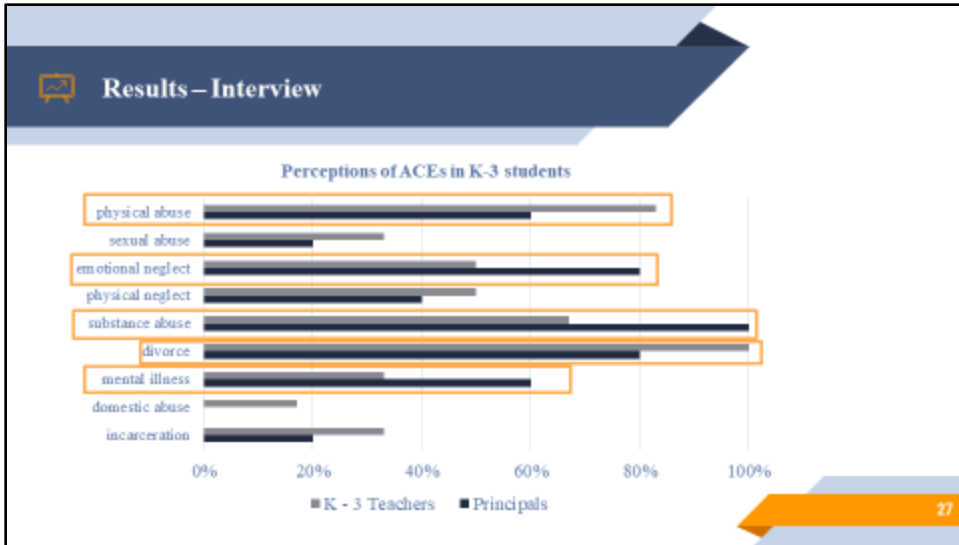
“The overall household dysfunction children are living in is real. Mental illness is a real problem. I had a student whose mother tried to take her own life during the COVID19 pandemic.”



Note: The evidence from the survey indicated that teachers and administrators perceived the four most adverse childhood experiences they observe within their school districts are:

Emotional neglect / Substance Abuse / Divorce / Mental Illness

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



Note - The evidence from the interviews indicated that teachers and administrators perceived the five most adverse childhood experiences they observe within their school districts are:  
Emotional neglect / Substance Abuse / Divorce / Mental Illness / Physical Abuse



Note: The metaphor that links the themes that have emerged from the research study is a “windshield.” Children are born with a clean slate and a “clear windshield” free of cracks and destruction.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



Note: When children are exposed to household dysfunction and trauma, small “cracks” begin to appear in their development affecting many aspects of their lives. They are still able to maneuver; however, things become less clear for them.



Note:

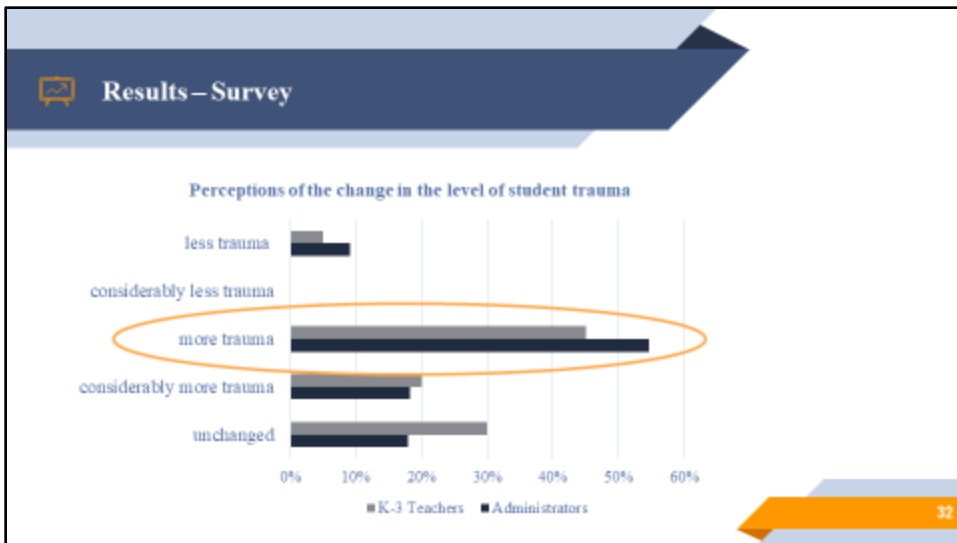
- When children begin to experience more household dysfunction and trauma more cracks appear and keep spreading until eventually their view is obstructed.
- When children have an obstructed view they begin to experience behavior changes, negative impacts on their mental health, parents and families become stressed causing more trauma and cracks to appear.
- With this stress children then suffer from continued household dysfunction as parents and caregivers turn to substance abuse, separation, incarceration, divorce, and mental illness.
- The household dysfunction and cycle of physical abuse continues the more stressors/cracks appear.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### Results - Themes

- *Increase of Teachers and Administrators awareness of trauma*
  - ▷ Level of trauma has increased
  - ▷ Trauma has become a buzz word
  - ▷ More documentaries, news coverage, and media exposure

31



Note:

- 100% of Teachers and Principals participating in the interviews reported an increase in the level of trauma K-3 students' experience.

- The majority of Survey participants reported observing more trauma since 2009. Their reasons related to the study themes are:

- Family system: increase in family mental illness / Lack of support for children / emotional neglect / less focus on family interaction / less family values / children being raised by grandparents / Family dynamics are changing / socioeconomic status and unemployment / teaching different children they had many years ago

- Awareness of trauma: teachers, administrators and family are more aware trauma exist / media coverage / documentaries/ the use of technology / teachers are referring students more to counselors than they ever have

- Resources and supports: Minimal youth mental health services / lack of supports and resources for struggling families /

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

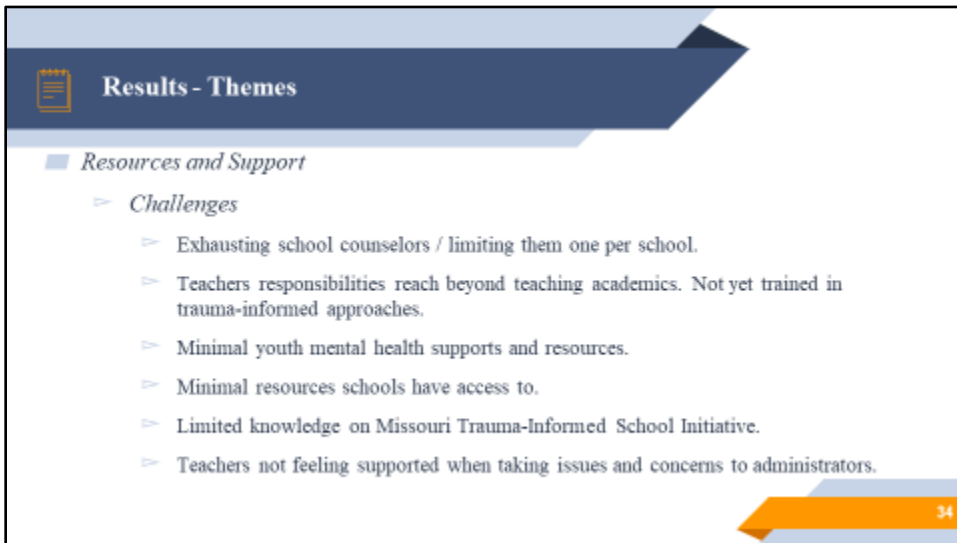


Note:

- The rearview mirror and blurred windshield represents that when we look back we can see a clearer picture. We can look back and see the trauma and dysfunction that has caused developmental concerns, mental health implications, and a sense of how trauma has impacted children's lives. By focusing on the cracks we have blurred vision but rather we need to be focusing on our awareness, supports and resources to rebuild the windshield.

- The increase of awareness emerged as a theme with both teachers and administrators alike. They all stated the level of early childhood trauma has increased since 2009 making note that the level of awareness of early childhood trauma and prevalence of trauma has increased in the children and families they serve.

- Points made regarding why they felt there has been an increase of awareness is due to trauma being a buzz word that is heard more often. There is more news coverage, documentaries, social media, and more children exposed to trauma than in years past because of household dysfunction, socioeconomic status, abuse, and stress on families.



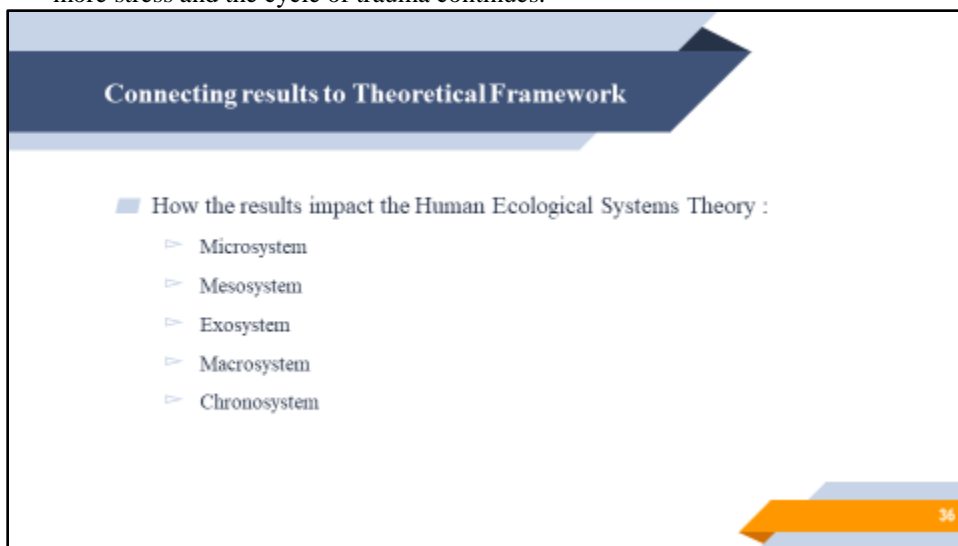
Note: Participants responded to not being familiar with the Initiative. Some stated they had heard about it but did not know the steps of the tiered system to becoming a trauma informed school. -When provided information on the 4 tiered system no teacher or administrator thought their school was a trauma informed school... but rather a teacher and administrator reported their school at being a level 1 just aware that trauma exists. -The rest of the participants felt that level 2 and level 3 was where their schools fell. Being trauma sensitive and trauma responsive.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



Note:

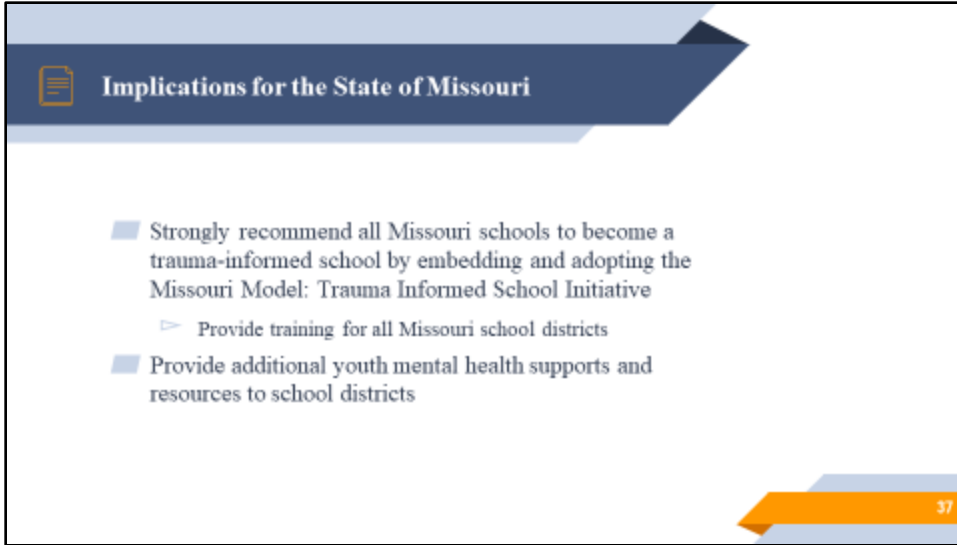
- To help children defy the odds set against them after years of trauma exposure teachers, administrators, and families need the supports and resources to improve the experiences, health, and development of young children.
- Teachers and administrators try navigating through a broken windshield because of their lack of knowledge, support and resources to help children and families.
- The clear unbroken windshield represents that it takes a skill set, tools, resources, and support to make changes. If you don't have the skill set needed to fix a windshield you will be unsuccessful causing more stress and the cycle of trauma continues.



Note: Results showed that the nature of trauma exists within a child's microsystem. In this study it was determined that household dysfunction, physical abuse and emotional neglect were the primary ACEs perceived by teachers and administrators. Participants also noted the following systems impacting early childhood trauma:

- Mesosystem: teachers building connection and trusting relationships with the parents
- Exosystem : social media, parents place of employment social media, technology, and external sources do have an influence on early childhood trauma.
- Macrosystem : family beliefs, lifestyles, resources available to the child
- Chronosystem : The changes of family socioeconomic status, transient families and children moving from school district to school district, moving into the foster system, living with grandparents and the chaos of life.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



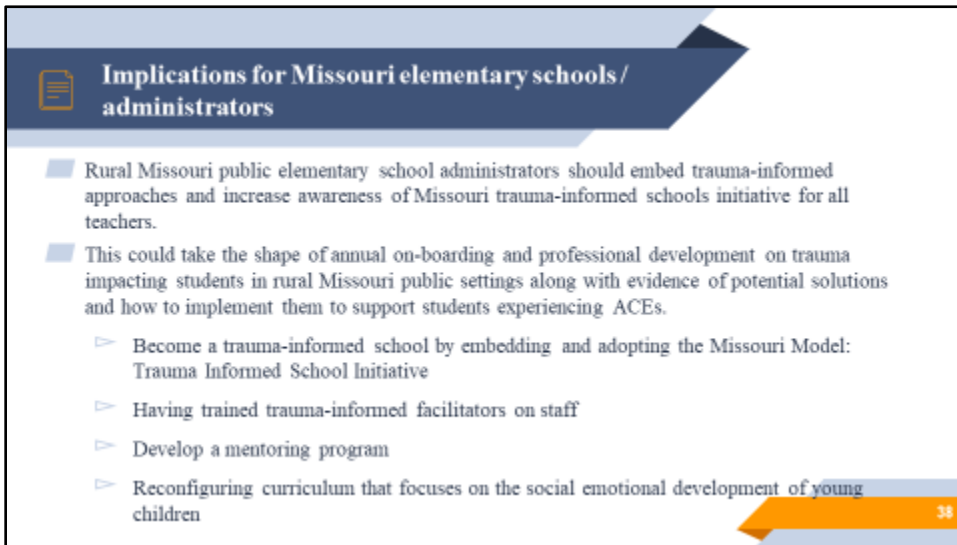
**Implications for the State of Missouri**

- Strongly recommend all Missouri schools to become a trauma-informed school by embedding and adopting the Missouri Model: Trauma Informed School Initiative
  - Provide training for all Missouri school districts
- Provide additional youth mental health supports and resources to school districts

37

Note:

- Trauma Informed School Initiative: With minimal knowledge of the MO Model Trauma Informed School Initiative from K-3 teachers and administrators school districts in the state of Missouri should utilize this initiative and framework for their school districts and organizations.
- Possibly the state of Missouri recommending all Missouri schools become trauma informed schools
- Providing additional youth mental health supports and resources: the presence and more availability of increased youth mental health counselors on site in elementary schools.



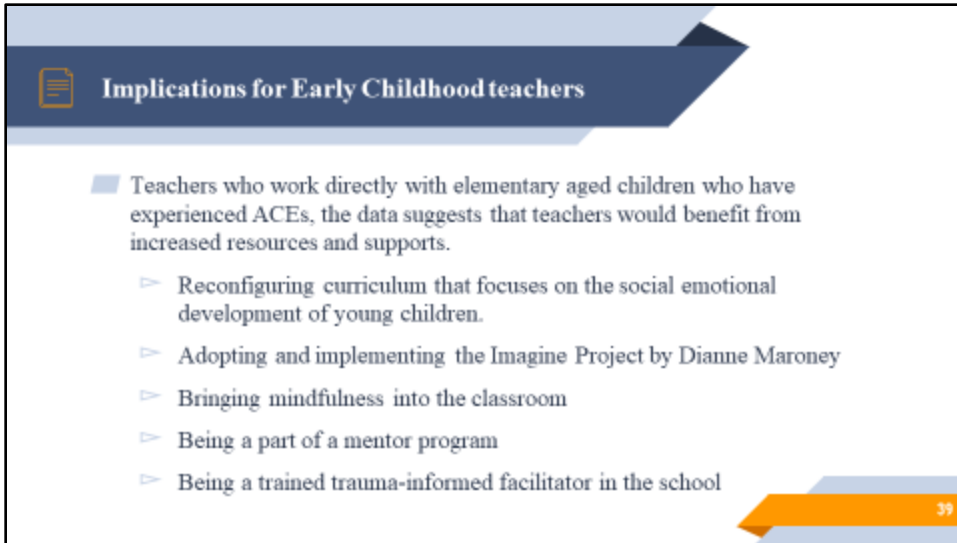
**Implications for Missouri elementary schools / administrators**

- Rural Missouri public elementary school administrators should embed trauma-informed approaches and increase awareness of Missouri trauma-informed schools initiative for all teachers.
- This could take the shape of annual on-boarding and professional development on trauma impacting students in rural Missouri public settings along with evidence of potential solutions and how to implement them to support students experiencing ACEs.
  - Become a trauma-informed school by embedding and adopting the Missouri Model: Trauma Informed School Initiative
  - Having trained trauma-informed facilitators on staff
  - Develop a mentoring program
  - Reconfiguring curriculum that focuses on the social emotional development of young children

38

- Note: - Trauma Informed School Initiative: With minimal knowledge of the Initiative. Administrators should utilize this initiative and framework for their school districts and organizations and become a trauma informed school. Studying and embedding the 4 levels to becoming a trauma informed school.
- Developing a mentor program -When a family that has concerns enters the school district a teacher or administrator gets paired with the family as a mentor.
  - Reconfiguring curriculum making social emotional development and learning the core focus:
    - Exposing children to more play based curriculum where they are able to express their emotions in a positive way. Focusing on the social emotional development of young children.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



**Implications for Early Childhood teachers**

- Teachers who work directly with elementary aged children who have experienced ACEs, the data suggests that teachers would benefit from increased resources and supports.
  - Reconfiguring curriculum that focuses on the social emotional development of young children.
  - Adopting and implementing the Imagine Project by Dianne Maroney
  - Bringing mindfulness into the classroom
  - Being a part of a mentor program
  - Being a trained trauma-informed facilitator in the school

39

Note: - Being a part of a mentoring program: When a family that has concerns enters the school district a teacher gets paired with the family as a mentor.

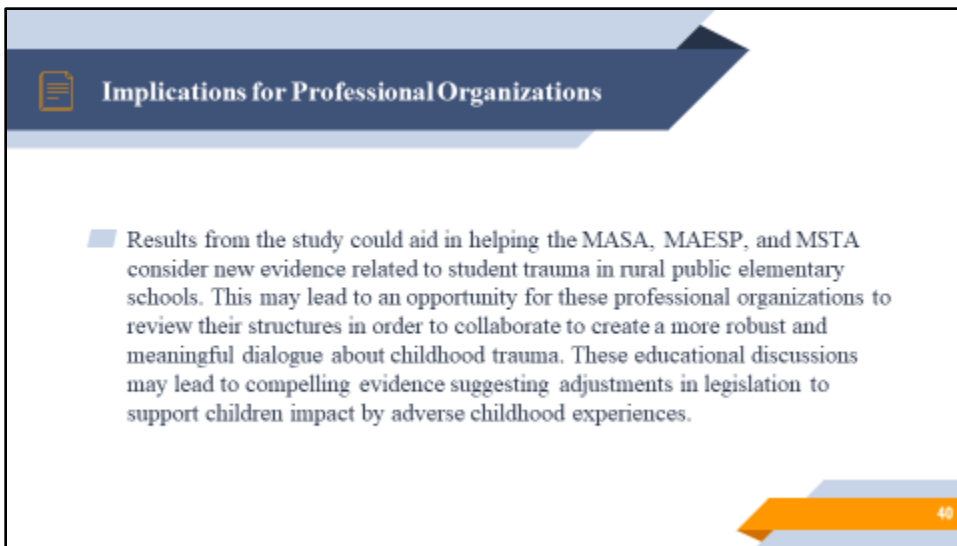
-Becoming a trauma-informed facilitator: Being trained in the Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed School Initiative

-Reconfiguring curriculum with social emotional development and learning as the core focus: Exposing children to more play based curriculum where they are able to express their emotions in a positive way. Focusing on the social emotional development of young children.

-Implementing mindfulness strategies in the classroom-Making mindfulness apart of the everyday schedule. Allowing children to have time to process their emotions and share out.

- Adopting the Imagine Project by Dianne Maroney

-Allowing children to write their story adding to it daily or weekly.




**Implications for Professional Organizations**

- Results from the study could aid in helping the MASA, MAESP, and MSTA consider new evidence related to student trauma in rural public elementary schools. This may lead to an opportunity for these professional organizations to review their structures in order to collaborate to create a more robust and meaningful dialogue about childhood trauma. These educational discussions may lead to compelling evidence suggesting adjustments in legislation to support children impact by adverse childhood experiences.

40

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

 **Implications for Educator Preparation Programs**

- Educator preparation programs hold a measure of responsibility to infuse the best practices for understanding and responding to trauma in elementary settings by augmenting awareness of ACEs and their impact on student learning.
- By preparing prospective and future teachers to support students who have experienced ACEs more resources will be brought to bear to support rural public elementary students as well as their teachers' and administrators'.

41

Note: Teacher preparation has lagged in addressing the importance of student trauma but the data suggests it is a persistent equity issue warranting the attention of the field.

**What I have learned...**



42

Note:

- Trauma is real, it does not discriminate, it is not going anywhere and it's impacting Northwest Missouri's most vulnerable population.
- Families are broken, children are broken, and families do not have the support or resources to break the cycle of trauma.
- There is a need for teachers and administrators to be trained in trauma-informed approaches to fully support our youngest learners.
- There is a need for Northwest Missouri school districts to adopt and embed the Missouri Model Trauma-Informed School Initiative.



Thank you for your time!

**QUESTIONS?**

You can find me at:  
[rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu)

43



REFERENCES

44

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



### References

- Anda, R.F., Dong, M., Brown, D.W., Felitti, V.J., Giles, W.H., Perry, G.P., Valerie, E. J., & Dube, S.R. (2009). The relationship of adverse childhood experiences to a history of premature death of family members. *BMC Public Health*, 9(106), 1-10. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-9-106
- Bethell, C. D., Newacheck, P., Hawes, E., & Halfon, N. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences: Assessing the impact on health and school engagement and the mitigating role of resilience. *Health Affairs*, 33(12), 2016-2115. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0914
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, 513-531.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiences by Nature and Design*. Cambridge: Harvard, UP.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (Eds.), *Readings on the development of children* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (p.3-8). Worth Publishers: New York, NY.
- Burke-Harris, N. (2014). The childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_lifetime?lang=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?lang=en)

45



### References

- Carter, P., & Blanch, A. (2019). A trauma lens for systems change. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 49-54.
- Center for disease control and prevention. (2019). Retrieved July 1, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acesstudy/index.html>
- Chafouleas, S. M., Johnson, A. H., Overstreet, S., & Santos, N. M. (2016). Toward a blueprint for trauma-informed service delivery in schools. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 144-162.
- Cole, S. F., Eisner, A., Gregory, M., & Ristuccia, J. (2013). Helping traumatized children learn II: Creating and advocating for trauma-sensitive schools. In Rossen, E. (Ed.), *Supporting and educating traumatized students*. Oxford University Press, 4-45.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- DeYoung, A. C., Kenardy, J. A., & Cobham, V. E. (2011). Trauma in early childhood: A neglected population. *Clinical Child Family Psychology Review*. doi:10.1007/s10567-011-0094-3

46

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



### References

- Dube, S. R., Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Chapman, D. N., Williamson, D. F., & Giles, W. H. (2001). Childhood abuse, household dysfunction, and risk of attempted suicide throughout the life span. Findings from the adverse childhood experiences study. *American Medical Association, 286*(24), 3089 – 3096.
- E. Burham (personal communication, October 25, 2019)
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14*(4), 245-258.
- Fink, A. (2017). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (2005). *Readings on the development of children* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (p.3-8). Worth Publishers: New York, NY.

47



### References

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative data. In Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (Eds.), *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Martinez, G. M. (2017). *Report: 47 percent of children in Missouri have adverse childhood experiences*. The Columbian Missourian: Columbia, MO.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (n.d). Retrieved July 15, 2019, from <https://dese.mo.gov/>.
- Missouri Model: A Developmental Framework for Trauma Informed. MO Dept. of Mental Health and Partners (2014). Retrieved from <https://saintfrancisministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MO-Model-Working-Documents-february-2015.pdf>
- National Kids Count Data Center; Annie E. Casey Foundation. National Survey of Children's Health (2016). <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9709-children-who-have-experienced-two-or-more-adverse-experiences?loc=1&loc2=2#detailed/2/2-52/rme/1539/my/18961,18962>

48

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



### References

- National Survey of Children's Health. (2016). Retrieved July 3, 2019 from <https://www.childhealthdata.org/learn-about-the-nsch/NSCH>.
- Nodaway County Children's Division. (2020). <https://dss.mo.gov/ed/office/nodaway.htm>
- Paquette, D., & Ryan, J. (2001). Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory. National Louis University.
- Perry, B. D. (2014). Helping traumatized children: A brief overview for caregivers. *The Child Trauma Academy*.
- Ratcliffe, M., Burd, B., Holder, K., & Fields, A. (2016). Defining rural at the U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C.
- Sacks, V., & Murphey, D. (2018). *The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences nationally, by state, and by race and ethnicity*. Child Trends: Bethesda, MD.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Simon, K., Compton, S. E., & Overstreet, S. (2020). The evolution of trauma-informed schools. In Rossen, E. (Ed.), Supporting and educating traumatized students. *Oxford University Press*, 4-45.
- Substance abuse and mental health services administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach, 1-27. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

49



### References

- Van der Kolk, B. A. (2005). Developmental trauma disorder: Toward a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 401-208.
- Wilson, J. M., Fauci, J. E., Goodman, L. A. (2015). Bringing trauma-informed practice to domestic violence programs: A qualitative analysis of current approaches. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85(6), 586-599.
- Wisdom, C. S., & Maxfield, M. G. (2001). An update on the cycle of violence: Research in brief. *National Institute of Justice*.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). Case study research: Design and methods (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). In Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

50

**SECTION FIVE**

**CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP**

**Target Journal**

The target journal for publication is the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly (ECRQ)*.

**Rationale for this Target**

The primary focus of the article published in the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly (ECRQ)* was focusing on early childhood development from birth through eight years of age and predominantly qualitative and quantitative research on issues related to early childhood development and educational theory and practice. The *ECRQ* was an applied journal and authors published in this journal were interested in work that had educational relevance in social, policy, and implications that has strengthened links between research and practice. Topics of interest within the *ECRQ* were the following: (a) program quality, (b) children's transition into the school system, (c) efficacy of early intervention programs, (d) children's social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral development, (e) best practices for classrooms and curriculum, and (f) professional development and training opportunities for early childhood practitioners. The *ECRQ* has experienced a five-year impact of 3.963 and had completed a double-blind review process.

**Outline**

- Title Page
- Highlights
- Abstract

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Concise factual abstract
- Graphical abstract
- Keyword
- Subdivision
- Introduction
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Appendices
- References

### **Plan for Submission**

Who: Elsevier Science Inc. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

When: Fall 2020

How: Elsevier Editorial System (EES) or EVISE®. The system used will depend on the journal. Ultimately, the Editor will decide on how well your article matches the journal.

A target backup magazine, the *Missouri Elementary Principal Magazine*, has been chosen for backup submission purposes. The magazine was an official publication of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP). The magazine has been published four times a year in September, December, February, and May. The primary focus of the magazine was to inform Missouri Principals on current issues, trends, and topics impacting principals.

**Submission-Ready Article**

**Title**

Qualitative bounded case study on teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools.

**Abstract**

The purpose of this bounded case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was to add to the existing research literature on early childhood trauma in addition to understanding teacher and administrator perceptions on students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools from 2009 through 2019. Survey participants ( $n=31$ ), and interview participants ( $n=11$ ) consisting of kindergarten through third grade teachers and elementary administrators completed a survey and shared their perceptions and lived experiences of students ACEs.

Teachers and administrators noticed the most adverse childhood experiences K through third grade children in rural Missouri elementary schools were exposed to included: (a) divorce, (b) substance abuse, (c) mental illness, (d) physical abuse, and (e) emotional neglect. Three themes emerged from the study: (1) the family system included household dysfunction that may include impactful events, such as divorce, substance abuse, and mental illness, (2) increase of teachers' and administrators' awareness of trauma, and (3) resources and supports. Teachers and administrators noticed an increase in continued trauma perceived to be because of unstable family conditions systems.

**Keywords:** adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed, teachers, administrators, elementary schools, rural, Northwest Missouri

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### **Funding Sources**

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### **Author**

Rebecca A. Moore  
Early Childhood Instructor at Northwest Missouri State University  
800 University Dr. Maryville, MO 64468  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis Ed.D at the University of Missouri,  
Columbia  
111 Jesse Hall, Columbia, MO 65211  
Personal Address : 1 Golf Tee Lane Maryville, MO 64468  
[rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu)  
Projected Completion Date: June 2020

### **Acknowledgements**

Dissertation Committee members: Dr. Timothy J. Wall, Dr. Nissa Ingraham, Dr. Linda Gray Smith and Dr. Shelly Hiatt.

Editor: Dr. Jodi Elder

### **Highlights**

- Divorce, substance abuse, mental illness, physical abuse, and emotional neglect most adverse childhood experiences in children grades kindergarten through third.
- The nature of children's trauma stems from unstable family conditions.
- An increase in student's adverse childhood experiences.
- Minimal knowledge on Missouri Trauma-Informed School Initiative
- Minimal support and resources for teachers and administrators.

**Graphical Abstract**



**Introduction**

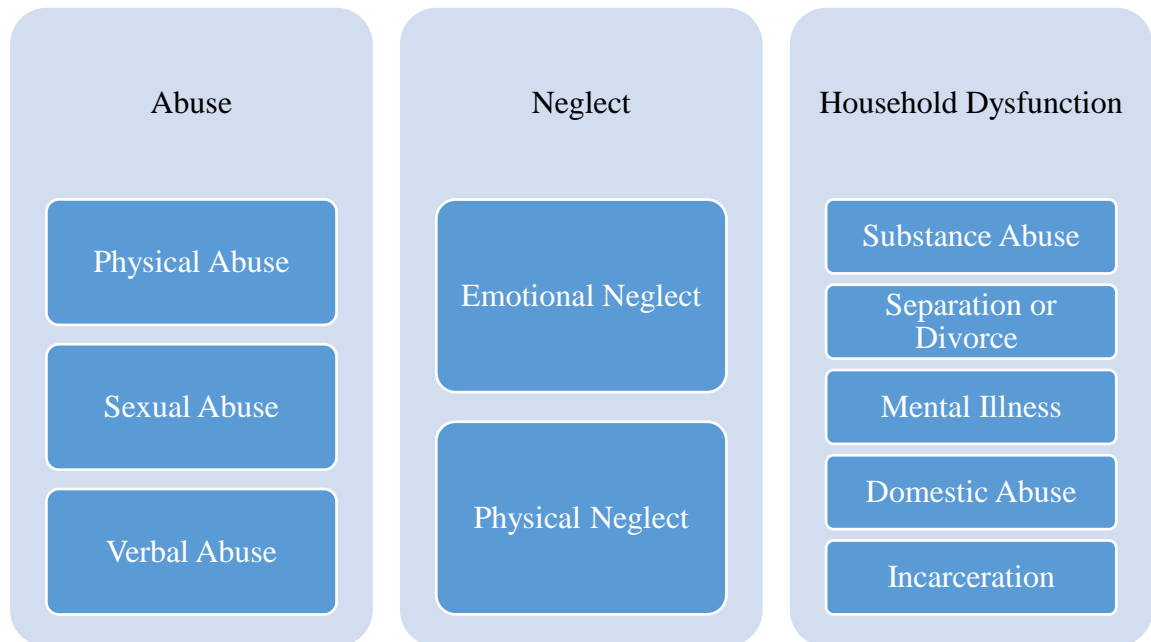
The main objective of the study was to understand teachers' and administrators' perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools. The overarching research question guiding this qualitative bounded case study was: What are teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third-grade classrooms from 2009-2019?

**Background**

Prolonged stress linked to adverse childhood experiences impacts a child's health development across the lifespan (Bethell et al., 2014). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was a term coined by Dr. Vince Felitti and Dr. Robert Anda in 1995. The term adverse childhood experiences was defined by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as abuse, neglect, or traumatic experiences an individual encounters

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

before the age of 18 (CDC, 2019). The ACEs study was a 10-item self-reporting questionnaire that identified childhood exposure in three categories: (1) abuse, (2) neglect, and (3) household dysfunction (see Figure 1) (Felitti, 2016).



*Figure 1.* A chart displaying the 10 types of adverse childhood experiences measured in the ACE questionnaire (Felitti, 2016).

The concept of trauma emerged through the field of mental health (SAMHSA, 2014). This research study utilized SAMHSA's definition of trauma, which emphasized the "three E's of trauma;" (1) event(s), (2) experience of the event(s), and (3) effect. As SAMHSA (2014) stated:

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, and that have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (p. 7)

Nearly half of all children in the U.S. experienced at least one adverse childhood experience during their lifetimes (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative,

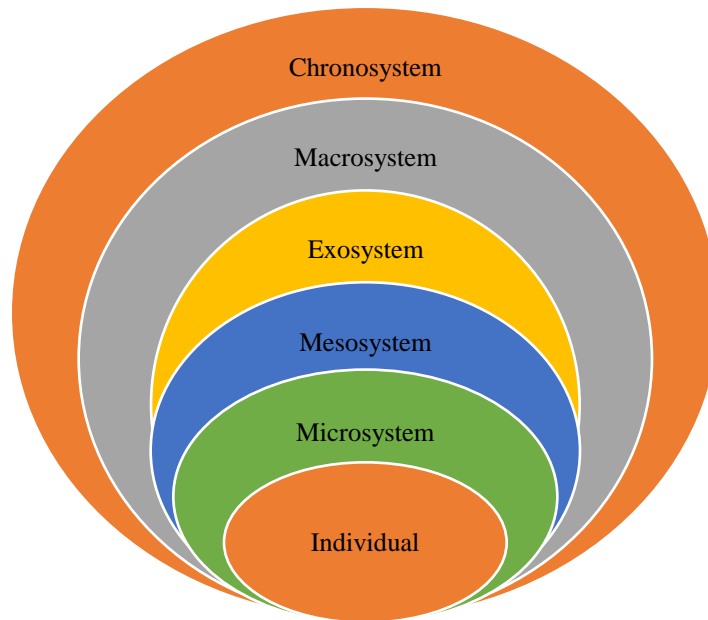
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

2013); therefore, it was critical that teachers understood how to address students' trauma in their classrooms (Reker, 2016).

### **Literature Review**

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Urie Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The human ecological systems theory emphasized the biological, social, and cultural impact upon an individual's life and stressed the significance of examining children's environments to attempt to understand development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified five subsystems (see Figure 2) in his human ecological systems theory: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem. These subsystems helped to describe how individuals developed within the human ecological systems theory by examining culture, lifestyle, change, and consistency and provided a lens for understanding students' adverse childhood experiences within the research study (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 2.* Representation adapted from Bronfenbrenner's (1977) five subsystems of the Human Ecological Systems Theory.

**Microsystem.** The first system of the human ecological systems theory identified was microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The structure of this system consisted of individuals' immediate surroundings, such as events, social roles, and interpersonal relationships, that formed within the family, school system, neighborhoods, and peer relationships (Paquette & Ryan, 2001; Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

**Mesosystem.** The second system was known as the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem consisted of two-way communication and decision making between two microsystem components (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers and parents working together for the best interest of children was an example of how the mesosystem impacted children's development (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

**Exosystem.** The exosystem was the third system in the human ecological systems theory and involved the influences that indirectly affected children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Indirect influences, such as parents' places of

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

employment, families, social systems, and neighborhoods, were likely to impact children's development (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

**Macrosystem.** The fourth system was the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem involved many different groups, such as children's culture, social classes, ethnic groups, family beliefs, customs, religious traditions, lifestyles, and resources, available to the children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

**Chronosystem.** The last and largest system within the human ecological systems theory was known as the chronosystem. The changes or consistency that took place over time and impacted children's development, such as the families' socioeconomic statuses, places of residence, and the chaotic or simplistic everyday lives, explained by the chronosystem (Gauvain & Cole, 2005).

The research study utilized three conceptual underpinnings. Trauma was viewed through the following lenses: (a) United States, (b) the state of Missouri, and (c) Rural Northwest Missouri. The subsequent concept of early childhood trauma was an additional conceptual underpinning used for the study.

### **Trauma in the United States**

Evidence has shown there was an increase in the percentage of children exposed to trauma in the U.S. from 2016–2018 (National Survey of Children's Health, 2016). The 2016 National Survey of Children's Health reported 34 million children, almost half of all United States children aged birth through 17, had at least one adverse childhood experience. More than 20% experienced two or more ACEs, while 35% of all children reported having experienced at least one ACE before entry into kindergarten (National Survey of Children's Health, 2016). The United States Department of Health and Human

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Services' (2012) report indicated that 678,810 children were maltreated compared to the 2013 and 2014 reports being nearly 700,000 children (USDHHS, 2015).

The National Center for Trauma Informed Care (NCTIC) was formed in 2005 by SAMHSA and was designed to provide consultation and training for organizational leaders wanting to implement trauma-informed practices (Fauci, et al., 2015). Trauma-informed schools has been a nationwide movement to create educational environments responsive to the needs of traumatized youth through the implementation of trauma-informed strategies (Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet, & Santos, 2016). In 2015, 17 out of 50 states had established trauma-informed practices (Simon, Compton, & Overstreet, 2020). Additionally, in 2019, 45 out of 50 states reported having information about trauma-informed schools and childhood trauma available on their department of education websites (Simon et al., 2020).

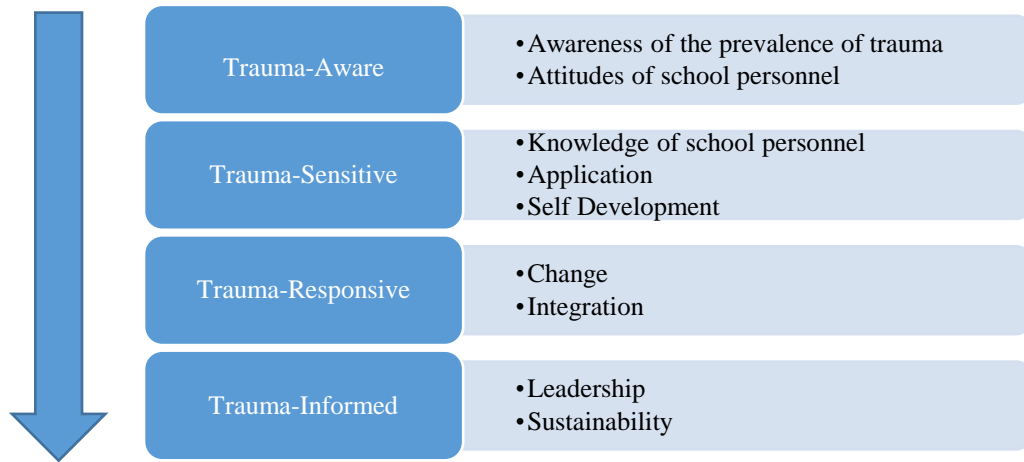
### **Trauma in Missouri**

According to the National Survey of Children's Health from 2015 to 2016, the state of Missouri reported 27% of children (362,000 children) had two or more adverse childhood experiences, which surpassed the national average of 21.7% (Martinez, 2017). The state of Missouri ranked as the fourth highest state in the number of children exposed to two or more adverse experiences (National Kids Count Data Center, 2016).

The Missouri Model Trauma-Informed School Initiative, as described by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE, 2019), has been an approach that involved school personnel understanding, recognizing, and responding to the symptoms of student trauma. The initiative has been a paradigm shift

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

that has developed over time by implementing school support systems through a continuum, see Figure 3 (The Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014).

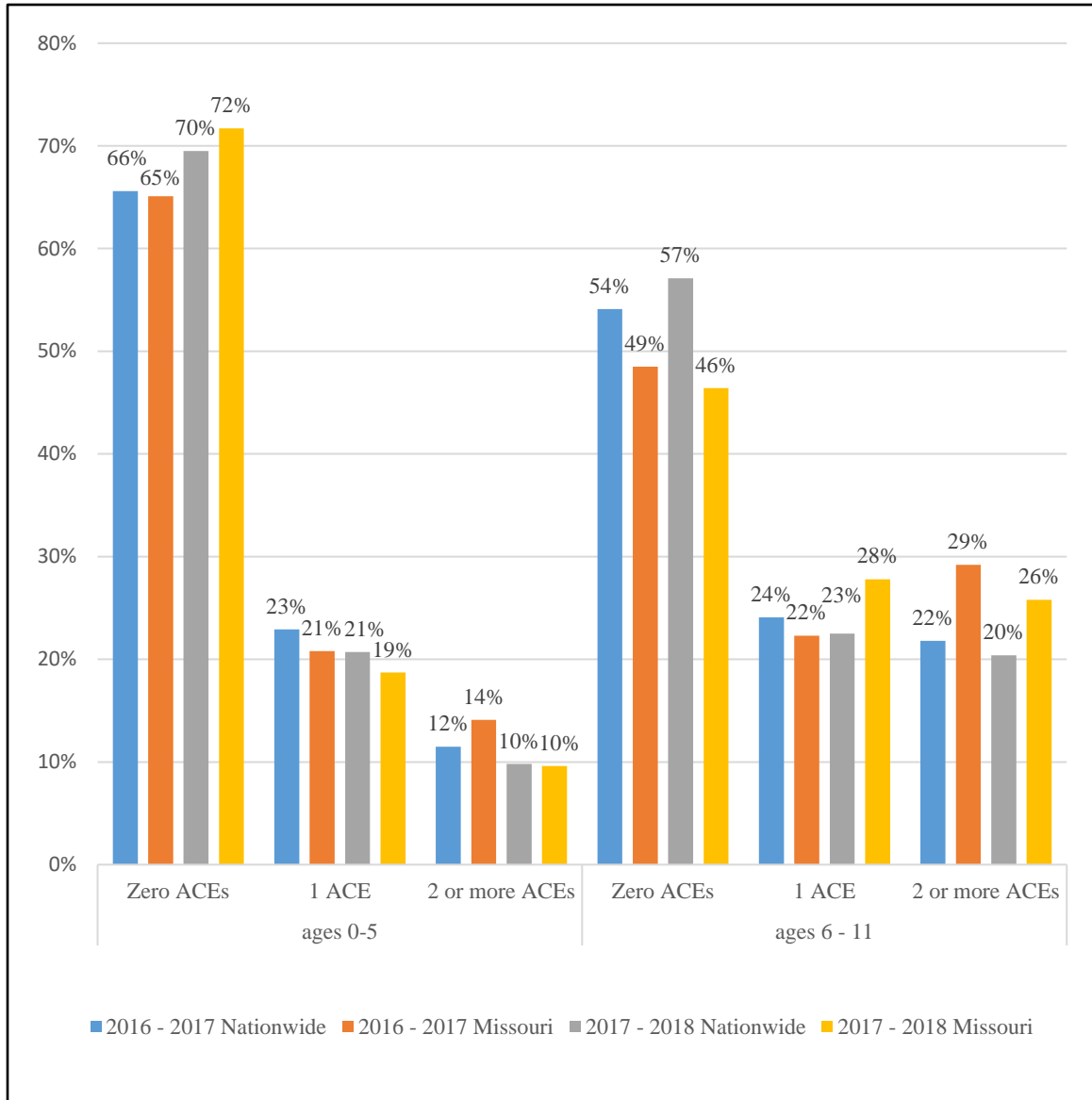


*Figure 3.* Representation of the Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative progression. A continuum for trauma-informed approaches (Missouri Model, 2014).

The Missouri trauma-informed schools initiative has encouraged a shift in how educators and school districts understood trauma, increased services, and supported students (Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014). The model was a continuum of four stages that organizations moved back and forth through over time as they began to comprehend and address students' trauma (see Figure 3) (MODESE, 2019; Missouri Model for Trauma-informed Schools, 2014).

Thus, the research study viewed trauma through the national, state of Missouri, and Nodaway County lenses. Table 1 was a comparative table recreated from the most updated data from the National Survey of Children's Health (2016) that represented the percentage of children aged birth to 11 years who were exposed to adverse childhood experiences nationwide in comparison to the state of Missouri from 2016 to 2017 and 2017 to 2018.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 4.* A comparison table of the percentage of children aged 0 - 11 exposed to adverse childhood experiences nationwide in comparison to Missouri from 2016–2017 and 2017–2018.

### Trauma in Rural Northwest Missouri

Although trauma has been present in schools and noticed by teachers and administrators, no significant research has been conducted about the prevalence of trauma in Northwest Missouri elementary schools. An example of absence of information was found within various outreach programs and lack of information provided to assist

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

families with trauma related issues (personal communication, 2020; Nodaway Children's Division, 2020).

### **Early Childhood Trauma**

As psychiatrist Perry (2014) stated, approximately five million children experienced some type of traumatic event in the U.S. every year. More than two million of these children were physical or sexual abuse victims (Perry, 2014). Although millions of young children were exposed to trauma each year, early childhood was the population largely neglected (DeYoung et al., 2011). Van der Kolk (2005) wrote that childhood trauma was the single most significant health challenge in the United States. Research by Van der Kolk (2005) found that most trauma occurred in the students' homes, reporting that nearly 80% of individuals responsible for mistreating a child were the children's' parents. DeYoung, Kenardy, and Cobham (2011) stated young children were the most vulnerable population. Children had limited coping skills and were strongly dependent on their primary caregivers to protect them (DeYoung et al., 2011). Children did not have the capabilities to report, move away, or protect themselves from predators (DeYoung, et al. 2011).

### **Material and Methods**

Three sources of data collection were used to validate results of the study (Creswell, 2014). Guided by Creswell (2014), a survey, semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013), and document analysis of school district websites were used for triangulation. Triangulation allowed the researcher to cross-validate and assess information from multiple sources of data to minimize limitations (Creswell, 2014).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The researcher chose this method of research because of the strength of drawing from multiple sources of data, minimizing limitations, comparing different perspectives, and developing different measurement instruments, which Creswell (2014) encouraged.

The data collected were from rural Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 12 elementary schools. Rural, as defined by Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, and Fields (2016), were areas not as well populated. The region was defined by farmlands, few housing options, and small town settlements (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). The researcher chose to use kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings, as early intervention with young children was imperative to preventing long-term consequences (Shonkoff, 2009). Three, rural Northwest counties were chosen for the study. The researcher chose these counties, because they were the three most Northwest regional counties in the state of Missouri. Survey data regarding administrators' and teachers' experiences with and knowledge of ACEs was gathered from Missouri kindergarten through third grade teachers and administrators from 12 elementary schools located in the Northwest Missouri region (University of Missouri Extension, 2019). The teachers and administrators selected from the 12 schools were chosen based on the researcher's focus of the study.

Purposeful sampling was used for the study. Purposeful sampling, as described by Fink (2017), was selecting participants based on the purpose of the study and knowledge of the population. The researcher used purposeful sampling when disseminating the survey to all Missouri elementary administrators and K-3 teachers in 12 elementary schools in the rural Northwest Missouri region. The researcher used purposeful sampling when contacting kindergarten through third grade teachers and principals from the 12

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

elementary schools to ask for their interest in participating in interviews with the researcher. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and/or telephone (Seidman, 2013). The researcher scheduled distant interviews with six, K-3 teachers and five principals and began to see saturation among the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling was utilized for website and document analysis of the 12 elementary schools located in the Northwest Missouri counties selected for the study.

The participants in the study were Northwest Missouri elementary administrators and kindergarten through third grade teachers from rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools. Purposeful sampling, as described by Fink (2017), was selecting participants based on the purpose of the study and knowledge of the population.

The researcher utilized purposeful sampling when sending a recruitment email (see Appendices A and B) prior to disseminating a survey via Survey Monkey to 23 Missouri elementary administrators (see Appendix C) and 62 teachers (see Appendix D) from the three Northwest counties school districts chosen for the study (Fink, 2017).

Contact information for the Missouri schools elementary administrators was obtained through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) School Directory on its website at <http://www.MODESE.mo.gov> and the 2019–2020 Missouri School Directory (Doerhoff, 2019) and the participating school districts' websites. Contact information for Northwest Missouri K-3 teachers was obtained through their school districts' websites.

Participants were provided the risks and benefits of study participation. Participants were provided an Informed Consent Form which was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri-Columbia, for

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

participation in the collection of survey data (see Appendix G). In addition, participants willing to participate in the interview were provided an interview Informed Consent Form approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri-Columbia for participation in interview data collection. Participants' emails agreeing to the interview process served as their consent for the interview Informed Consent form (see Appendices H and I). The following collection methods were used to provide the researcher with a holistic account of teacher and administrators perceptions of students' ACEs in rural, Northwest Missouri elementary schools from 2009 through 2019.

Fink (2017) noted surveys were often used in research to obtain information, such as background, perceptions, values, and demographic characteristics, from the participants at specific points in time. This research used an electronic, cross-sectional survey. The survey was disseminated to 23 Missouri elementary administrators (see Appendix C) and 62 teachers - kindergarten through third grade (see Appendix D) in 12 elementary schools located in the three rural Northwest counties chosen for the study via email distribution through Survey Monkey (Fink, 2017).

Additionally, the researcher completed a document analysis of the 12 elementary schools, information on their websites related to trauma-informed awareness, trauma-informed resources to families, and engagement in trauma-informed approaches was documented. The researcher conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (see Appendices E and F) via Zoom and telephone took (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) approximately 40 minutes with Missouri principals and kindergarten through third grade teachers employed at 12 elementary schools in the three rural, Northwest Missouri counties chosen for the study until saturation was met (Seidman, 2013). Saturation, as

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

defined by Seidman (2013), was when the researcher began to hear the same information from the participants. The researcher chose to utilize interviews rather than focus groups, so that participants were comfortable to express their perceptions honestly without feeling pressured by other participants.

The participants' interviews were recorded and transcribed (Seidman, 2013), using the Vidgrid word processing software in the CANVAS learning management course platform. To ensure interview credibility, the researcher utilized member checking, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Member checking occurred to support study validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher sent transcribed interviews to the participants and asked participants to verify for accuracy. The researcher received multiple responses confirming the accuracy of the transcripts.

The researcher engaged in triangulation for data quality by utilizing survey data, document analysis of the school district websites, and interviews of principals and teachers. An illustration of the data collection method the researcher used for the study was represented in Figure 5. This illustration described the step-by-step process supporting data collection.

As seen in Figure 5, the data collection process and analysis of the data occurred in a tiered system, allowing the researcher to disseminate the survey to participants, to complete a document analysis of the school websites, and to conduct Zoom and telephone interviews. The researcher continued data collection until saturation was reached (Seidman, 2013).

Members of the IRB (see Appendix G) through the University of Missouri Columbia, approved the study to ensure safeguarding for the protection of participants.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

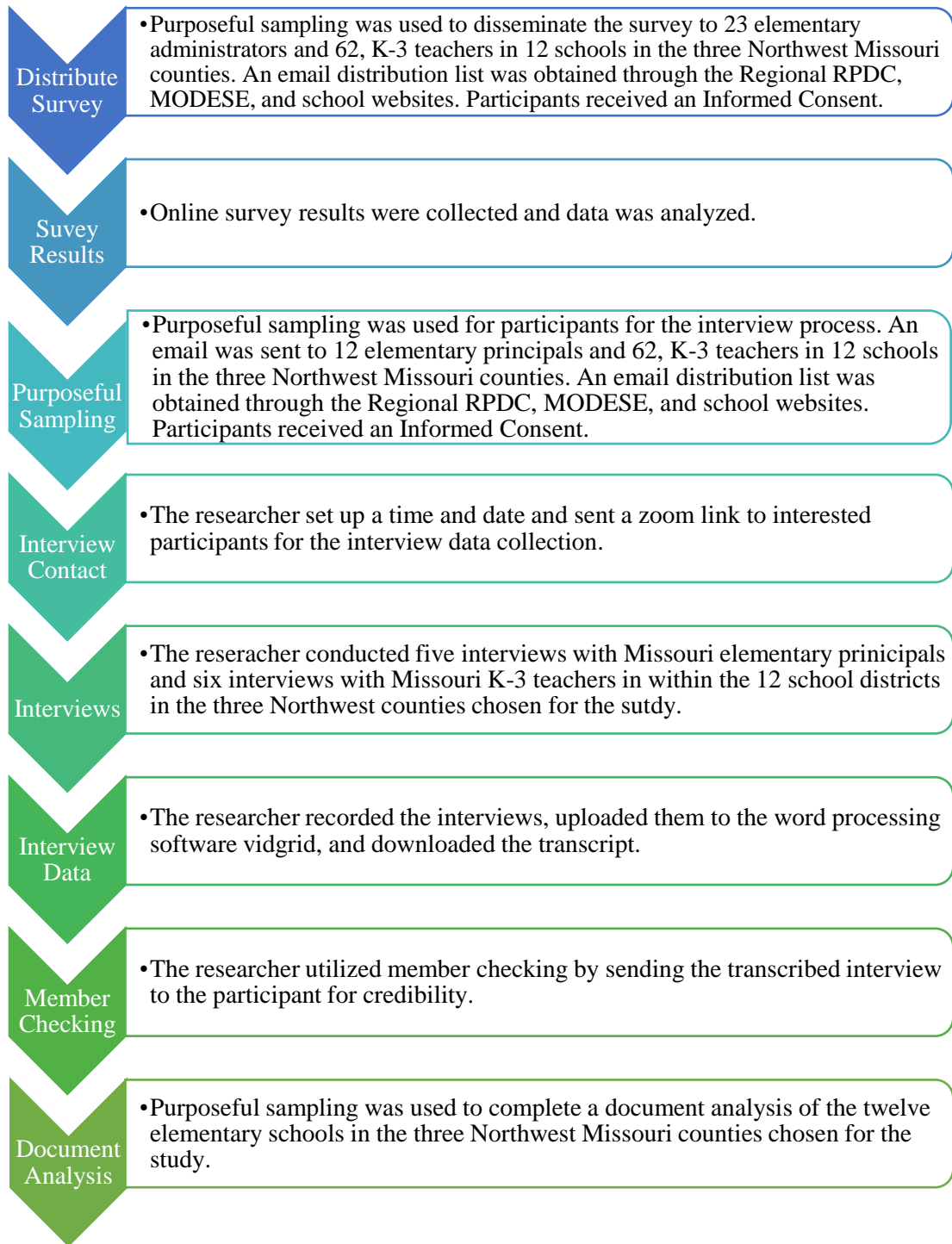
Also, survey participants were provided an Informed Consent (see Appendices H and I) stating they understood the risks and benefits of the study (Seidman, 2013).

The researcher utilized a constant comparative method for data analysis, which was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to make sense of the data collected. The constant comparative method allowed the researcher to understand the data by arranging material into common categories and themes for interpretation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Axial coding, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) as a qualitative research technique that connected data by categories and subcategories, was used to help interpret the interview transcripts. Analysis of the school district websites and descriptive statistics were used to inform survey results. Descriptive statistics analysis began once the researcher received a 48% ( $n=11$ ) administrator response rate and 32% ( $n=20$ ) teacher response rate was obtained. According to Field (2018), a 30% minimum survey response rate retrieval allowed for valid data collection. The researcher completed a document analysis of the 12 elementary schools by documenting which schools had information on their websites related to trauma-informed awareness, provided trauma-informed resources to families, and engaged in trauma-informed approaches.

Once interviews were completed and transcribed, the data was organized, sorted, and coded (Fink, 2017). A qualitative codebook was used, which Creswell (2014) defined a qualitative codebook as a table of predetermined codes, making it easier for the researcher to code the data. The codebook allowed the researcher to establish categories and maximize coherent patterns and themes (Creswell, 2014). Figure 5 provided further explanation of the data collection process for the research study.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 5.* The methodology of the research study is represented through the progression of data collection and data analysis.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

As seen in Figure 5, the data collection process and analysis of the data occurred in a tiered system, allowing the researcher to disseminate the survey to participants, to complete a document analysis of the school websites, and to conduct Zoom and telephone interviews. The researcher continued data collection until saturation was reached.

### **Results**

Analysis of the school districts' websites and descriptive statistics were used to help inform survey and interview results. The evidence from the document analysis of the websites showed minimal trauma-informed resources and approaches available to families. Thus, these findings were similar to participants reporting their perceptions of the lack of supports and resources available to assist children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. A review of the 12 school district websites revealed seven schools provided hotline numbers for reporting child abuse and neglect. Six schools had a counselor's page with minimal resources for families such as social emotional videos, bullying prevention, suicide prevention, and mindfulness resources. One school district provided the link to the Missouri Model Trauma-Informed School Initiative. There was no website that listed robust trauma-informed resources.

Three themes emerged from the results of the study: (a) the family system, (b) increase in teacher and administrators awareness of trauma, and (c) resources and support.

**Family system.** The first theme that emerged was related to the concept of the family system. In interviews and surveys of study participants, comprised of teachers and administrators in rural elementary settings, the data revealed significant dysfunction. The participants commonly addressed the impact of ACEs on families. The family system

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

included household dysfunction that may have included impactful events such as divorce, substance abuse, and mental illness. One participant's response supported this theme when the teacher stated, "Families are living more in poverty than they used to which causes children to be in unsafe homes, lack the emotional support they need, and parents are abusing drugs more which leads to a decrease in parents' mental health."

Another participant supported this theme by stating, "There is a break in children's homes. There isn't a core parent anymore like there used to be causing more parents to abuse drugs." In addition, physical abuse, emotional neglect, socioeconomic status, generational trauma, and negative media influence were seen as significant to students' adverse childhood experiences. Another participant's response also supported this theme when he noted, "It is rare to see a two parent home anymore due to drug use and divorce." Evidence indicated Bronfenbrenner's (1977) microsystem supported the family systems theme.

Another interview participant stated, "Households are broken. Parents are putting other needs and wants in front of the care of their children." Therefore, children's immediate environments, known as the microsystem, was significantly impacted. Evidence from the study supported the family system theme by identifying teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the most significant adverse childhood experiences they observe within their school districts. Survey and interview participant responses as seen in Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the most perceived ACEs students' experience which included: (a) divorce, (b) mental illness, (c) substance abuse, (d) emotional neglect, and (e) physical abuse.

PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

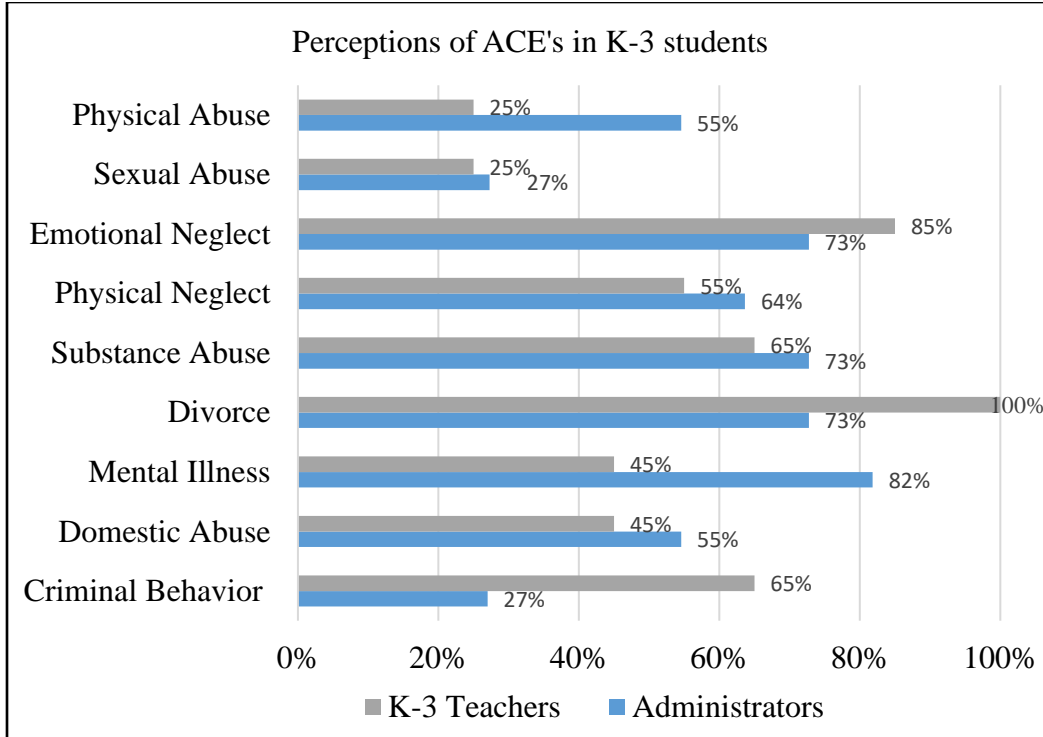


Figure 6. Survey participants' perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences.

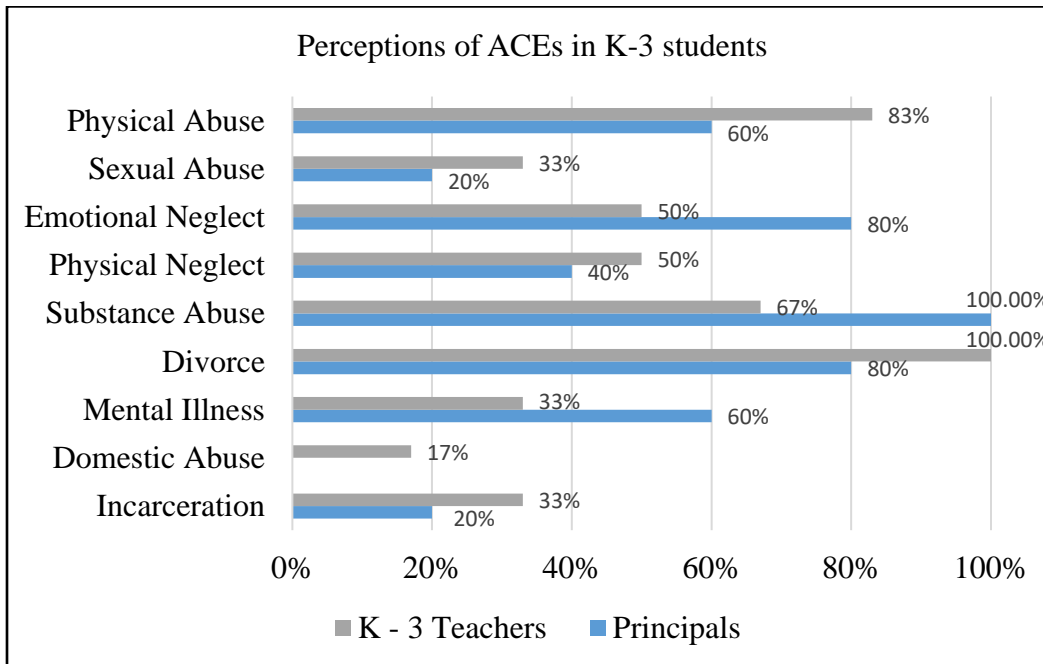


Figure 7. Interview participants' perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Furthermore, the first research question presented in the study was: What are administrators' perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 – 2019? Findings indicated administrators perceived mental illness, emotional neglect, substance abuse, and divorce as being the most observed ACEs seen in their school districts. Evidence supported these findings as administrators noted, "Children are coming from divorced families now more than they used to."

In addition, an administrator stated, "It is very rare to have two parents married and living in the same household. Children are jumping around and there is no stability or emotional support." These quotations supported the conclusion that the family system, which Bronfenbrenner viewed as the microsystem, was most impacted.

The second research question presented in the study was: What are teachers' perceptions of student's adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009–2019? Findings indicated teachers perceived mental illness, emotional neglect, substance abuse, physical abuse, and divorce as being the most observed ACEs seen in their school districts. Evidence supported these findings as teachers noted, "Parents are having children because it is the status quo. They spend more time on their phones and social media and do not focus on their children leading to emotional neglect and physical abuse." In addition a participant stated, "Families are living in poverty more. They are low income and parents are making bad decisions such as abusing drugs. It becomes a generational behavior."

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Bronfenbrenner's microsystem can be a lens through which we advance our understanding of environmental impacts on children's opportunity to learn. This study provided insight into dysfunction in families. A teacher noted, "The overall household dysfunction children are living in is real. Mental illness is a real problem. I had a student whose mother tried to take her own life during the COVID19 pandemic."

Children in rural Missouri public elementary schools routinely live in unstable family conditions, which hinders their academic environment and limits learning. Teachers and administrators may not be fully aware of the dysfunction the researcher uncovered.

**Teacher and administrator awareness of trauma.** The second theme that emerged within the research study was an increase in teacher and administrators awareness of trauma. Survey and interview participants commented their level of awareness of student trauma had increased. Reasons supporting the increase of awareness were: (a) trauma has become a buzz word, (b) there are more documentaries, and (c) an increase in news and media coverage. Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem applied as a lens to understand how children's development was impacted through connections between home and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Evidence from the study supported this finding as a teacher stated, "Building strong and trusting relationships with the students and families as a way of being informed of issues and concerns and having a connection with the family."

Additionally, a teacher noted, "When parents feel comfortable and trust you, they share more information with you which increases your awareness of trauma." Thus, 100% of teacher and principals participating in the interviews reported an increase in

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

their perceptions of the level of trauma K-3 students' experiences (see Figure 8). Data showed unstable family conditions as the underlying reason for an increase in students' adverse childhood experiences. Survey and interview participants perceptions given for the increase of students' ACEs related to the study's themes were shown in Table 1.

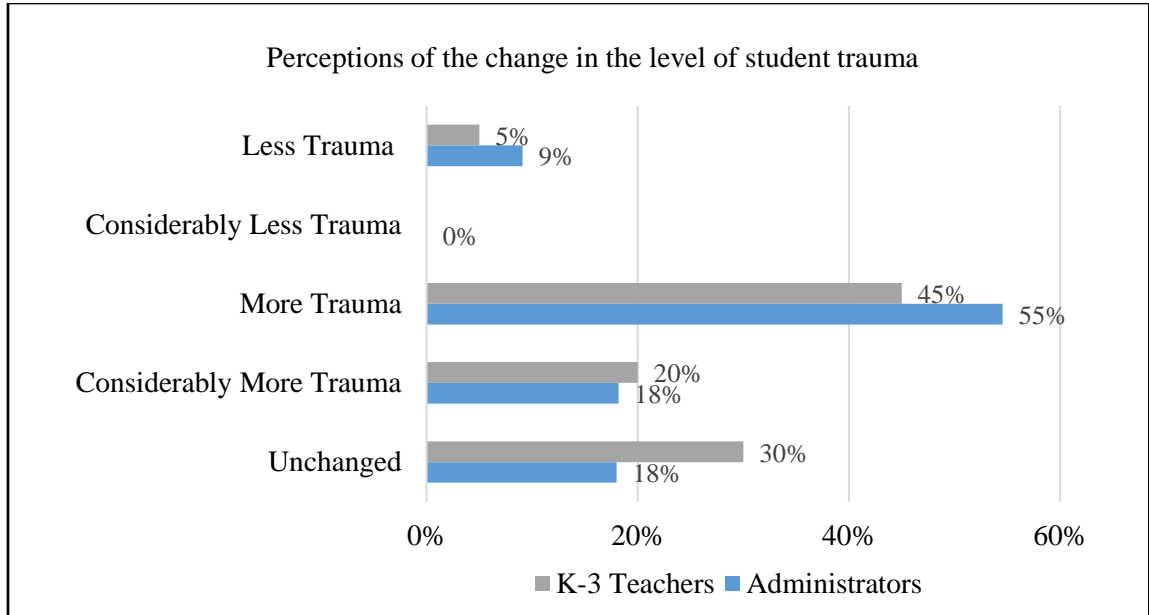


Figure 8. Participants' perceptions on the change of students' trauma from 2009–2019.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Table 1

*Participant Perceptions of the Increase of Rural Missouri Elementary Student Trauma*

Family systems	Awareness of trauma	Resources and support
There is an increase in family mental health illness.	Teachers and administrators are more aware of the prevalence of young children exposed to trauma.	There are minimal youth mental health services.
There is a lack of family support for young children.	The increase in media coverage.	Lack of supports and resources for children and struggling families.
Children are suffering from emotional neglect.	More documentaries on children exposed to trauma.	Minimal support from administrators when reporting student concerns.
Less focus on family interaction.	Technology advancements.	
Less family values.	Teachers are referring students to counselors more than they ever have.	
Children are being raised by grandparents.		
Family dynamics are changing.		
Families low socioeconomic status.		
Families frequent change of employment.		

*Note.* Participants' perceptions of the increase of students' ACEs categorized by the study's three themes.

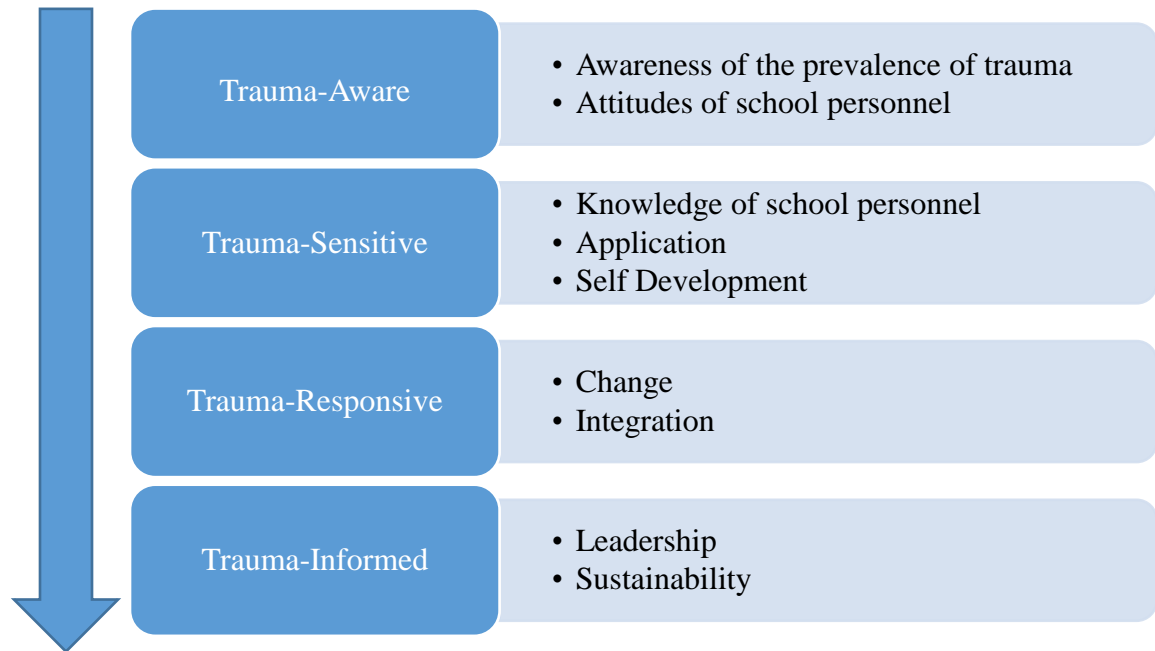
**Resources and support.** The third theme that emerged from the research study was minimal resources and supports available to teachers and administrators to effectively support students exposed to trauma. Evidence showed challenges teachers and administrators face when working with students exposed to ACEs. Some of those challenges described included: (a) exhausting school counselors and/or limiting one counselor per school, (b) teachers responsibilities reaching beyond teaching academics,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

(c) teachers and administrators not being properly trained in trauma-informed approaches, (d) minimal youth mental health supports and resources, (e) teachers not feeling supported when taking students' issues and concerns to administrators, and (f) teacher and administrator limited knowledge on Missouri Trauma-Informed School Initiative. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) exosystem was used as a lens to understand the influences that impact children's development through indirect interactions, and environmental elements, in particular, social systems and services. Participants noted a lack of resources and supports when working with children exposed to ACEs. These services of providing resources and supports to teachers and administrators could benefit families and vulnerable children.

Participants responded not being familiar with the Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed School Initiative. Some stated they had heard about it but did not know the steps of the tiered system to becoming a trauma-informed school (see Figure 9). When provided information on the four-tiered system, no teacher or administrator thought their school was a trauma informed school. One teacher and administrator reported their school being a Level One and just being aware trauma exists. The remaining participants reported their schools fell within a Level Two or Level Three.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 9.* Representation of the Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative Progression. A continuum for trauma-informed approaches (Missouri Model, 2014).

Consequently, the results of the research study concluded that the nature of early childhood trauma often existed primarily within a child’s microsystem. Evidence from the research study determined that household dysfunction, physical abuse, and emotional neglect were the primary adverse childhood experiences perceived by teachers and administrators resulting in dysfunction within the family system and those closest to the child.

Although, the child’s microsystem was determined to be the system most impacted by early childhood trauma, participants also noted the following human ecological systems impacted by trauma. The mesosystem and the importance of teachers building connections and trusting relationships with children and parents. The exosystem and the influence of social media, technology, and parents places of employment. The macrosystem and the impact of family beliefs, lifestyles, and resources available to the

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

child. Lastly, the chronosystem and the changes of family socioeconomic status, transient families, and children moving in and out of the foster care system.

### **Making Meaning**

Teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences proved significant in the study. The results indicated the types of adverse childhood experiences young children were exposed to in rural, Northwest Missouri as posing significant challenges for their developments and impacted their school performances as found in the perceptions of teachers and administrators. A metaphor chosen to connect and make meaning of the three themes found within the research study was a car windshield. Children were born with a clean slate and a "clear windshield" free of cracks and destruction.



When children were exposed to household dysfunction and began to experience adverse childhood experiences, small "cracks" begin to appear in their development affecting many aspects of their lives. They were still able to maneuver; however, things became less clear for them.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



When children began to experience more household dysfunction and adverse childhood experiences more cracks appeared and kept spreading until eventually their view was obstructed. When children had an obstructed view, they begin to experience behavior changes, negative impacts on their mental health, parents and families became stressed, causing more trauma and cracks to appear. With this stress, children then suffered from continued household dysfunction as parents and caregivers turned to

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

substance abuse, separation, incarceration, divorce, and mental illness. The household dysfunction and cycle of physical abuse continued the more stressors/cracks appear.



The rearview mirror and blurred windshield represented that when we look back we can see a clearer picture. We can look back and see all of the trauma and dysfunction that has caused developmental concerns, mental health implications, and a sense of how trauma has impacted children's lives. By focusing on the cracks we had blurred vision, rather we need to be focusing on our awareness, supports and resources to rebuild the windshield.



## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

To help children defy the odds set against them after years of trauma exposure teachers, administrators, and families need the supports and resources to improve the experiences, health, and development of young children. Teachers and administrators try navigating through a broken windshield because of their lack of knowledge, support and resources to help children and families. The clear unbroken windshield represents that it takes a skill set, tools, resources, and support to make changes. If you don't have the skill set needed to fix a windshield you will be unsuccessful causing more stress and the cycle of trauma continues.

### **Discussion**

As previously mentioned, the theoretical framework guiding this study was Urie Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The researcher connected the study's themes and implications for practice to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) five subsystems: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem.

**Microsystem.** The first theme identified within the study was the family system. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) microsystem was used as a lens to deeper the understanding of this theme. Within the microsystem children's development was impacted by their family units, schools, and individuals closest to the child, such as parents, siblings, and teachers. Evidence from the study proved the most frequent ACEs children were exposed to included household dysfunction, such as divorce, mental illness, substance abuse, physical abuse and emotional neglect.

Implications from the study suggested families could be supported from teachers and administrators through a mentoring program providing families with support and

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

resources. Additionally, schools could adopt the MO Model Trauma-Informed School Initiative to become a trauma-informed school and allow teachers to become trauma-informed facilitators. Their knowledge and training could impact children's immediate environment by focusing on trauma-informed approaches, such as mindfulness and curriculum dedicated to social emotional development.

**Mesosystem.** The second theme identified was teachers' and administrators' awareness of trauma. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) mesosystem helped to articulate this theme. The mesosystem impacted children's development through connections between home and school. Participants from the study shared the importance of building trusting relationships with their students' families as a way of being informed of issues and concerns within the home. Participants noted when parents felt comfortable and trust you, they shared more information which increased their awareness of trauma. Implications from the study suggested a mentoring program pairing up teachers and administrators with families to provide support and resources that can strengthened the relationships between school personnel and families.

**Exosystem.** The third theme identified in the study was resources and support. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) exosystem provided a deeper lens into this theme and helped to understand how parents' places of employment, media, neighborhoods, social services and systems impacted children's development indirectly. Participants from the study noted children were impacted through their parents' employment inconsistencies and negative media influences. Teachers' and administrators' awareness of trauma significantly increased due to more media exposure and documentaries of children exposed to trauma.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Additionally, results from the study could aid in helping professional organizations such as MASA, MAESP, and MSTA consider new evidence related to student trauma in rural public elementary schools. This may lead to opportunities for these professional organizations to review their structures to collaborate to create a more robust and meaningful dialogue about childhood trauma. These educational discussions may lead to compelling evidence suggesting adjustments in legislation to support children impacted by adverse childhood experiences (MAESP, 2019; MASA, 2020; MSTA, 2019). These professional organizations can advocate for children by providing funding and ensuring regional cooperatives across the state of Missouri provide resources and supports to children exposed to ACEs.

**Macrosystem.** Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem provided a deeper lens in understanding how children's development was impacted by their families' socioeconomic statuses, family values, beliefs, customs, and lifestyles significantly. Participants from the study stated families were impacted by low socioeconomic status in the rural area of Northwest Missouri. Additionally, participants noted there were less family values, family interactions, and an overall lack of focus on family beliefs and values than in years past.

**Chronosystem.** The changes or consistency taking place over time and impacting children's development, such as the families' socioeconomic statuses, places of residence, and the chaotic or simplistic everyday lives, explained the chronosystem (Gauvain & Cole, 2005). Providing a mentoring program with teachers and administrators through the children's schools benefited families by offering consistent supports, resources and minimizing chaos.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Additionally, educator preparation programs hold a measure of responsibility to infuse the best practices for understanding and responding to trauma in elementary settings by augmenting awareness of ACEs and their impact on student learning. Teacher preparation has lagged in addressing the importance of student trauma but the data suggests it is a persistent equity issue warranting the attention of the field. By consistently preparing prospective and future teachers to support students, who had experienced ACEs more resources will be brought to bear to support rural public elementary students as well as their teachers and administrators and in return positively impact a child's development.

**Further implications.** The research study provided implications for the State of Missouri by strongly recommending an increase in funding for schools to provide professional development, courses, and hands on learning strategies of trauma-informed approaches to develop the skill set needed to work with children exposed to trauma. In addition, increasing on site youth mental health counselors in Missouri elementary schools. Lastly, with minimal knowledge of the Missouri Model: Trauma-Informed School Initiative from K-3 teachers and administrators school districts in the State of Missouri should utilize the framework.

Additionally, the study provides implications for Missouri elementary school districts. Schools should embed the MO Model Trauma-Informed School Initiative and become trauma-informed schools. By studying and embedding the four levels to becoming trauma-informed organizations, schools could reconfigure their curriculums to expose children to more play-based curriculum where they were more able to express their emotions in positive ways of focusing (MODESE, 2019). By doing this, schools,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

therefore, would have more core focuses on the social emotional development of young children. The last implication for Missouri school districts was to adopt mentor programs by pairing a teacher or administrator to families to offer resources and supports.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the data shows it would be unethical to continue to have young children exposed to adverse childhood experiences and to not work to improve trauma-informed practice in Missouri schools. Additionally, it has been unfair to continually ask teachers and administrators to provide support when they were not equipped to do so. Families and children needed the support and resources to help combat the generational cycle of trauma. It is through the school system perhaps that families gained understanding of how adverse childhood experiences were significantly hindering their children's development. Thus, preparing teachers and administrators to provide adequate support and resources for families and children, in the end, benefitted children more than anything.

In conclusion, the research study suggests early childhood teachers become trained trauma-informed facilitators and be trained in trauma-informed approaches. Another recommendation is to expose children to more play-based curriculum focusing on the social emotional development of their students. The implementation of mindfulness strategies in the classroom and adopting the Imagine Project by Dianne Maroney by allowing children to engage in expressive writing would benefit students. Teachers pairing up with families to be mentors to provide resources and supports as needed would be beneficial.

**Appendices**

APPENDIX A: Survey recruitment email for administrators

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Rebecca Moore, and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri- Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

You have been selected to participate in the following research study due to your current administrative role in a rural, Northwest Missouri school district. I would greatly appreciate your support in completing the attached survey at your earliest convenience. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this survey, your efforts are appreciated.

Survey link: \_\_\_\_\_

With great thanks and kind regards,  
Rebecca Moore  
University of Missouri, Columbia : Doctoral Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX B: Survey recruitment email for teachers

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Rebecca Moore, and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

You have been selected to participate in the following research study due to your current role as a Kindergarten through third-grade teacher in a rural, Northwest Missouri school district. I would greatly appreciate your support in completing the attached survey at your earliest convenience. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this survey, your efforts are appreciated.

Survey link: \_\_\_\_\_

With great thanks and kind regards,

Rebecca Moore

University of Missouri, Columbia : Doctoral Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX C: Missouri elementary administrator survey

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

1. What types of adverse childhood experiences are you aware of in students in grades kindergarten – third grade at your school? (Check all that apply)

##### Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

##### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

##### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

2. How long have you served as a school administrator at your current school?

- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 10 or more

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

3. In what role do you serve the school? (Please type in your role)

4. In what years have you served as an administrator in rural Northwest Missouri?

(Check all that apply)

- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019

5. Please rank the following adverse childhood experiences from least to most seen with 1 being the least and 10 being the most in kindergarten – third grade during your time at your current school.

Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Psychological

### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

Branch question: If you have seen a change in severity, please explain why you think this has occurred? (text response)

6. Compared to when you began at your current school, how much has the level of trauma experienced by your kindergarten – third grade students changed?

- |                          |                       |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| considerably less trauma | less trauma           | more trauma           |
| <input type="radio"/>    |                       | <input type="radio"/> |
| considerably more trauma |                       | unchanged             |

7. Have you worked as an administrator at another school?

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Yes                   | No                    |

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

8. If you answered yes on question 7, how long have you served as an administrator overall?

- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 10 or more

9. Based upon your observations in schools and the community since 2009, please provide examples of other student trauma not listed. (text response)

END OF SURVEY

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX D: Missouri kindergarten – third grade teacher survey

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

1. What types of adverse childhood experiences are you aware of in students in grades kindergarten – third grade at your school? Check all that apply

##### Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

##### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

##### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

2. How long have you served as a kindergarten – third grade at your current school?

- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 10 or more

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

3. Which grade do you currently teach?

- Kindergarten
- First Grade
- Second Grade
- Third Grade

4. In what years have you served as a Kindergarten – third grade teacher in rural

Northwest Missouri? (Check all that apply)

- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019

5. Please rank the following adverse childhood experiences from least to most seen with 1 being the least and 10 being the most in kindergarten – third grade during your time at your current school.

Abuse

- Physical

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Sexual
- Psychological

### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

Branch question: If you have seen a change in severity, please explain why you think this has occurred? (text response)

6. Compared to when you began at this school, how much has the level of trauma experienced by your kindergarten – third grade students changed?

Considerably less trauma

less trauma

more trauma

considerably more

unchanged

trauma

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

7. Have you worked as a kindergarten – third grade teacher at another school?

- Yes       No

8. If you answered yes on question 7, how long have you served as a kindergarten – third grade teacher overall?

- 0-2  
 3-5  
 6-10  
 10 or more

9. Based upon your observations in schools and the community since 2009, please provide examples of other student trauma not listed. (text response)

END OF SURVEY

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX E: Interview questions for principals

1. Tell me when you became a school principal?
2. How long have you been a principal?
3. How long have you served as the principal at your current school?
4. Tell me how familiar you are with the Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide information on the Missouri model if needed)
5. Tell me what level your school is in regard to Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide them with an example of the 4 levels trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive, trauma-informed as needed)
6. Elaborate more on the specific types of adverse childhood experiences students have encountered? (provide explanation of the adverse childhood experiences as needed)
7. What are your thoughts on if the incident rate of students' adverse childhood experiences has changed?
8. What is nature of the trauma you are seeing? (For example: family, friends, neighborhoods, churches, relationships etc)
9. Describe how you are informed of students' adverse childhood experiences within your school?

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX F: Interview questions for K-3 teachers

1. Tell me when you became a teacher?
2. How long have you been a Kindergarten through third grade teacher?
3. What grade do you currently teach?
4. How long have you been a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher at your current school?
5. What other grades (if any) have you taught?
6. Tell me how familiar you are with the Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide information on the Missouri model if needed)
7. Tell me what level your school is in regard to Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide them with an example of the 4 levels trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive, trauma-informed as needed)
8. Elaborate more on the specific types of adverse childhood experiences students have encountered? (provide explanation of the adverse childhood experiences as needed)
9. What are your thoughts on if the incident rate of students' adverse childhood experiences has changed?
10. What is nature of the trauma you are seeing? (For example: family, friends, neighborhoods, churches, relationships etc)
11. Describe how you are informed of students' adverse childhood experiences within your school?

# PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

## APPENDIX G: IRB Approval



**Institutional Review Board**  
**University of Missouri-Columbia**  
FWA Number: 00002876  
IRB Registration Numbers: 00000731, 00009014

482 McReynolds Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
573-882-3181  
irb@missouri.edu

March 16, 2020

Principal Investigator: Rebecca Moore (MU-Student)  
Department: Educational Leadership-EDD

Your IRB Application to project entitled A Qualitative bounded case study on teachers and administrators perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through Third Grade was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2020469
IRB Review Number	260799
Initial Application Approval Date	March 16, 2020
IRB Expiration Date	March 16, 2021
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
3. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
4. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the MU Business Policy and Procedure: [http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2\\_250.html](http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2_250.html)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MU IRB Office at 573-882-3181 or email to [muresearchirb@missouri.edu](mailto:muresearchirb@missouri.edu).

Thank you,  
MU Institutional Review Board

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX H: Survey Informed Consent

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of student's adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade. Through participation in this research study you are allowed the right to be informed about the study procedures and participation consent. This informed consent provides you specific information about the research study. If you feel you need further clarification regarding the research study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators on students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade classrooms.

Participants will include Missouri elementary administrators and kindergarten through third grade teachers from the rural Northwest Missouri region. Participants will be asked to complete a survey through Survey Monkey.

The research study will take approximately two months to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45 minute interview and completion of a survey.

As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide administrators and early childhood teachers an understanding of the perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences within the rural Northwest Missouri region. The study will help fill a gap in literature relating to early childhood trauma as well as how administrators and teachers perceive student trauma.

There will be no way of identifying who took the survey and therefore no information from the survey can be cross-referenced. Information will be locked in a secure location, with the researcher only having access to the information. Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The IRB can be reached at [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu) or 573-882-3181.

Researcher Rebecca Moore: 573.768.0486 or [rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu)

University of Missouri Ed.D Advisor contact information: Dr. Timothy Wall  
660.562.1179 or [timwall@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:timwall@nwmissouri.edu)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX I: Interview consent form

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of student's adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade. Through participation in this research study you are allowed the right to be informed about the study procedures and participation consent. This informed consent provides you specific information about the research study. If you feel you need further clarification regarding the research study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators on students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade classrooms.

Participants will include Missouri elementary administrators and kindergarten through third grade teachers from the rural Northwest Missouri region. Participants will be randomly selected to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 45 minutes. There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45 minute interview

The research study will take approximately two months to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide administrators and early childhood teachers an understanding of the perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences within the rural Northwest Missouri region. The study will help fill a gap in literature relating to early childhood trauma as well as how administrators and teachers perceive student trauma.

The researcher is the only individual who will have access to the data; therefore, the information you provide will be kept confidential. Information will be locked in a secure location, with the researcher only having access to the information. Identifying characteristics will not be disclosed at any time.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The IRB can be reached at [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu) or 573-882-3181.

Researcher Rebecca Moore: 573.768.0486 or [rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu)

University of Missouri Ed.D Advisor contact information: Dr. Timothy Wall  
660.562.1179 or [timwall@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:timwall@nwmissouri.edu)

A copy of the informed consent will be given to you prior to your participation in the research study.

## AUTHORIZATION

I have read and understand the purpose of the research study and the contents of the consent form and I voluntarily choose to participate in the research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of the informed consent and is intended for my participation in the research study and does not take away any of my legal rights.

**References**

- Bethell, C. D., Newacheck, Hawes, E., & Halfon, N. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences: Assessing the impact on health and school engagement and the mitigating role of resilience. *Health Affairs*, 33(12), 2016-2115. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0914
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, 513-531.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiences by Nature and Design*. Cambridge: Harvard, UP.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). Contexts of child rearing: Problems and prospects. In Vivara Trisnadi-Rages, L. (Ed.). *An ecological systems approach to reduce children's encounters with obscenity on the internet*. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (Eds.). *Readings on the development of children* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (p. 3-8). New York, NY. Worth Publishers.
- Chafouleas, S. M., Johnson, A. H., Overstreet, S., & Santos, N. M. (2016). Toward a blueprint for trauma-informed service delivery in schools. In Overstreet S., & Chafouleas, S. M. (Eds.), *Trauma-informed schools: Introduction to the special issue*. *School Mental Health*, 8, 1-6: doi 10.1007/s12310-016-9184-1
- Chafouleas, S. M., Johnson, A. H., Overstreet, S., & Santos, N. M. (2016). Toward a blueprint for trauma
- Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. (2013). Overview of adverse child and family experiences among U.S. children. In Reker, K. (Ed.), *Trauma in the classroom: Teachers' perspectives on supporting students experiencing child traumatic stress*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2146](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2146)
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- DeYoung, A. C., Kenardy, J. A., & Cobham, V. E. (2011). Trauma in early childhood: A neglected population. *Clinical Child Family Psychology Review*, 14(3), 231-250 doi:10.1007/s10567-011-0094-3
- Doerhoff, S. (2019). Missouri School Directory, 2019–2020.
- E. Burham (personal communication, October 25, 2019).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Felitti, V. J. (2016, June 23). *Dr. Vince Felitti: Reflections on the adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ns8ko9-ljU>
- Fink, A. (2017). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (2005). *Readings on the development of children* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.), New York, NY: Worth Publishers.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative data. In Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (Eds.). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (4<sup>th</sup>. Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Martinez, G. M. (2017). Report: 47% of children in Missouri have adverse childhood experiences. *The Columbian Missourian*. Columbia, MO.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4<sup>th</sup>. Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019). Retrieved from <https://MODESE.mo.gov/>.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019). *Trauma informed*. Retrieved from <https://MODESE.mo.gov/traumainformed>.
- Missouri Department of Mental Health and Partners. (2014). *Missouri Model: A developmental framework for trauma informed*. Retrieved from <https://saintfrancisinministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MO-Model-Working-Document-february-2015.pdf>
- National Kids Count Data Center. (2016). Annie E. Casey Foundation. *National Survey of Children's Health*. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9709-children-who-have-experienced-two-or-more-adverse-experiences?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/1539/any/18961,18962>
- National Survey of Children's Health. (2016). *Child health data*. Retrieved from <https://www.childhealthdata.org/learn-about-the-nsch/NSCH>.
- Nodaway County Children's Division. Retrieved from <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/office/nodaway.htm>
- Paquette, D., & Ryan, J. (2001). *Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory*. Chicago, IL: National Louis University.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Perry, B. D. (2014). Helping traumatized children: A brief overview for caregivers. *The Child Trauma Academy*. Retrieved from <http://newdirections.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Helping-Traumatized-Children.pdf>
- Ratcliffe, M., Burd, B., Holder, K., & Fields, A. (2016). *Defining rural at the U.S. Census Bureau*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Reker, K. (2016). *Trauma in the classroom: Teachers' perspectives on supporting students experiencing child traumatic stress*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2146](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2146)
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Shonkoff, J. P. (2009). Investment in early childhood development lays the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. In Tremblay R. E., Boivin M, Peters RDeV, (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. Montreal, Quebec: *Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development*.
- Simon, K., Compton, S. E., & Overstreet, S. (2020). The evolution of trauma-informed schools. In Rossen, E. (Ed.), *Supporting and educating traumatized students*. Oxford University Press (pp. 4-45).
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*, 1-27. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- University of Missouri Extension. (2019). Retrieved from <https://extension2.missouri.edu/>
- United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Administration on children, youth, and families. *Child maltreatment 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Administration for Children and Families. Administration on Children, Youth and Families, *Child maltreatment 2013*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Administration for Children and Families. Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. *Child maltreatment 2017*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018). Administration for Children and Families. Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. *Child maltreatment 2018*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2005). Developmental trauma disorder: Toward a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 401-208.

Wilson, J. M., Fauci, J. E., & Goodman, L. A. (2015). Bringing trauma-informed practice to domestic violence programs: A qualitative analysis of current approaches. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85(6), 586-599.

**SECTION SIX**

**SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION**

As I reflect on my time in the Ed.D program, the one word that comes to mind is growth. When I began the program three years ago with nervousness and hesitation, I was skeptical I had what it took to be a successful doctoral student. Being a first generation college student and navigating through my college experience, I was faced with many obstacles. I never anticipated that I would have the opportunity to be a part of the cooperative Ed.D. program; however, as I look back to the beginning of my time in the program, I have seen substantial growth in myself as an educational leader and scholar.

**The influence of the dissertation process on my practice as an educational leader**

The program began with the importance of understanding who I was as a learner by identifying my strengths. This was something I never gave much thought about until being introduced to StrengthsFinder (Gallup, 2012). Having been identified as a strategic thinker, I recognized how I like to assess, to absorb, and to analyze information and situations to plan for future goals, while understanding how my past experiences influenced my present circumstances (Rath, 2008). Recognizing this strength amplified my passion and dissertation work to absorb and understand how students were impacted by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (CDC, 2019) and how those experiences influenced circumstances and my practice as an educational leader.

Learner was another strength of mine identified through Gallups' (2012) StrengthsFinder. Houles (1961) found individuals desired to learn through fulfillment of goals, having opportunities to socialize with others and focusing on acquiring new knowledge for the sake of learning. Personal and professional experiences of working

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

with young children exposed to trauma sparked my interest to learn and understand more about students' ACEs. The dissertation process was the turning point that instilled a love of learning for the topic of trauma and determination to find ways to augment my knowledge on adverse childhood experiences (Moore, 2019).

I believe that learning is a process, of trial and transformation. Reflecting on the dissertation process these are two words that collectively summed up my experience. The theory of margin explained by McClusky (1963) emphasized the significance of learning how to balance the commitments in one's life, such as self-care, religious and spiritual obligations, family responsibilities, relationships, and environments. My dissertation topic of understanding young children's exposure to ACEs was a heavy topic to comprehend. I had to find a balance and ensure self-care strategies and supports were in place and focus on my own relationships and environments throughout the dissertation process. When selecting my dissertation topic, I recognized it was a controversial subject to research; however, as an educational leader, I found it imperative to bring awareness to students' adverse childhood experiences. Although, I have personal beliefs on the topic the process challenged me to be cognizant of my own biases and assumptions, something that I was more insensible to prior to the dissertation process and Ed.D. program.

The dissertation process has impacted my practice as an educational leader significantly. As Gill (2010) stated, individual learning happened as new skills were developed and an individual's awareness, beliefs, and attitudes changed their outlooks on the world, improve job performance, and processing of information. As Merriam and Bierema (2014) stated, individual experiences were the main characteristics of adult learning. The dissertation process has allowed me to acquire new knowledge and skills,

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

such as: (a) understanding the difference between quantitative and qualitative research, (b) utilizing various research methods and recognizing the importance of interviews, surveys, and document analysis, (c) identifying the different components of analyzing and coding data, (d) recognizing the importance of triangulation, and (e) synthesizing literature.

Through the process and Ed.D. program, I have gained a broader understanding and appreciation of valuing and collaborating with individuals of varying backgrounds, which has impacted my practice as an educational leader. Hoggan (2016) coined the term “epistemological” and described it as allowing oneself to be more open and using coherent ways of knowing to be more culturally accepting (p. 67).

Using semi-structured interviews and allowing others to share their stories, I was able to understand their perspectives, to discover new ways of learning, to communicate effectively, and to form connections with the teachers and administrators (Cueva, 2010). I remained open and cleared any preconceived notions prior to talking with teachers and administrators regarding their experiences working with children exposed to adverse childhood experiences. As Dorime-Williams (2018) stated, applying a social justice approach allows one to consider how individuals’ identities, experiences, and sensitivities positively impacted organizations. Through the conversations, I was able to appreciate their roles, value their experiences, and understand how their experiences and sensitivities to children’s ACEs impact their school districts.

Additionally, I have become a more empathetic educational leader throughout this process, which has transformed my learning. Listening to teachers and administrators share their personal experiences and stories of students’ adverse childhood experiences

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

has expanded my knowledge and understanding (Lawrence & Paige, 2016). As Rossiter and Clark (2007) stated, stories have the capacity to transform the listener by leading them to new perspectives and insights.

### **The influence of the dissertation process on me as a scholar**

The dissertation process allowed me to become more confident as a scholarly writer. Reflecting on what identifies me as a scholarly writer would be my passion, my motivation, and my investigative nature. I am more aware about the importance of being passionate about the research study. Having been passionate about my topic, I was eager and motivated to collect data and to hear the perceptions of teachers and administrators on students' adverse childhood experiences. As I collected and analyzed data, examined, and began interpreting, I started to understand how the data could inform practice, a term Mandinach (2012) defined as "data-driven decision making" (p. 71).

Additionally through this process, I have seen how data has the potential to inform decision-making and improve organizations like school districts while providing a foundation for teachers and administrators to examine implications for their practice (Easton, 2009). Data drives decision making and, according to Duncan (2009), was the roadmap to transformation. Through the interview process with teachers and administrators data showed an increase in students' adverse childhood experiences and the need for additional trauma-informed approaches within the elementary schools. Conducting a bounded case study, I now understand the significance of integrating both data and lived experiences to inform practice (Mandinach, 2012). It was important to have a balance of both, as Mandinach (2012) stated, "without data, you are only an opinion" (p. 81). I have learned how to link theory and practice and apply other scholarly

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

contributions to my work throughout the dissertation process, a skill that was lacking prior to the program (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). As I worked through the dissertation process, I came to realize that research should be a lifelong learning process focusing on the problems that scholars emphasized and the evidence as to why it was a problem (Ahl, 2006). I became more knowledgeable about how others' scholarly works on adverse childhood experiences, children's development, and the human ecological systems theory contributed to my study.

The program increased my knowledge and understanding of the significance of engaging in critical reflective practices as an educational leader, which Taylor (2009) described as a core component of transformative learning. Equivalent to the "see-feel-change sequence" (p. 732) that Brown (2006) described as "affective knowing" (p. 10) in how individuals developed an increased awareness of others' feelings based upon personal experience. Mezirow's (2009) theoretical framework emphasizing personal transformation and growth supported the above concepts. Transformative learning summarized the dissertation process for me. I am more open, capable of change, and more reflective as a practitioner (Mezirow, 2000). The process has helped shape who I am as a scholar (Clark, 1993) and undoubtedly changed how I view academia.

**References**

- Administration for Children & Families. (2017). Mission Statement. In Austin-Morris, (Ed.), *Toxic stress education for pediatric practitioners to improve health outcomes*. University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Ahl, H. (2006). Motivation in adult education: A problem solver or euphemism for direction and control? In Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (Eds), *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Alisic, E. (2012). Teachers' perspectives on providing support to children after trauma: A qualitative study. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 27(1), 51-59. doi: 10.1037/a0028590
- Anda, R. F., Dong, M., Brown, D. W., Felitti, V. J., Giles, W. H., Perry, G. P., Valerie, E. J., & Dube, S. R. (2009). The relationship of adverse childhood experiences to a history of premature death of family members. *BMC Public Health*, 9(106), 1-10. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-9-106
- Anderson, E. M., Blitz, L.V., & Saastamoinen, M. (2015). Exploring a school-university model for professional development with classroom staff: Teaching trauma-informed approaches. *School Community Journal*, 25(2), 113-134.
- Morris, A. (2018). Toxic stress education for pediatric practitioners to improve health outcomes. Kansas City, MO: University of Missouri.
- Barr, D. A. (2018). When trauma hinders learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(6), 39-44.
- Beard, J. W. (2014). Adolescents and child maltreatment. *National Association of School Nurses*. doi.org/10.1177/1942602X13517721

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Bethell, C. D., Davis, M. B., Gombojav, N., Stumbo, S., & Powers, K. (2017). *Issue Brief. A national and across state profile on ACEs among children and possibilities to heal and thrive*. John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Retrieved from <http://www.cahmi.org/projects/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces/>
- Bethell, C. D., Newacheck, P., Hawes, E., & Halfon, N. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences: Assessing the impact on health and school engagement and the mitigating role of resilience. *Health Affairs*, 33(12), 2,016-2,115. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0914
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2013). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bremner, J. D., Bolus, R., & Mayer, E. A. (2007). Psychometric properties of the early childhood inventory self-report. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 195(3), 211-218. doi: 10.1097/01.nmd.0000243824.84651.6c
- Bremner, J. D., Vermetten, E., & Mazure, C. M. (2000). Development and preliminary psychometric properties of an instrument for the measurement of childhood trauma: The early trauma inventory. *Depression and Anxiety*, 12, 1-12.
- Brendtro, L. (2006). The vision of Urie Bronfenbrenner: Adults who are crazy about kids. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 15(3), 162-166.
- Brendtro, L., Ness, A., & Mitchell, M. (2005). *No disposable kids*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Briggs, F., & Hawkins, R. (1997). Child protection: A guide for teachers and child care professionals. In Walsh, K., Farrell, A., Schweitzer, R., & Bridgstock, R. (Eds.), *Critical factors in teachers detecting and reporting child abuse and neglect: Implications for practice*. (pp. 1-86). Abused Child Trust.
- Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research. (2019). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University College of Human Ecology.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1970). Two worlds of childhood: US and USSR. In Brendtro, L. (Ed.), *The vision of Urie Bronfenbrenner: Adults who are crazy about kids. Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 15(3), 162-166.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, 513-531.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiences by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, UP.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). Contexts of child rearing: Problems and prospects. In Vivara Trisnadi-Rages, L. (Ed.), *An ecological systems approach to reduce children's encounters with obscenity on the internet*. University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (Eds.), *Readings on the development of children* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (p. 3-8). New York, NY. Worth Publishers.
- Brooks, C. (2007). *Environmental risk factors and risky sexual behavior outcomes: Attitudes as a mediating factor*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Brunzell, T., Stokes, H., & Waters, L. (2018). Why do you work with struggling students? Teacher perceptions of meaningful work in trauma-impacted classrooms. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(2), 116-142.
- Burke-Harris, N. (2014). The childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_lifetime?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en)
- Cambria, N. (2013). Child trauma: St. Louis County tackles childhood trauma. *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. Retrieved from [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/st-louis-county-tackles-childhood-trauma/article\\_41ad83fa-2c47-563b-a3f0-4f32dc32344e.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/st-louis-county-tackles-childhood-trauma/article_41ad83fa-2c47-563b-a3f0-4f32dc32344e.html)
- Capizzi, A. M., & DaFonte, A. (2012). Supporting paraeducators through a collaborative classroom support plan. In Anderson, E. M., Blitz, L. V., & Saastamoinen, M. (Eds.), *Exploring a school-university model for professional development with classroom staff: Teaching trauma-informed approaches*. *School Community Journal*, 25(2), 113-134.
- Carello, J., & Butler, L. D. (2015). Practicing what we teach: Trauma-informed educational practice. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 35(3), 262-278: [doi.org/ 10.1080/08841233.2015.1030059](https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2015.1030059)
- Carter, P., & Blanch, A. (2019). A trauma lens for systems change. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 49-54.
- Ceci, S. J. (2006). Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005). *American Psychologist*, 61(2), 173-174. [doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.61.2.173](https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.61.2.173)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). *Child maltreatment prevention*.

Retrieved from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/childmaltreatment/index.html>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *Violence prevention*. Retrieved from

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/cestudy/index.html>

Chafouleas, S. M., Johnson, A. H., Overstreet, S., & Santos, N. M. (2016). Toward a blueprint for trauma-informed service delivery in schools. In Overstreet S., & Chafouleas, S. M. (Eds.), *Trauma-informed schools: Introduction to the special issue. School Mental Health*, 8, 1-6: doi 10.1007/s12310-016-9184-1

Chafouleas, S. M., Johnson, A. H., Overstreet, S., & Santos, N. M. (2016). Toward a blueprint for trauma-informed service delivery in schools. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 144-162.

Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. (2013). Overview of adverse child and family experiences among U.S. children. In Reker, K. (Ed.), *Trauma in the classroom: Teachers' perspectives on supporting students experiencing child traumatic stress*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved

[https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2146](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2146)

Ciuffetelli, P. D., Grenville, H., & Flessa, F. (2011). Case studies of school community and climate: Success narratives of schools in challenging circumstances. In Anderson, E. M., Blitz, L. V., & Saastamoinen, M. (Eds.), *Exploring a school-university model for professional development with classroom staff: Teaching trauma-informed approaches. School Community Journal*, 25(2), 113-134.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Clark, M. C. (1993). Transformational learning. In Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (Eds.), *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cole, S. F., Eisner, A., Gregory, M., & Ristuccia, J. (2013). Helping traumatized children learn: Creating and advocating for trauma-sensitive schools. In Rossen, E. (Ed.), *Supporting and educating traumatized students 4-45*. Oxford University Press.
- Corcoran, J., Franklin, C., & Bennett, P. (2000). Ecological factors associated with adolescent pregnancy and parenting. *Social Work Research, 24*(1), 29-39.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cueva, M. (2010). A living spiral of understanding: Community-based adult education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 125*, 79-90.
- DeYoung, A. C., Kenardy, J. A., & Cobham, V. E. (2011). Trauma in early childhood: A neglected population. *Clinical Child Family Psychology Review, 14*(3), 231-250. doi:10.1007/s10567-011-0094-3
- Doerhoff, S. (2019). Missouri School Directory, 2019–2020.
- Dorime-Williams, M. (2018). Developing socially just practices and policies in assessment. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 177*, 41-56. doi: 10.1002/ir.20255
- Downey, L. (2007). *Calmer classrooms: A guide to working with traumatized children*. Melbourne: State of Victoria, Child Safety Commissioner.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Dube, S. R., Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Chapman, D. N., Williamson, D. F., & Giles, W. H. (2001). Childhood abuse, household dysfunction, and risk of attempted suicide throughout the life span. Findings from the adverse childhood experiences study. *American Medical Association, 286*(24), 3089 – 3096.
- Duncan, A. (2009). Federal leadership to support state longitudinal data systems. In Mandinach, E. B. (Ed.), *A perfect time for data use: Using data-driven decision making to inform practice. Educational Psychologist 47*(2), 71-85.
- E. Burham. (personal communication, October 25, 2019).
- Easton, J. Q. (2009). Using data systems to drive school improvement. In Mandinach, E. B. (Ed.), *A perfect time for data use: Using data-driven decision making to inform practice. Educational Psychologist 47*(2), 71-85.
- Ezell, M. (2013). *Advocacy in the human services*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning.
- Fang, X., Brown, D. S., Florence, C. S., & Mercy, J. A. (2012). The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 36*, 156-165. doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.10.006
- Felitti, V. J. (2016, June 23). *Dr. Vince Felitti: Reflections on the adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ns8ko9-ljU>
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Finkelhor, D., & Dzuiba-Leatherman, J. (1994). Children as victims of violence: A National Survey. *Journal of American Academy of Pediatrics*, 94(4), 413-420.
- Fink, A. (2017). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Garner, A., Shonkoff, J., Siegel, B., Dobbins, M., Earls, M., Garner, A., & Wood, D. (2012). Early childhood adversity, toxic stress, and the role of the pediatrician: Translating developmental science into lifelong health. *Pediatrics*, 129, 224-231.
- Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (2005). *Readings on the development of children* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (p. 3-8). New York, NY: Worth Publishers.
- Gill, S. J. (2010). *Developing a learning culture in nonprofit organizations*. Los Angeles: CA: Sage.
- Giller, E. (2009). *What is psychological trauma?* Retrieved from <https://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/friends-family-alcoholics/214177-what-psychological-trauma.html>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative data. In Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (Eds.), *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Han, H. S. (2014). Supporting early childhood teachers to promote children's social competence: Components for best professional development practices. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 42*, 171-179.
- Heffron, F. (1989). Organization theory and public organizations: The political connection. In Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (Eds.), *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Heinzelmann, M., & Gill, J. (2013). Epigenetic mechanisms shape the biological response to trauma and risk for PTSD: A critical review. *Nursing Research and Practice, 1-11*. doi.org/10.1155/2013/417010.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1969). Life-cycle theory of leadership. In Northouse, P. G. (2016), *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hoggan, C. D. (2016). Transformative learning as a metatheory: Definition, criteria, and typology. *Adult Education Quarterly, 66*(1), 57-75. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Horner, G. (2015). Childhood trauma exposure and toxic stress: What the PNP needs to know. *Journal of Pediatric Healthcare, 29*(2), 191-198.
- Houles, C. O. (1961). The inquiring mind. In Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (Eds.), *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Huxham, C. (1996). *Creating collaborative advantage*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Joining Choices for Children. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.joiningforcesforchildren.org/>

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Jones, M. (2013). *Teacher response to trauma training*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/23840b4a74192d6db5b2f0cf56eb9550/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Kelleher, K., Taylor, J., & Rickert, V. (1992). Mental health services for rural children and adolescents. In Slovak, K., & Singer, M. (Eds.), *Gun violence exposure and trauma among rural youth*. *Violence and Victims*, *16*(4), 389-400.
- Ko, S. J., Ford, J. D., Kassam-Adams, N., Berkowitz, S. J., Wilson, C., Wong, M., Brymer, M. J., & Layne, C. M. (2008). Creating trauma-informed systems: Child welfare, education, first responders, health care, juvenile justice. *Professional Psychology Research and Practice*, *4*(39), 396-404.
- Kotchick, B. A., Shaffer, A., Forehand, R., & Miller, K. S. (2001). Adolescent sexual risk behavior: A multi-system perspective. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *21*(4), 493-519.
- Lawrence, R. L., & Paige, D. S. (2016). *What our ancestors knew: Teaching and learning through storytelling*. Doi:10.1002/ace.20177
- Lieberman, A. F., Chu, A., Van Horn, P., & Harris, W. W. (2011). Trauma in early childhood: Empirical evidence and clinical implications. *Development and Psychopathology*, *23*, 397-410 doi:10.1017/S0954579411000137
- Lewis, M. L., & Ippen, C. G. (2004). Rainbows of tears and souls full of hope. Cultural issues related to young children and trauma. In J. D. Osofsky (Ed.), *Young children and trauma: Intervention and treatment* (pp. 11–46). Guilford Press.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Lewis, M. (1995). Altering fate: Why the past does not predict the future. In Brendtro, L. (Ed.), *The vision of Urie Bronfenbrenner: Adults who are crazy about kids. Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 15(3), 162-166.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. In Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (Eds.), *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.
- MacMillian, H. L. (2000). Child maltreatment: What we know in the year 2000. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 45, 702-709.
- Mandinach, E. B. (2012). A perfect time for data use: Using data-driven decision making to inform practice. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(2), 71-85.
- Martinello, E. (2019). Applying the ecological systems theory to better understand and prevent child sexual abuse. *Sexuality and Culture*, 24, 326-344.  
[doi.org/10.1007/s12119-019-09629-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-019-09629-z)
- Martinez, G. M. (2017). Report: 47% of children in Missouri have adverse childhood experiences. *The Columbian Missourian*. Columbia, MO.
- Maslach, C. (1999). Progress in understanding teacher burnout. In Brunzell, T., Stokes, H., & Waters, L. (Eds.), *Why do you work with struggling students? Teacher perceptions of meaningful work in trauma-impacted classrooms*, (pp. 116-142).
- McClusky, H. Y. (1963). The course of the adult life span. Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. (Eds.), *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- McInerney, M., & McKlindon, A. (2014). Unlocking the door to learning: Trauma-informed classrooms and transformational schools. *Education Law Center*, 1-24.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*.

San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and*

*implementation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation

theory. In Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (Eds.), *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2009). Transformative learning theory. In Mezirow, J., Taylor, E. W., &

Associates (Eds.), *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace, and higher education* (pp. 18-31). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mintzberg, H. (1979). The five basic parts of the organization. In Shafritz, J. M., Ott, J.

S., & Jang, Y. S. (Eds.), *Classics of organization theory* (pp. 219-230). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Missouri Academy for Child Trauma Studies. (2020, February 16). Retrieved from

<https://www.moacts.org/Home.aspx>

Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. (2019). Retrieved from

<https://www.maesp.com/>.

Missouri Association of School Administrators. (2020). Retrieved from

<https://www.masaonline.org/>.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019). Retrieved from

<https://MODESE.mo.gov/>.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019). *Trauma informed*.

Retrieved from <https://MODESE.mo.gov/traumainformed>.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Missouri Department of Mental Health. (2019). *Missouri Model Developmental Framework*. Retrieved from <https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/missouri-model-developmental-framework-trauma-informed-approaches>

Missouri Department of Mental Health. (2020). *Guide to Missouri's Government*. Retrieved from <https://www.mo.gov/government/guide-to-missouris-government/department-of-mental-health/>

Missouri Department of Social Services. (2020). *US Census Bureau. Division of Budget and Planning*. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9568-substantiated-child-abuse-neglect-and-family-assessments?loc=27&loct=5#detailed/5/4151,4192,4222/true/573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35,18,17/any/18756,18757>

Missouri Model: *A Developmental Framework for Trauma Informed*. Missouri Department of Mental Health and Partners. (2014). Retrieved from <https://saintfrancisministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MO-Model-Working-Document-february-2015.pdf>

Missouri State Teachers Association. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.msta.org/about/>.

Missouri State Teachers Association. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.msta.org/>

Moore, R. (2019). *Scholarly Practitioner Review*, (pp. 2-6).

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.naesp.org/>.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.nctsn.org/>.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

National Institute of Mental Health. (2019). *Coping with traumatic events*. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/coping-with-traumatic-events/index.shtml>

National Kids Count Data Center. (2016). Annie E. Casey Foundation. National Survey of Children's Health. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/9709-children-who-have-experienced-two-or-more-adverse-experiences?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/true/1539/any/18961,18962>

National Survey of Children's Health. (2016). *Child health data*. Retrieved from <https://www.childhealthdata.org/learn-about-the-nsch/NSCH>.

Nodaway County Children's Division. (2020). <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/office/nodaway.htm>

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Northwest Regional Professional Development Center. (2019). Retrieved from <https://nwmissouri.edu/rpdc/>.

Nurcombe, B., Wooding, S., Marrington, P., Bickman, L., & Roberts, G. (2000). Child sexual abuse II: Treatment. In Walsh, K., Farrell, A., Schweitzer, R., & Bridgstock, R. (Eds.), *Critical factors in teachers detecting and reporting child abuse and neglect: Implications for practice*. (pp. 1-86). Abused Child Trust.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Collins, K. M. T., & Frels, R. K. (2013). Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to frame quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 7(1), 2-8.

Paquette, D., & Ryan, J. (2001). Bronfenbrenner's human ecological systems theory. Chicago, IL: National Louis University.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Perry, B. D. (2014). Helping traumatized children: A brief overview for caregivers. *The Child Trauma Academy*. Retrieved from <http://newdirections.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Helping-Traumatized-Children.pdf>
- Phelan, J. (2004). Some thoughts on using an ecosystem perspective. In Brendtro, L. (Ed), *The vision of Urie Bronfenbrenner: Adults who are crazy about kids. Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 15(3), 162-166.
- Pines, A M. (2002). Teacher burnout: A psychodynamic existential perspective. In Brunzell, T., Stokes, H., & Waters, L. (Eds.), *Why do you work with struggling students? Teacher perceptions of meaningful work in trauma-impacted classrooms. Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(2), 116-142.
- Purewal, S. K., Bucci, M., Wang, L. G., Koita, K., Marques, S. S., Oh, D., & Burke Harris, N. (2016). Screening for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in an integrated pediatric care model. In *Zero to Three, Connecting science, policy and practice. National Training Institute*, 36(3), 10-16.
- RV-Banks, Y., & Meyer, J. (2017). Childhood trauma in today's urban classroom: Moving beyond the therapist's office. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, 30(no.1-4) 63-75.
- Ratcliffe, M., Burd, B., Holder, K., & Fields, A. (2016). *Defining rural at the U.S. Census Bureau*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Rath, T. (2008). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams and why people follow: Part 2 Maximizing your team*. (pp. 21-76). New York: NY: Gallup Press.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Reker, K. (2016). Trauma in the classroom: *Teachers' perspectives on supporting students experiencing child traumatic stress*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/2146](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2146)
- Rossiter, M., & Clark, M. C. (2007) Narrative and the practice of adult education. In Lawrence, R. L., & Paige, D. S. *What our ancestors knew: Teaching and learning through storytelling* (pp. 63-72).
- Sacks, V., & Murphey, D. (2018). *The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences nationally, by state, and by race and ethnicity*. Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.), New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Shonkoff J. P. (2009). Investment in early childhood development lays the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society. In Tremblay R. E., Boivin M, Peters RDeV (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. Montreal, Quebec: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development.
- Simon, K., Compton, S. E., & Overstreet, S. (2020). The evolution of trauma-informed schools. In Rossen, E. (Ed.), *Supporting and educating traumatized students*. (pp. 4-45). Oxford University Press.
- Slovak, K., & Singer, M. (2001). Gun violence exposure and trauma among rural youth. *Violence and Victims*, 16(4), 389-400.
- Stevens, J. E. (2012). *The adverse childhood experiences study: The largest most public health study you never heard of began in an obesity clinic*. Retrieved from <https://acestoohigh.com/2012/10/03/the-adverse-childhood-experiences-study->

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

the-largest-most-important-public-health-study-you-never-heard-of-began-in-an-obesity-clinic/

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *Concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*, 1-27.

Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Taylor, E. W. (2009). Fostering transformative learning. In Mezirow, J., Taylor, E. W., and Associates (Eds.), *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace and higher education* (pp. 3 – 17). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Teicher, M., Anderson, S., & Polcari, A. (2002). Developmental neurobiology of childhood stress and trauma. In Van de Kolk, B. A. (Ed.), *The neurobiology of childhood trauma and abuse*. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, 12, 293-317.

Terrasi, S. & de Galarce, P. C. (2017). Trauma and learning in America's classrooms. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 98(6), (pp. 35-41).

The Gallup Organization. (2012). StrengthsQuest. Retrieved from: <http://www.gallup.com/products170984/strengthsquest.aspx>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/>

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

The Missouri Model for Trauma-Informed Schools. (2014). Missouri Trauma

Roundtable, p 1-25. Retrieved from

[https://MODESE.mo.gov/sites/default/files/cnsl\\_Missouri\\_Modelpercent20school\\_guidance\\_doc.pdf](https://MODESE.mo.gov/sites/default/files/cnsl_Missouri_Modelpercent20school_guidance_doc.pdf)

Thompson, O. (2018). Head start's long-run impact: Evidence from the program's introduction. *Journal of Human Resources*, 53(4), 1100-1139.

Turbin, M. S., Jessor, R., Costa, F. M., Dong, Q., Zhang, H., & Wang, C. (2006).

Protective and risk factors in health-enhancing behavior among adolescents in China and the United States: Does social context matter? In Brooks, C. (Ed.), *Environmental risk factors and risky sexual behavior outcomes: Attitudes as a mediating factor*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2020). Retrieved

from <https://en.unesco.org/themes/early-childhood-care-and-education#:~:targetText=Earlypercent20childhoodpercent2Cpercent20definedpercent20aspercent20the,thepercent20peoplepercent20thatpercent20surroundpercent20them>.

University of Missouri Extension. (2019). Retrieved from

<https://extension2.missouri.edu/>

United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). Administration on

children, youth, and families. *Child maltreatment 2008*. Retrieved from

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov>.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Administration on children, youth, and families. *Child maltreatment 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Administration for Children and Families. Administration on Children, Youth and Families. *Child maltreatment 2013*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Administration for Children and Families. Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. *Child maltreatment 2017*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). Administration for Children and Families. Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. *Child maltreatment 2018*. Available from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/>

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2003). The neurobiology of childhood trauma and abuse. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, 12, 293-317.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

- Van der Kolk, B. A. (2005). Developmental trauma disorder: Toward a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 401-208.
- Vivara Trisnadi-Rages, L. (2007). *An ecological systems approach to reduce children's encounters with obscenity on the internet*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri.
- Wadsworth, M. E., Raviv, T., Reinhard, C., Wolff, B., Santiago, D., & Einhorn, L. (2008). An indirect effects model of the association between poverty and child functioning. In Anderson, E. M., Blitz, L. V., & Saastamoinen, M. (Eds.), *Exploring a school-university model for professional development with classroom staff: Teaching trauma-informed approaches*. *School Community Journal*, 25(2), 113-134.
- Walsh, K., Farrell, A., Schweitzer, R., & Bridgstock, R. (2005). *Critical factors in teachers detecting and reporting child abuse and neglect: Implications for practice*. Abused Child Trust, 1-86.
- Wilson, J. M., Fauci, J. E., & Goodman, L. A. (2015). Bringing trauma-informed practice to domestic violence programs: A qualitative analysis of current approaches. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85(6), 586-599.
- Wisdom, C. S., & Maxfield, M. G. (2001). An update on the cycle of violence: Research in brief. *National Institute of Justice*.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). Case study research: Design and methods (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). In Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E., *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. (4<sup>th</sup>. Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Zelazo, P. D., Blair, C. B., & Willoughby, M. T. (2016). *Executive function: Implications for education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Research.

**APPENDICES**

- A. IRB Approval
- B. Survey Recruitment email for Administrators
- C. Survey Recruitment email for kindergarten through third grade teachers
- D. Survey Informed Consent
- E. Survey : Missouri elementary administrators
- F. Survey : Missouri kindergarten through third grade teachers
- G. Interview Recruitment email for Principals
- H. Interview Recruitment email for kindergarten through third grade teachers
- I. Interview Informed Consent
- J. Interview questions for Missouri principals
- K. Interview questions for Missouri kindergarten through third grade teachers

PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval



**Institutional Review Board**  
**University of Missouri-Columbia**  
FWA Number: 00002876  
IRB Registration Numbers: 00000731, 00009014

482 McReynolds Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
573-882-3181  
irb@missouri.edu

March 16, 2020

Principal Investigator: Rebecca Moore (MU-Student)  
Department: Educational Leadership-EDD

Your IRB Application to project entitled A Qualitative bounded case study on teachers and administrators perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through Third Grade was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2020469
IRB Review Number	260799
Initial Application Approval Date	March 16, 2020
IRB Expiration Date	March 16, 2021
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
3. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
4. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the MU Business Policy and Procedure: [http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2\\_250.html](http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2_250.html)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MU IRB Office at 573-882-3181 or email to [muresearchirb@missouri.edu](mailto:muresearchirb@missouri.edu).

Thank you,  
MU Institutional Review Board

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX B: Survey recruitment email for administrators

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Rebecca Moore, and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

You have been selected to participate in the following research study due to your current administrative role in a rural, Northwest Missouri school district. I would greatly appreciate your support in completing the attached survey at your earliest convenience. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this survey, your efforts are appreciated.

Survey link: \_\_\_\_\_

With great thanks and kind regards,  
Rebecca Moore  
University of Missouri, Columbia : Doctoral Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX C: Survey recruitment email for K-3 teachers

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Rebecca Moore, and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

You have been selected to participate in the following research study due to your current role as a Kindergarten through third-grade teacher in a rural, Northwest Missouri school district. I would greatly appreciate your support in completing the attached survey at your earliest convenience. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this survey, your efforts are appreciated.

Survey link: \_\_\_\_\_

With great thanks and kind regards,

Rebecca Moore

University of Missouri, Columbia : Doctoral Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX D: Survey Informed Consent

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of student's adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade. Through participation in this research study you are allowed the right to be informed about the study procedures and participation consent. This informed consent provides you specific information about the research study. If you feel you need further clarification regarding the research study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators on students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade classrooms.

Participants will include Missouri elementary administrators and kindergarten through third grade teachers from the rural Northwest Missouri region. Participants will be asked to complete a survey through Survey Monkey.

The research study will take approximately two months to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45 minute interview and completion of a survey.

As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide administrators and early childhood teachers an understanding of the perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences within the rural Northwest Missouri region. The study will help fill a gap in literature relating to early childhood trauma as well as how administrators and teachers perceive student trauma.

There will be no way of identifying who took the survey and therefore no information from the survey can be cross-referenced. Information will be locked in a secure location, with the researcher only having access to the information. Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The IRB can be reached at [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu) or 573-882-3181.

Researcher Rebecca Moore: 573.768.0486 or [rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu)

University of Missouri Ed.D Advisor contact information: Dr. Timothy Wall  
660.562.1179 or [timwall@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:timwall@nwmissouri.edu)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX E: Missouri elementary administrators survey

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

1. What types of adverse childhood experiences are you aware of in students in grades kindergarten – third grade at your school? (Check all that apply)

##### Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

##### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

##### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

2. How long have you served as a school administrator at your current school?

- a. 0-2
- b. 3-5
- c. 6-10
- d. 10 or more

3. In what role do you serve the school? (Please type in your role)

4. In what years have you served as an administrator in rural Northwest Missouri?

(Check all that apply)

- a. 2009
- b. 2010
- c. 2011
- d. 2012
- e. 2013
- f. 2014
- g. 2015
- h. 2016
- i. 2017
- j. 2018
- k. 2019

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

5. Please rank the following adverse childhood experiences from least to most seen with 1 being the least and 10 being the most in kindergarten – third grade during your time at your current school.

### Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

Branch question: If you have seen a change in severity, please explain why you think this has occurred? (text response)



## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX F: Kindergarten – Third grade teacher survey

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

1. What types of adverse childhood experiences are you aware of in students in grades kindergarten – third grade at your school? Check all that apply

##### Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

##### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

##### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

2. How long have you served as a kindergarten – third grade at your current school?
  - a. 0-2
  - b. 3-5
  - c. 6-10
  - d. 10 or more
  
3. Which grade do you currently teach?
  - Kindergarten
  - First Grade
  - Second Grade
  - Third Grade
  
4. In what years have you served as a Kindergarten – third grade teacher in rural Northwest Missouri? (Check all that apply)
  - a. 2009
  - b. 2010
  - c. 2011
  - d. 2012
  - e. 2013
  - f. 2014
  - g. 2015
  - h. 2016
  - i. 2017
  - j. 2018
  - k. 2019

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

5. Please rank the following adverse childhood experiences from least to most seen with 1 being the least and 10 being the most in kindergarten – third grade during your time at your current school.

### Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological

### Neglect

- Physical
- Emotional

### Household Dysfunction

- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Mental illness
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal behavior

Branch question: If you have seen a change in severity, please explain why you think this has occurred? (text response)

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

6. Compared to when you began at this school, how much has the level of trauma experienced by your kindergarten – third grade students changed?

Considerably less trauma

less trauma

more trauma

considerably more  
trauma

unchanged

7. Have you worked as a kindergarten – third grade teacher at another school?

Yes

No

8. If you answered yes on question 7, how long have you served as a kindergarten – third grade teacher overall?

a. 0-2

b. 3-5

c. 6-10

d. 10 or more

9. Based upon your observations in schools and the community since 2009, please provide examples of other student trauma not listed. (text response)

END OF SURVEY

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX G: Interview recruitment email for principals

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Rebecca Moore and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri, Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

You have been selected to participate in an interview process in the following research study due to your current principal role in a rural, Northwest Missouri school district. I would appreciate your notification of interest to participate in a 40 minute interview at your earliest convenience. Upon your notification of interest I will be in contact with you to set up a date and location for the interview. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the interview process, your efforts are appreciated.

With great thanks and kind regards,  
Rebecca Moore  
University of Missouri, Columbia : Doctoral Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX H: Interview recruitment email for K-3 teachers

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Rebecca Moore and I am a Doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program through the University of Missouri, Columbia. I am conducting a qualitative research study on understanding teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third-grade classrooms.

You have been selected to participate in an interview process in the following research study due to your current role as a Kindergarten through third-grade teacher in a rural, Northwest Missouri school district. I would appreciate your notification of interest to participate in a 40 minute interview at your earliest convenience. Upon your notification of interest I will be in contact with you to set up a date and location for the interview. Your participation is voluntary, but important to the success of this research study. Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the interview process, your efforts are appreciated.

With great thanks and kind regards,

Rebecca Moore

University of Missouri, Columbia : Doctoral Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX I: Interview consent form

#### A QUALITATIVE BOUNDED CASE STUDY ON TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES IN RURAL, NORTHWEST MISSOURI KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of student's adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade. Through participation in this research study you are allowed the right to be informed about the study procedures and participation consent. This informed consent provides you specific information about the research study. If you feel you need further clarification regarding the research study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and/or discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

The purpose of the research study is to understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators on students' adverse childhood experiences in rural, Northwest Missouri Kindergarten through third grade classrooms.

Participants will include Missouri elementary administrators and kindergarten through third grade teachers from the rural Northwest Missouri region. Participants will be randomly selected to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 45 minutes. There are no risks of being involved with the study except the commitment of a 45 minute interview

The research study will take approximately two months to complete. Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

As a doctoral study, there are no benefits to you as a participant; however, the data and results collected from the study will provide administrators and early childhood teachers an understanding of the perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences within the rural Northwest Missouri region. The study will help fill a gap in literature relating to early childhood trauma as well as how administrators and teachers perceive student trauma.

The researcher is the only individual who will have access to the data; therefore, the information you provide will be kept confidential. Information will be locked in a secure location, with the researcher only having access to the information. Identifying characteristics will not be disclosed at any time.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

Participants may contact the following at any time with questions or concerns related to the research study.

Please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions about your rights as a research participant. The IRB can be reached at [irb@missouri.edu](mailto:irb@missouri.edu) or 573-882-3181.

Researcher Rebecca Moore: 573.768.0486 or [rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:rebeccam@nwmissouri.edu)

University of Missouri Ed.D Advisor contact information: Dr. Timothy Wall  
660.562.1179 or [timwall@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:timwall@nwmissouri.edu)

A copy of the informed consent will be given to you prior to your participation in the research study.

### AUTHORIZATION

I have read and understand the purpose of the research study and the contents of the consent form and I voluntarily choose to participate in the research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of the informed consent and is intended for my participation in the research study and does not take away any of my legal rights.

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX J: Interview questions for principals

1. Tell me when you became a school principal?
2. How long have you been a principal?
3. How long have you served as the principal at your current school?
4. Tell me how familiar you are with the Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide information on the Missouri model if needed)
5. Tell me what level your school is in regard to Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide them with an example of the 4 levels trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive, trauma-informed as needed)
6. Elaborate more on the specific types of adverse childhood experiences students have encountered? (provide explanation of the adverse childhood experiences as needed)
7. What are your thoughts on if the incident rate of students' adverse childhood experiences has changed?
8. What is nature of the trauma you are seeing? (For example: family, friends, neighborhoods, churches, relationships etc)
9. Describe how you are informed of students' adverse childhood experiences within your school?

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX K: Interview questions for K-3 teachers

1. Tell me when you became a teacher?
2. How long have you been a Kindergarten through third grade teacher?
3. What grade do you currently teach?
4. How long have you been a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher at your current school?
5. What other grades (if any) have you taught?
6. Tell me how familiar you are with the Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide information on the Missouri model if needed)
7. Tell me what level your school is in regard to Missouri's Model of Trauma-informed school initiative? (provide them with an example of the 4 levels trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive, trauma-informed as needed)
8. Elaborate more on the specific types of adverse childhood experiences students have encountered? (provide explanation of the adverse childhood experiences as needed)
9. What are your thoughts on if the incident rate of students' adverse childhood experiences has changed?
10. What is nature of the trauma you are seeing? (For example: family, friends, neighborhoods, churches, relationships etc)
11. Describe how you are informed of students' adverse childhood experiences within your school?

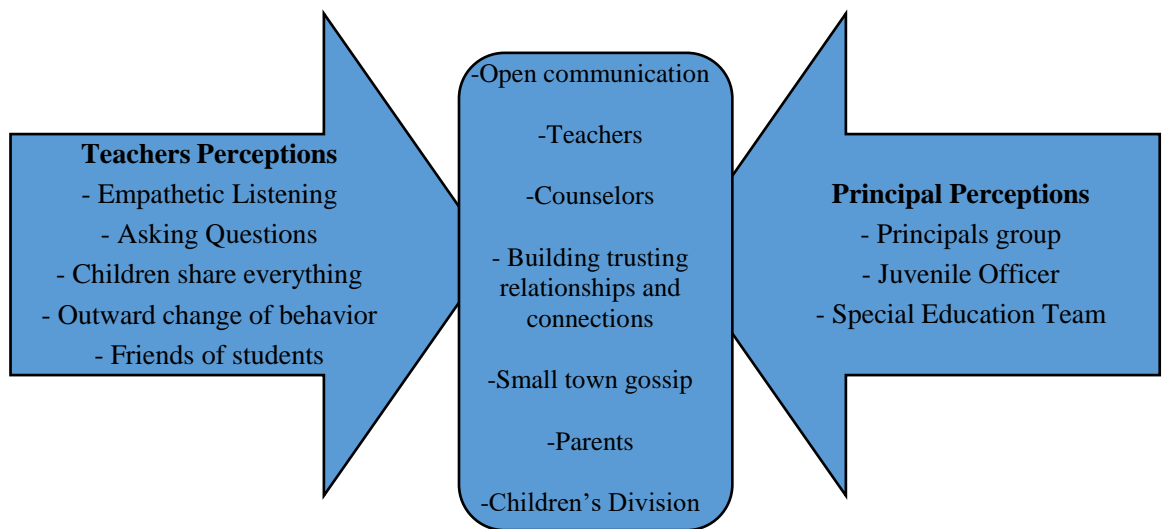
## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA

### APPENDIX L: Teacher and administrator differences

The below information was removed from the Chapter 4: Contribution to practice and from Chapter 5: Contribution to scholarship to meet the presentation and article submission requirements. The presentation and article included the first two research questions which was to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences. An additional research question was selected to determine if there was a difference between teacher and administrator perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in rural, Northwest Missouri kindergarten through third-grade classroom settings from 2009 – 2019.

The difference between teacher and administrator perceptions of students' ACEs were found in the way they were informed of students' ACEs within their school districts. Teacher's reported additional ways of being informed of students' ACEs such as: (a) asking their students' questions, (b) being an empathetic listener when children share openly, (c) observing and documenting students' outward behaviors, and (d) students' friends sharing concerns willingly. Conversely, administrators reported being informed of students' ACEs through their principal group, Juvenile officers, and special education team. Although, both teachers and administrators had some differing perceptions they had similarities as well (see Figure 10).

## PERCEPTIONS OF TRAUMA



*Figure 10.* Illustration of the differences of teacher and administrator perceptions on how they are informed of students' adverse childhood experiences within their school districts.

In addition to the differing perceptions as seen in Figure 10, teachers reported at times not feeling supported by their administrators when taking students' concerns and issues to them. Some participant's comments were as follows:

"I feel like teachers get brushed off when taking students concerns to the principal."

"I hear all of my students' words. I had a student who spoke of wanting to kill themselves. I tried to speak to the administrator about it and was told that if the child said it again tomorrow they would look into it further. I feel it's like the boy who cried Wolf, when is it going to be too late?"

"I wish administrators took teachers more seriously and were more proactive."

Although, there were some differences, teachers and administrators had similar perceptions of students' adverse childhood experiences throughout the research study. In conclusion the study signifies the need for teachers and administrators to work together for the best interest of all children. As Hellen Keller states, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

**VITA**

Rebecca A. Moore was born in Perryville, MO. She graduated from St. Vincent High School in 2002. Rebecca earned a Bachelor's degree in Human Environmental Studies with an emphasis in Child Development and Family Studies in 2006 and a Masters of Arts degree in Human Environmental Studies in 2010 from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, MO. She completed her Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis in 2020 from the University of Missouri, Columbia. She is currently an Early Childhood instructor at Northwest Missouri State University. She and her husband Dave have been married since 2006 and together they have two children, Connor and Raelyn. She and her family live in Maryville, MO.