CARRYING THEIR SECOND BACKPACK: UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH TRAUMA-AFFECTED STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A DISSERTATION IN
Education

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by
JENNIFER N. NORTHCUTT

M.A., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2016

Kansas City, Missouri
2021

CARRYING THEIR SECOND BACKPACK: UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH TRAUMA-AFFECTED STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Jennifer N. Northcutt, Candidate for the Doctor of Education Degree

University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2021

ABSTRACT

This heuristic narrative study addressed the high prevalence of trauma that children in schools are experiencing and its secondary effects on those who work with them in schools. While there are plentiful studies to be found regarding the outcomes of traumatic events on children, little focus has been placed on supporting the educators who work with trauma-affected students. The purpose of the study was to examine the lived experiences of seven teachers in an urban school who self-reported as working with trauma-affected students, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. An extensive review of literature was conducted that delved into the existing knowledge about the science of trauma, the concept of compassion fatigue, educating the whole child, and servant leadership as a method of support for teachers and students who are trauma affected. The primary study methodology consisted of in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews. Additional data sources included co-researcher reported results on the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) survey (Felitti et al., 1998) and a preliminary survey which was used to

recruit participants as well as to develop interview questions and supplement the findings pulled from the other data sources. Findings suggest that the experiences of teachers related to trauma, as well as their knowledge and disposition about trauma itself, contribute greatly to their overall lived experience in the classroom. A significant factor in the lived experiences of co-researchers was the change to virtual teaching and learning. An additional contributing factor was the co-researchers' own ACE scores, as well as their experience with trauma-informed professional development. Additionally, co-researchers identified ways that trauma was a barrier for their students academically, behaviorally, and socially. Co-researchers agreed that working closely with trauma-affected students has implications for their own overall mental wellness, as evidenced by feelings and experiences with burnout, emotional responses, and difficulty maintaining work-life balance. Relationships emerged as an effective way to provide teachers and students with some support. Additional helpful strategies were also uncovered including teacher protective factors and system supports including access to support staff. Grounded in the stories of the co-researchers, a model for administrators is introduced that provides actionable ways to support teachers working with trauma-affected students.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled "Carrying their Second Backpack: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Teachers who Work with Trauma-Affected Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic," presented by Jennifer Northcutt, candidate for the Doctor of Education Degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Loyce Caruthers, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Donna Davis, Ph.D., Committee Member
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Uzziel Pecina, Ed.D., Committee Member
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Foundations

Raquel Coy, Ed.D., Committee Member
Clardy Elementary School, Principal

CONTENTS

TABLES

Table Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jimmy—you are not just my rock. You are my mountain. A natural wonder in my life that is so strong and beautiful that it sometimes takes my breath away. Thank you for always being patient with me, for listening to me drone on and on about my literature review, for putting up with my weekend writing retreats and late afternoons at school, and most importantly, for being my partner, my best friend, and strongest supporter.

Eloise and Ambrose—my best girl and my best boy—you are my greatest accomplishments. You are my whole heart.

Mimi—From day one, you have been my biggest inspiration. Thank you for passing on your love of education and your pursuit for knowledge. You sparkle, always, and that's why I love you.

Jeremy—Lots of little siblings look up to their older siblings. For me, it's the other way around. I admire and respect you so much. Your support and encouragement was essential in this process, and I would not be where I am today without you.

To my parents—Thank you for instilling within me the belief that I can, and should, work hard and aspire to be anything I wanted to be. I know that without your support, I wouldn't have been able to finish this momentous task.

Chaur—The first day we had class, you grabbed my hand and said, "Come on. We got this." We walked through this process together, although you were always a few steps ahead of me. Thank you for inspiring me and being the friend I needed and continue to need. "Because I knew you, I have been changed for good."

To my colleagues and friends—your pure, authentic interest and joy in my progress, your constant encouragement and support, and your shared frustration when things weren't going my way—all inspired me and motivated me beyond anything you can imagine.

Dr. Caruthers—I don't think the word "respect" quite covers the way I feel about you. You taught me what "tough love" truly is. Your high expectations are why I am where I am now. I am so honored to be among the hundreds of students whose lives you have changed by being their mentor, leader, and friend.

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Raquel Coy, Dr. Donna Davis, and Dr. Uzziel Pecina, for your time, support, feedback, and guidance. Being able to share and grow my study with those who have paved the way in the field has been humbling and inspiring.

Finally, thank you to my co-researchers for your openness, vulnerability, and for trusting me to tell your story. It has been an honor.

DEDICATION

For my students—for all of my “Davids,” past, present, and future.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Mrs. Northcutt, I don't have my project done. I was robbed at gunpoint at my bus stop yesterday. Sorry."

As he told me the reason he could not complete his project, David (pseudonym) looked up at me with a blank expression. I felt my jaw drop, and my eyes met his. At that moment, I knew that this declaration was not a scheme to get out of the assignment. The pain and fear in his eyes did not match the assertive stance of his body. He was being honest with me, but his guard was up. I wanted to hug him, but I simply nodded and smiled.

"Okay, David. I understand. I'm very glad you are okay. We will work it out."

The year I started working in the urban center of a large Midwestern city was the first year I was truly introduced to the impact of traumatic experiences on the education of children. My eight years of teaching prior to that year in a cozy small town had provided me with no experience as to how to respond to David's disclosure; however, on a human level, I knew that he would be forever changed because of his experience. Indeed, he was; the change was immediate and heartbreaking. In the weeks and months that passed, David became one of my most challenging students. He exhibited behaviors that were unmanageable. He was disrespectful, often talking back to me or making fun of my clothes or hair right to me, in front of the class. He was overt about his dislike for the content and would stare blankly at me while I gave directions and then make sure I noticed that he was not doing the work. Our interactions were upsetting to me. Despite telling David that I cared about him too much to let him behave poorly, despite being a constant, reliable person who

followed through in all ways, our relationship growth was stunted, and I was unable to reach him on an academic or personal level. I felt myself starting to give up.

During one student intervention team meeting, David was brought up as the topic of discussion. All teachers were experiencing the same issues with David, and it gave me some comfort to know that I was not the only one; however, it made me sad to see a student in such desperate need of support that was beyond our scope in the classroom. David was failing all of his classes, and we all felt hopeless.

As I continued my work with David, I felt myself in a constant state of worry over whether I was providing enough support for him. Did he know I cared? Did he feel safe at home? I would feel guilty as I looked around my relatively nice, safe neighborhood as I imagined him feeling unsafe in his own home and in his own neighborhood. After several months went by, I found myself becoming desensitized to new stories of trauma that I would hear, and upon reflection, I realized that I was numb due to not taking care of myself as I worked so hard to take care of David and my other students. I wasn't sleeping well, and I had a hard time concentrating on tasks both in and out of work. I recognized that I was distancing from David, simply because I didn't quite know how to help him. The guilt I felt over this distance led me to become irritable, due to a disgust I felt in myself as an educator. I felt powerless and helpless, and once or twice, considered leaving the profession of teaching altogether.

I wish I could say that David was able to pass my class that year. Unfortunately, the weight of his trauma affected his learning so much that he passed only one class. At this time, the concept of trauma-informed care was relatively new, and I had not even heard the term, let alone attended any professional development or implemented any strategies within

my classroom. It is because of David—and many other students—that I now have a vested interest in understanding the phenomenon of trauma and how best to respond as a caring adult in their lives.

Like David, in schools across America, some students walk into school carrying more than just their backpacks. They are carrying with them the effects of years of complex trauma that significantly impact their learning, behavior, and overall success in school. In fact, "half of all students come to school having experienced or still experiencing some sort of trauma, violence or chronic stress" (Carter, 2017, p. 52). Trauma includes any event that creates toxic stress in an individual, and in children, often includes events such as physical or sexual abuse, neglect, death of loved ones, or witnessing traumatic events (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Burke et al., 2011; Carter, 2017; Garrett, 2014; Johnson et al., 2013). This second backpack is too heavy for children to carry, and as adults, we are in a position to help lighten their load by supporting them through their trauma, healing, and self-discovery. However, this process can be challenging when there are rigorous academic goals and expectations to be met. In my experience as an education professional, becoming trauma informed feels like one more thing added to the plate in an endless buffet line of programs, initiatives, and expectations for teachers.

Despite this feeling, it is essential for educators to develop a foundation of trauma awareness to understand their students and the changes that trauma could create in their lives. In the larger sense, childhood trauma can create adults who are at higher risk of emotional and physical health issues (Burke et al., 2011; Carter, 2017; Felitti et al., 1998). When considering the global problem of traumatic experiences, it is important to note how essential it is to address childhood trauma early, in order to mitigate the effects of untreated

childhood trauma in adults. Failure to do so can create issues within the context of one's adult life. In the seminal quantitative study on the effect of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) on adult wellness, Felitti et al. (1998) identified the link between childhood trauma and issues that those children presented with as adults, including addiction, diseases, emotional wellness, and even mortality. The researchers surveyed over 9,500 adults regarding their childhood experiences involving trauma. The number of categories of these adverse childhood experiences was then compared to measures of adult risk behavior, health status, and disease. Researchers "found a strong dose response relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults" (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 251). Those who had indicated experiencing four or more adverse childhood events were at an increased risk for "disease conditions including ischemic heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease, as well as poor self-rated health also showed a graded relationship to the breadth of childhood exposures" (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 251). The ACES study was groundbreaking at the time of its release and continues to hold up today. In a quantitative study by Reuben et al. (2016), adults who reported significant childhood trauma were more likely to report having physical or emotional health issues in adulthood. Additionally, adults who did not report trauma or did not recall documented trauma were found to be less likely to experience adverse health events in adulthood (Reuben et al., 2016).

Research provides support for the claim that trauma affects people in different ways, both as children and as adults. If a child experiences trauma, they may never disclose this trauma nor exhibit any behaviors that would indicate they had this negative experience

(Reuben et al., 2016; Souers & Hall, 2016). However, even if a child is able to cope with trauma or adverse events, they are still very likely to experience adverse health effects as adults (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2016; Felitti et al., 1998; Garrett, 2014; Reuben et al., 2016). Therefore, adults working with children in the educational setting must understand that if a child has experienced trauma, not only may it present problems for them with learning and academic achievement, it may impact their future success as an adult.

Problem Statement

As a counselor working with students who are trauma-affected, I have seen firsthand the way that trauma ripples through a school environment. Elementary-aged students who have experienced trauma may not process emotions the same way as students who have not experienced trauma, therefore causing issues with academic performance, behavior, and attendance (Burke et al., 2011; Carter, 2017; Souers & Hall, 2016). These barriers to success are a challenge for educators who are seeking to reach and teach these young people. The pressure to effectively educate traumatized children is growing, and teachers are faced with a new sense of urgency to help students overcome their trauma in addition to teaching them the content (Carter, 2017). This added challenge can have adverse effects on teachers' mental health, which can hinder their effectiveness, therefore creating a cycle of trauma-affected teachers caring for trauma-affected students (Elliot et al., 2018; Kukla, 2009).

If a child's trauma is untreated, students who have experienced trauma in the lower grades are at risk for academic failure; as the student progresses through school and the trauma continues to be untreated, they increase their risk for retention or dropout. Porche et al. (2011) found that children who have experienced trauma drop out of school at a significantly higher rate (19.79 %) than those who have not experienced trauma (12.97%)

(Porche et al., 2011; Rumsey & Milsom, 2018). Additionally, from a mental health perspective, students who have untreated trauma are likely to present with emotional regulation issues, such as behavioral outbursts, excessive emotional responses, or shutting down or avoidance of tasks (de Thiery, 2016; Rumsey & Milsom, 2018; Souers & Hall, 2016). Blodgett and Lanigan (2018) confirmed the presence of the problem in their research on the association of school success in children and ACES scores. The researchers found that in their study of 2,021 elementary-aged students from a metropolitan area:

> Increasing ACE exposure was associated in a linear fashion with greater rates of academic failure, attendance problems, and school behavior problems after controlling for the school the student attended, grade level, gender, race, free and reduced meal enrollment, and special education enrollment. As ACE levels increased, the percent of children with two or more areas of school problems increased. (p. 141)

However, the researchers caution educators to be cognizant that the presence of ACES in a child's background is not a guarantee that these issues will be present, but it does create an increased level of risk for the child (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018).

The impact of the problem of the prevalence of trauma among students in urban settings is significant. Upon first glance, traumatized students may appear "normal"; they smile, laugh, and engage in activities that they enjoy. They may go weeks, months, or even years without displaying any symptoms of having experienced trauma. However, as educators work more with students from trauma, it becomes evident how significant the impact of trauma truly is on their students' behavior and overall academic achievement, as well as the way that working with students who have experienced trauma affects the adults who work closely with them.

Burke et al. (2011) reviewed information from survey data collected from over 700 children who visited a western state medical center. Findings revealed that 12% of the children had experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences, and of those 12%, all children were found to be at an increased risk for obesity and learning and behavior problems (Burke et al., 2011). As a result of this study and others showing similar results, educators have an increased sensitivity for the need for trauma-informed interventions (Burke et al., 2011). However, many teachers are at a loss as to how those interventions could be realistically implemented in the classroom.

Increasingly, research is being done into the specific effects of high ACES on student behavior in the classroom. One implication of student trauma is that when students have experienced trauma, they perceive many routine school phenomena as a threat to safety. Terrasi and Galarce (2017) noted their reactions:

> When children perceive their environment as a dangerous place, they can become hypervigilant, experiencing everyone and everything as a potential threat to their safety. Psychologically, they have a fragmented sense of self and are vulnerable to anxiety and depression; behaviorally, they are prone to the extremes of withdrawal or serious acting-out behaviors. (p. 76)

This leads to the enactment of the fight, flight, or freeze response, which can present as behavior challenges in the classroom (Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). Students who "fight" may appear aggressive, disrespectful, or unruly (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). Students who "flight" may present with avoidance of activities or elopement from the classroom or building (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017). "Freeze" is just as challenging; this often appears in the form of "shutting down" and can be frustrating to teachers who are attempting to teach skills to the child (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016; Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017).

Additionally, school staff may notice that students who they perceived have experienced trauma have a harder time responding to stimuli with an appropriate emotional response; in many cases, "emotional dysregulation is due to high emotional vulnerability and an inability to regulate emotions" (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 142). Additionally, "emotional dysregulation entails the inability to be aware of and understand emotions, to accept those emotions, to control impulsive behavior and work toward goals when facing emotions" (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 142). Often students from trauma have large-scale emotional reactions to problems or triggers that seem small to others. Overall, these responses to stimuli present with issues in accessing the curriculum, thus leading to the risk of lower academic performance. It is important for teachers to recognize the prevalence of trauma in their school and to understand and implement strategies for coping so that learning can take place.

In conjunction with the problem that traumatic stress presents to students as they work to learn and succeed in school, teachers are also affected by student trauma. In a study of teachers exposed to working with students from trauma and their level of secondary traumatic stress, using in-depth interviews and observations over an extended period of time, the researcher found that secondary traumatic stress is prevalent in most educators due to their deep sense of caring and responsibility for their students (Kukla, 2009; Martinez et al., 2016; Schepers, 2018). This can lead to symptoms that are similar to what are seen in students, but on a smaller and more controlled scale (Schepers, 2018). The level of exposure to traumatic stress in students causes many teachers to experience feelings of inadequacy, burnout, and potentially higher rates of turnover (Schepers, 2018). Therefore, not only does

trauma affect the student, but likely affects those with whom the student works in an educational setting.

The problem of trauma on student school success is complex and can be attributed to many causes. When considering what truly causes the problem, it is important to take into account both the reasons why students are experiencing higher incidences of trauma in urban areas and the physiological effects that trauma has on a child's brain that causes the problem. Through the research conducted in this study, I have begun to view trauma as a thick fog that not only follows the student around, but permeates the school environment in which that student spends most of their days. This thick fog touches students, teachers, administrators, and everyone who comes in contact with that student. To see through the fog, educators first must understand what the fog is made of—hence the importance of understanding exactly what trauma is and what that means for students and teachers alike.

The Science of Trauma

In order to fully understand the effect that trauma has on students, it is important to first understand the biology and theory behind trauma. In the book *Fostering Resilient Learners,* Kristin Souers and Pete Hall (2016) explained that "when students are in a state of stress, they are in the part of their brain designed for survival: the limbic area" (p. 31). When students from trauma are faced with a danger, they are cognitively unable to rationalize, reason, or think critically. In their book *The Whole Brain Child,* Siegel and Bryson (2016) referred to this part of the brain as the "downstairs brain," and the cerebral cortex, which controls rational thinking, the "upstairs brain" (pp. 39-40). Siegel and Bryson (2016) emphasized the need for children to be able to integrate the two parts of the brain in order to respond to trauma. This is easier for students who have not experienced trauma and who

have a strong system of support. However, students from trauma have a difficult time making the integration from “downstairs brain” to “upstairs brain,” which interrupts rationalization and more advanced cognitive activity (Siegel & Bryson, 2016).

Barr (2018) discussed the concept of executive functioning as a deficit in students who have experienced trauma. When a typical child feels angry, they have both a conscious and unconscious level of control over deeply-rooted memories that may create emotional responses (Barr, 2018). Conversely, students who have experienced trauma do not have the same level of executive functioning capacity within their brain due to malfunctions in communication from the limbic system to the prefrontal cortex (Barr, 2018). Students without executive functioning skills are highly challenging within the classroom, often disrupting the normal classroom routines and processes with outbursts or emotional responses to stimuli that they perceive as threatening (Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017).

Trauma Prevalence in Low Income Schools

According to the 2011–12 National Survey of Children’s Health (2012), nearly 35 million children in the United States are living with emotional and psychological trauma, and students may be more likely to be experiencing this type of trauma if they live in high poverty areas. Further research needs to be conducted in this area in order to determine the veracity of related environmental and economic disadvantages. Some questions have been raised as to whether this is an accurate representation, due to the fact that much of this information is based on reports to child protective services, and people in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods tend to have more contact with government agencies due to inequitable reporting to Children’s Division (Menard & Ruback, 2003; Skeen & Tomlinson, 2013). However, it is statistically shown that crime rates in lower socioeconomic

neighborhoods are higher than in more affluent neighborhoods (Menard & Kuback, 2003; Skeen & Tomlinson, 2013).

Zimmerman (2014) provided some clarity on why this may be. In a survey of over 8,000 adults and 6,000 children in several low-income neighborhoods in a large urban city center, the researcher found that the children were more likely to disclose seeing, hearing, participating in, or experiencing violent events than the adults. The researcher posited that this is related to the time spent in the home, and that children may be more likely to be exposed to neighborhood violence because they are more likely to be home when these events are occurring. Additionally, Zimmerman infers that children are more likely to report because the fear of retaliation or implications to reporting violence are less prevalent to children or youth. The survey data confirmed the more likely presence of traumatic experiences for children living in urban areas.

A review of the literature leads to the inference that students in urban, economically disadvantaged areas may see or hear more violent acts, may experience more transition and displacement, and may have less consistency with adult presence due to incarceration, family separation, and death (Kimbro & Denney, 2015; Menard & Ruback, 2003). All of these life events are traumatic, and when traumatic events occur in childhood, the impact on the child's school success is significant.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this heuristic, narrative study is to explore the stories of lived experiences of teachers working in an urban Midwestern school with students who they perceive have experienced adverse childhood experiences, or traumatic events. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) described lived experience as "the result of any transaction between

people and the world, emphasizing the subjective significance of the situation on the person.…the subjective side of culture – mediates and organizes behaviours" (p. 33). The manner in which I shared the experiences of the teachers, as well as my focus for interpretation of data, best aligns with the narrative approach. Narrative inquiry helps us to "learn about both specific individuals and society and culture more generally" (Patton, 2015, p. 98) and allows us to honor the story of the individual while at the same time utilizing that story as data (Bochner, 2001). This form of inquiry is symbiotic in nature and can involve collaboration and mutual storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is a unique research method which gives participants a voice in the research process. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) further explained this benefit to narrative inquiry: "the practitioner, who has long been silenced in the research relationship, is given the time and space to tell her or his story so that it too gains the authority and validity that the research story has long had" (p. 4). Furthermore, it is an approach that is harmonious with the field of education. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) asserted that narrative inquiry is essential in education in that it helps us learn about the personal, practical, and theoretical practice of teaching. While nothing about this study was simple, narrative inquiry begins simply enough—by asking the participants to tell their story (Clandinin, 2013). I wanted to hear the secret, sacred, and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) of teachers regarding trauma in classroom settings.

My research is further supported by the approach of heuristic inquiry. Selecting a heuristic approach was essential to me as I find it crucial to weave my own personal experiences in working with trauma-affected students. Patton (2015) identified the key question of heuristic phenomenological inquiry as "What is my experience of this

phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?" (p. 119). Central to this study is the heuristic concept of *tacit knowing* versus *explicit knowing* (Polyani, 1967). *Tacit knowledge* is a deeply rooted comprehension of a concept that allow an individual to "see the wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts" (Polanyi, 1967, p. 31). In other words, some concepts we just know, but we cannot always articulate how or why we know. As a career educator myself, I possess a tacit knowledge of the way it feels to work with trauma-affected students. I have a strong connection to what it is like to work in a classroom, the overall feeling of a school and working as an educator, and much of the experience of my participants was familiar to me. Because I had this tacit knowledge, it was necessary for me to engage heuristic processes such as journaling and reflecting to record my own reactions and connections to the study as it unfolded; overall, it was a benefit to the study and led to common ground between myself and my participants, thus leading to depth and richness in the study itself. I also find it important to note that in heuristic inquiry, participants are viewed as co-researchers with the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Each of these approaches are supported by a foundation of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry asserts that subjectivity has value, the power lies in the participants rather than the researcher, and studies are time- and context-bound (Grbich, 2013). Qualitative inquiry contributes to our ability to make meaning of the essence of the human experience, to evaluate and analyze that meaning, and to help us to make informed decisions about change (Patton, 2015). The use of narrative, heuristic phenomenology as a theoretical tradition with the underlying framework of qualitative inquiry allowed me to obtain a rich, deep understanding of the central phenomenon.

Research Questions

To increase my understanding of the lived experiences of teachers working with students who may have experienced traumatic events, I developed two overarching central research questions which guided my study. Maxwell (2013) elucidated that the crucial elements of research questions include a "clear relationship to the goals of your study, and should be grounded in what is already known about the things you are studying and the theoretical concepts and models that can be applied to these" (pp. 4–5). Moustakas (1994) speaking specifically about heuristic inquiry, emphasized that "it is essential that the question be stated in simple, clear, and concrete terms" (p. 41). Further, questions should be rooted in a deep interest or desire to increase understanding of a certain phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Embracing this understanding allowed me to develop research questions that are both focused and open-ended, with the goal being a thick, rich description as is the hallmark of qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To drive the inquiry process, Creswell and Poth (2018) described the use of sub-questions as essential to further narrow central questions. Incorporating sub-questions into the study allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of teachers both in and out of the classroom. The first central question was designed to explore teachers' stories inside the classroom as they work to address the needs of traumatized students.

Central Question 1: What stories do teachers tell of their lived experience in the classroom who work with students that may have experienced traumatic events?

a) What is the experience of the teacher in terms of *behavior or discipline issues* with children who may have experienced traumatic events?

b) What is the experience of the teacher in terms of *relational issues* with children who may have experienced traumatic events?

c) What is the experience of the teacher in terms of *curriculum and instruction* with children who may have experienced traumatic events?

The second central question sought to further explain the experiences of teachers outside of the classroom, shedding a more personal light on the phenomenon. This question aimed to create understanding of teachers who might experience secondary traumatic stress, burnout, or dissatisfaction with their jobs, when working with a larger population of traumatized students.

Central Question 2: 'What stories do teachers tell of their lived experiences outside of the classroom, or on a personal level as result of working with students who may have experienced traumatic events?

a) What personal experiences do they reveal about their lives outside the classroom as a result of working with students who might have experienced traumatic events?

b) How do teachers manage secondary traumatic stress that may be present as a result of working with students who have likely experienced traumatic events?

Maxwell (2013) explained that research questions provide connectors for determining other important parts of the study, including the methodology and theoretical or conceptual framework, which serves as the foundation knowledge of the study

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I introduce the theories that provided the foundation on which this study was built. When embarking on a qualitative inquiry, it is important to develop an

understanding of what information presently exists about the phenomenon and to utilize that existing knowledge to create a plan for additional inquiry. Incorporating a theoretical base helps to design the study and to provide a foundation for inquiry. Referred to interchangeably with the term "conceptual framework," a theoretical framework is key to the overall design of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009) asserted that "the goal of a conceptual framework is to categorize and describe concepts relevant to the study and map relationships among them" (p. 129). Miles and Huberman (1994) further explained that "to achieve this goal, qualitative researchers incorporate both relevant theory and empirical research that help to organize the conceptual framework" and "to see where the overlaps, contradictions, refinements, or qualifications are" (p. 22).

The theoretical framework for this study consists of four strands. Each strand has a significant contribution to the research of the phenomenon. The strands consist of *trauma theory*, or the discussion of the foundational knowledge of trauma and its effects on student achievement; *compassion fatigue*, which examines the experience of caregivers who exhibit symptoms that are related to their work with trauma-affected people; *whole child theory*, the explanation of the types of interventions that address not only academic needs but aim to heal the child emotionally and mentally; and *servant leadership*, which identifies the type of leadership that harmonizes with leading both students from trauma and the teachers who work with them. This foundational knowledge supported my inquiry into the lived experiences of teachers when working with students who have experienced trauma. While this chapter provides highlights key elements of each theory, a more in-depth exploration is presented in Chapter 2.

Trauma Theory

Trauma is generally referred to as a deeply disturbing or upsetting experience (Souers & Hall, 2016; Sporleder & Forbes, 2016). Trauma involves a threat to health, safety, sanity, or life (Brandell & Ringel, 2012). Furthermore, people can experience three types of trauma: acute, chronic, or complex (Brandell & Ringel, 2012; National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). Acute trauma is brief in nature and happens one time (Brandell & Ringel, 2012; National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). Though acute in nature, this form of trauma is no less significant to whomever experiences it. An example of acute trauma is the loss of a loved one due to violence. Chronic trauma is repeated and prolonged exposure to the same traumatic event, such as child abuse or neglect (Brandell & Ringel, 2012; National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). Finally, complex trauma is when a person experiences either acute or chronic trauma together, or multiple traumatic events occur within a person's lifetime (Brandell & Ringel, 2012; National Institute of Mental Health, 2016).

When a person experiences acute, chronic, or complex trauma and does not have adequate relational care or support, this creates toxic stress. Johnson et al. (2013) defined toxic stress as "the extreme, frequent, or extended activation of the stress response, without the buffering presence of a supportive adult." (p. 319). The traumatic experience alters the function of the hippocampus, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex, which are responsible for memory retrieval and emotional regulation behaviors, judgment, cognitive functioning, and learning (Garrett, 2014). The level of toxic stress that children are exposed to can directly impact their ability to learn and function in a regular classroom setting (Garrett, 2014). Toxic stress can have lasting effects, leading to the increased likelihood for adult physical and emotionally maladaptive behaviors or symptoms (Felitti et al., 1998). One significant

disruption in development is related to executive functioning or emotion regulation. Short et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative study that explored the link between post-traumatic stress disorder and inability to self-regulate emotions. The study surveyed 766 individuals who had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and analyzed their results on several different surveys that measure emotional regulation skills. The study found that significant positive correlations can be identified between toxic stress exposure and difficulties with regulating emotions (Short et al., 2016)

Understanding the way trauma changes the way the brain receives, stores, and retrieves information is essential for school staff to know and understand (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016). Trauma can be shown to lessen a child's ability to think flexibly, thus creating moments of being "stuck," which can be frustrating to teachers and school staff (Barr, 2018). Additionally, trauma can affect children's ability to regulate emotions or demonstrate executive functioning skills (Barr, 2018). Barr explained the implications of trauma on a child's executive functioning skills:

> a child develops a feeling of intense anger in response to a stimulus, that anger may represent an emotional memory of an earlier experience stored in the orbital frontal cortex. The child may only have conscious control over their response to that memory if they have developed an adequate level of executive function. (p. 41)

Thus, the impact of trauma on the brain can be drilled down to the basic concept of executive functioning. When the part of the brain that is responsible for controlling emotions and behavior has been damaged, the child must work even harder to manage their reactions to stimuli.

Whole Child Theory

Another theoretical basis for the study is that education of the whole child is necessary to student achievement. This theory, commonly referred to as "whole child," is "defined by policies, practices, and relationships that ensure each child, in each school, in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged" (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2012, p. 2). Whole-child education includes not just academic development and nurturing but emotional, physical/health, familial, and behavioral education as well (Roffey, 2016). This holistic approach engages stakeholders and provides an individualized component to school-wide reform (Roffey, 2016). In relation to trauma, educators who utilize a whole-child approach will see the merit in a trauma-informed program benefitting children who have toxic stress.

Educating the whole child involves a focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) that is folded seamlessly into the school day. Providing SEL opportunities to students directly affects their future. "In one study that measured young people's' levels of self-control, 95 percent of the participants in the top quintile of self-control went on to graduate from high school, compared with 58 percent of those in the lowest quintile" (Moffitt et al., 2011, 2694). Students who have supports for social and emotional skills are more likely to report being happy at school, having healthy relationships, and report overall success academically (Krachman et al., 2018).

Existing research supports the argument that educating the whole child has positive effects on students who have experienced traumatic events (Koffman et al., 2009; Krachman et al., 2018; Moffitt et al., 2011). In a quantitative study by Koffman et al. (2009), 387 students who participated in a whole-child oriented program called the Juvenile Orientation

and Prevention Program (JIPP) at their school were surveyed after completion of the program to determine its effectiveness on emotion regulation and decision making skills. Koffman et al. derived the following conclusion from the study:

> A program designed to consider the whole child in the form of a comprehensive set of services and interventions may be an effective tool to promote mental health and reduce depression among youths with multiple risk factors, most of whom might otherwise be reluctant to take advantage of mental health services. (p. 245)

Whole child initiatives, like any new undertaking in a school setting, require top-down implementation. Therefore, it is essential for the building leadership to possess certain qualities that make it more natural and authentic to make the switch to a focus on whole-child education. The next strand in the literature review examines the theory of servant leadership and the role that it plays in creating a child-centered, trauma-informed school building that supports both teachers and students.

Compassion Fatigue

Traumatic events do not remain with the person who was traumatized. The backpack analogy provides us with the visual that students need help carrying this burden, and it is often the teacher or caregiver that relieves these burdens for these students. Thus, it is important to understand the theory of compassion fatigue as a part of the overall theme of this study. Compassion fatigue and its derivations are a major underlying theory on which this study is founded. In the seminal work on compassion fatigue, Figley (1997) explained that compassion fatigue is equal to burnout, but includes the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as emotional distress, irritability, problems concentrating, memory loss, and physical symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These symptoms magnify the experience for the person affected and can lead to job dissatisfaction, ultimately

having the potential for one to leave their profession all together (Figley, 1997; Tepper & Palladino, 2007). Compassion fatigue is unique in that it requires empathy; without compassion, it is impossible to have compassion fatigue (Figley, 1997; Tepper & Palladino, 2007).

Compassion fatigue is not a new phenomenon; however, it is only recently that research has taken place examining the levels of compassion fatigue that teachers are experiencing (Elliot et al., 2018). Teachers are increasingly being expected to fulfill roles that are more than just delivering the content. Teachers report a significant struggle in finding work-life balance and an increase in symptoms that can be attributed to compassion fatigue (Tapper & Palladino, 2007). A brief survey by Elliot et al. (2018) indicated that more than 64% of teachers surveyed in a large district had experienced symptoms of compassion fatigue. A more thorough, mixed-methods study by Robinson (2005) was able to find a statistically significant prevalence of compassion fatigue among educators. Additionally, those who reported having previous trauma in their own personal lives were found to be much more likely to experience compassion fatigue when faced with secondhand trauma (Robinson, 2005). Many adults have experienced trauma, so this is a significant consideration as I construct the narrative of my participants.

While there is a paucity of recent research that focuses specifically on teachers, additional studies confirm the significance of compassion fatigue among those in the helping profession. One highly researched occupation in regard to compassion fatigue is nursing. Lines can be drawn to connect the profession of nursing to the profession of teaching; primarily, both occupations involve taking care of vulnerable people. A mixed-methods study of first- and second-year nurses by Delaney (2018) found that not only did a

statistically significant number of nurses report having symptoms of compassion fatigue, but indicated that they would like to receive training and support on how to manage the symptoms of compassion fatigue. It is not far-fetched to assume that a similar study of teachers would likely yield similar results.

Servant Leadership Theory

When addressing student trauma, it is important for leaders to be poised to enact change in the status quo that might prevent traumatized students from learning or thriving. The school leader must understand the essence of the lived experience of the teachers and utilize these experiences to determine what systemic change needs to occur to address these experiences. In order to fully impact the adults in the building and gain buy-in, mindful leaders should also adopt a *servant leadership* mindset when working with colleagues. For the purpose of this study, I will use the lens of servant leadership as a theoretical basis for working with and learning about students who have experienced trauma.

According to Robert Greenleaf (1970), who coined the term *servant leadership* and produced many writings on the topic, servant leaders are those who prioritize serving over leading and whose main concern is that the needs of the followers are met in order for the organization to benefit as a whole. This is a variance from traditional leadership models. In servant leadership, the focus shifts from a self-serving perspective to an internal motivation to serve followers, in turn serving society (Anderson, 2006). Servant leaders incorporate a humanistic approach to their leadership style, including humor, empathy, active listening, and relationship building (Anderson, 2006). In turn, the followers or supporters feel more connected to the overall mission of the organization. The working environment is more positive and productive; therefore, the outcomes are greater (Anderson, 2006).

Servant leadership translates well into the school setting, especially when working with students who have experienced trauma. When a school leader puts the needs of school staff and students above their own, the result is increased support, which helps the leader to enact the desired change. However, servant leadership is not without its flaws. In a study on servant leadership within the school setting, Carolyn Crippen (2005) pointed out that certain types of schools may require more transactional leadership styles; for example, a school that is in chaos or crisis, perhaps failing academically or financially. For some schools, certain procedural changes may be necessary to implement prior to beginning the journey to a true servant leadership model; these changes and needs may require a more decisive leadership approach (Crippen, 2005). "Also, certain school issues require a more ordered approach, i.e., fire drills, medical emergencies, and other immediate response procedures" (Crippen, 2005, p. 86). Servant leadership is best implemented in schools that are at least moderately successful, and for staff and leaders who wish to make positive change over time.

Additionally, servant leadership may positively contribute to teacher retention, which is important in schools serving students who have experienced trauma. Students from trauma need consistent, reliable care and to be able to establish relationships based on mutual trust and respect (Souers & Hall, 2016; Sporleder & Forbes, 2016). A quantitative study by Shaw and Newton (2014) helped to provide evidence for the need for servant leadership in regard to teacher retention. The researchers examined the correlation between teacher job satisfaction and principals who identified as servant leaders. The study sampled 234 teachers using surveys and found a 0.69 effect size for servant leadership and teacher attrition (Shaw & Newton, 2014). The effect size is considered significant and indicates that servant leadership behaviors in school leaders is a key element in teacher retention (Shaw &

Newton, 2014). This is meaningful in that high turnover can disrupt student success, and the likelihood of turnover in urban schools serving students of color is higher, and the turnover rate is disproportionate to suburban or rural schools (Guin, 2004). Furthermore, this relationship between teachers and leaders can help to mitigate the effects of secondary traumatic stress by providing support and consistency in assisting teachers with the training and interventions needed to work with students from trauma (Nealy-Oparah & Scruggs-Hussein, 2018).

Assumptions

I entered into this inquiry with several assumptions. One assumption was that students who live in high poverty urban areas are more likely to experience traumatic events. There is some research that supports this assumption: "the stress of living in chronic poverty is also traumatic for children when the hassle of daily life limits their caregivers' ability to shelter them from adversity" (Lieberman & Osofsky, 2009, p. 56) . However, I drew more heavily upon my own experience as an educator in rural, suburban, and urban settings and what I witnessed in each school setting. Secondly, I began this inquiry under the assumption that teachers struggle to support students from trauma. I believe that most teachers understand the impact of trauma, but when it comes to creating equitable learning experiences for all students, I think most teachers are challenged by how to address the needs of traumatized students while not ignoring others. I do firmly believe that, for the majority of educators, the empathy and concern for children is far greater than the ability to use that empathy to provide interventions. Finally, I assume that teachers who work with trauma-affected students are experiencing some form of emotional response which could prevent them from feeling fully satisfied within their positions.

My assumptions and background knowledge provided me with a general understanding of the concept of trauma and its effects on children and proved to be a compass as I planned the direction of the study with both teachers and students in mind. In the next section, I provide an overview of the methods used in the study, including a rationale of qualitative research, a summary of the site and sampling, highlights of the data collection and analysis process, and a broad explanation of the theoretical traditions that underpin this research.

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative Research Overview/Rationale

This heuristic, narrative inquiry explored stories of the lived experiences of teachers when working with students whom they perceive might have experienced significant trauma. Qualitative inquiry is the most appropriate method to study this phenomenon. Patton (2015) explained that qualitative inquiry seeks to contribute knowledge in seven ways:

> Illuminating meaning; studying how things work; capturing stories to understand people's' perspectives' elucidating how systems function and their consequences for people's' lives; understanding context, how and why it matters; identifying unanticipated consequences, and making case comparisons to discover important patterns and themes across cases. (pp. 12–13).

While all of these contributions are meaningful in this study, several of these are more significant to my study. First of all, in seeking to understand the lived experiences of teachers, I am examining how the school system functions in relation to students from trauma. I am also seeking to understand context and how it matters, which is an essential piece of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015). Finally, I utilized the data and the information from this study to make comparisons to the existing literature as well as to future research on students from trauma. Aligning the purpose of my study with these contributions listed

by Patton (2015) helps to highlight the importance of utilization of qualitative inquiry for this study.

Some questions have been raised as to whether a qualitative researcher should structure methodological plans, since the nature of qualitative study can lead to different needs and determinations (Maxwell, 2013). However, Maxwell (2013) argued that it is helpful to lay out a tentative plan, with the idea that it may require revisions as the study progresses. Therefore, I established a plan for the site in which I conducted my study, an overview of the participants and sampling strategies I would utilize, and a plan for collecting and analyzing the data that is obtained at my selected site.

Overview of Site

There are many things to take into consideration when deciding upon a site for a qualitative study. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended looking for a site that incorporates individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being studied. During preliminary informal conversations with the school leadership, I was able to determine that most, if not all, teachers at this site were likely to have experienced the phenomenon of working with students who have experienced trauma. Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that it is essential to select a site which provides access and rapport; one in which the researcher is able to gather appropriate permissions and participations. The site that I selected had a school leadership team that is heavily invested in the improvement of trauma-informed practices and felt strongly that participating in a study of this type would allow the teachers an opportunity to experience a level of reflective practice that may not be typically done.

The site that was selected for this study is an urban elementary charter school in a Midwest state, Underoak Elementary School. The demographic information for the school listed on State Department of Education (2018) for year 2017 is reported as 64.6% White/Caucasian, 6.9% African American, 19.5% Hispanic, and 9% Other. The school is reported as having a 48.3% economically disadvantaged population (State Department of Education, 2018);1.8% of the population is reported as being migrant (State Department of Education, 2018); 11.7% of students are identified as English Language Learners; and 14.42% of students are identified as having a disability (State Department of Education, 2018). The school is in a large metropolitan urban core.

The school was not one at which I am currently or was formerly employed. Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledged that while it may be easy to gain access and permissions at one's own place of employment, there are some ethical implications to such a decision. In an effort to avoid any dilemmas of that nature, I selected a site that is relatively new and unfamiliar, except for a few details learned during my preliminary research of the site.

Participants and Purposeful Sampling Strategies

For this study, I utilized purposeful sampling, which is the primary sampling strategy for qualitative studies and consists of careful selection of participants who can provide insight and understanding about the central phenomenon and research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I selected eight participants based on Duke's Recommendation for phenomenological studies (cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). While the number was small, the selection of participants was intentional, and the experiences of each participant were studied in extensive detail to provide depth and breadth to the readers' understanding of the phenomenon.

Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized the need for selecting "individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored" (p. 152). Based on this recommendation, I incorporated criterion sampling wherein I selected participants who had all experienced the phenomenon of working with students who have potentially experienced trauma, thus creating a homogeneous sample of participants who had all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, I employed the use of maximum variation sampling, to ensure heterogeneity of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were staggered in their experience, but racial and gender diversity was more challenging to obtain.

Data Collection

The primary source of data collection for this study was in-depth interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that interviews should consist of a description of the meaning of the phenomenon for those who have experienced it, and often more than one interview will take place. Interviews were conducted in a private office, in-person, at the site, with additional information gained in writing if needed. Due to COVID-19, this turned out to be very different during the field phase of the study. This is highlighted in more detail in later chapters. The approximate time allotted for each interview was one hour. Based on the information gathered from primary interviews, follow-up interviews (see Appendix A and Appendix B) for initial and follow-up interview protocol) were also scheduled in order to fully address the research questions.

The interview questions were based on an initial survey that was also included in the dataset for some participants. The survey was used as a recruitment tool and asked

participants baseline information including demographic information, their perception of student trauma experiences, and their understanding of how trauma may present barriers to learning. The responses from the survey served as a basis for the interview questions as well as a starting point for the initial interview.

Additional data collection sources included observations and documents. I observed participants in the classroom or on Zoom and noted their interactions and interventions with students who may have experienced trauma. An observational protocol (see Appendix C) was developed to guide the observations and to provide data for analysis. Documents reviewed consisted of trauma-centered resources that have been provided to staff, including but not limited to articles, presentations, and professional development activities.

As an additional data source, I provided co-researchers with the Adverse Childhood Events Survey (ACE Survey) and asked them to report their score during their interviews. This survey allowed me to get a glimpse into the background of the teachers themselves and provided me with an opportunity to make connections between the teachers' trauma and their experience with trauma-affected students. Finally, as this study is heuristic in nature and includes my experiences and knowledge of the topic, I maintained a reflective journal to detail my own experiences and thoughts during the process, as recommended by Moustakas (1994).

Data Analysis Plan

Once the data were collected, I utilized coding and thematic content analysis to explore common themes in the data from the interviews, observations, and document reviews, combined with heuristic inquiry. The traditions that I selected for this study were my guidebook for data collection and analysis as well. As I engaged with the data, I utilized

the steps of heuristic research as outlined by Moustakas, which include initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (1994). First, in initial engagement, I discovered the question and began to live through the lens of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Then, my experience in my own educational setting as I worked through this process was viewed through the lens of working with trauma-affected students during the step entitled immersion (Moustakas, 1994). Incubation is the step in the research process wherein I removed myself from the experience and began to focus on how the phenomenon integrated itself into daily life (Kenny, 2012; Moustakas, 1994.). Then, illumination involved combining tacit knowledge with emerging new knowledge (Kenny, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). During this phase, coding of data occurred through a descriptive and interpretive process to identify themes. Explication and creative synthesis, the final steps of the process, allowed me to synthesize my experiences with my new learning to change my previous understanding in order to develop a new comprehension of the phenomenon (Kenny, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). In the explication phase of heuristic phenomenology, a comprehensive picture of themes was developed based on the collected data (Moustakas, 1994). This required careful analysis of the experience of the individuals as well as the experience of the researcher. In the creative synthesis phase, themes were used to restory the data of co-researchers.

Following these steps to heuristic research allowed me to have structure as I returned to the data over and over again to derive a richer understanding of the phenomenon which was being studied, as well as to maintain an understanding of how my own experience shaped my perceptions of the participants' realities. Similarly, narrative inquiry promotes the use of the story as data and encourages the researcher to adopt that perspective

throughout the analysis and interpretation of the data (Patton, 2015), using three-dimensional narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) combined with the socio-cultural process (Grbich, 2013). Data were analyzed with the foundational goal of qualitative inquiry in mind: to explore teachers' stories of the essence of the lived experience of trauma (Patton, 2015). The data collection and analysis plan for this study is detailed further in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

This study is a significant addition to the existing research that has been done surrounding trauma in schools. While there is myriad literature emerging about this phenomenon, much of it pertains to the more clinical side of trauma (Abraham-Cook, 2014). In my preliminary research on the phenomenon of compassion fatigue in teachers, I found scant empirical studies that focus specifically on teachers. This study provides a personalized, experiential look at how teachers perceive their work with possibly traumatized students. Additionally, while educators are familiar with the phenomenon of trauma and the existence of ACEs in children, there is still a paucity of research as to how specifically to address this trauma in a school setting (Gallagher, 2015; Himmelstein, 2020). Teachers are eager for strategies, interventions, and collaboration in order to improve practices in the classroom and ameliorate the learning experiences of children who are traumatized (Gallagher, 2015).

The study will significantly improve teachers' practices within the classroom. I find it immensely helpful to draw upon the experiences of others to help inform one's own practice, and I view this as a benefit of the study. Teachers will learn various strategies and methods that have been tried, and will be able to compare their own experiences with those

included in the study. Conversely, they will also learn what did not work, or what strategies may have proven to be unsuccessful. They may be able to connect with the experiences of the participants as it pertains to symptoms of burnout and compassion fatigue. The big picture is that teachers will be able to increase their understanding of what it is like to be in the classroom with students who may have experienced traumatic events, and how that impacts teaching and learning.

Teachers and administrators as target audiences for this study will also obtain greater perspectives regarding the level of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue that teachers working with traumatized students often faced. Additionally, they may learn new strategies for managing their burnout symptoms and feel solidarity with others who are experiencing similar struggles.

The study is also intended to improve educational financial policy in that a large amount of funding needs to be set aside for interventions for trauma-informed endeavors. However, many urban schools, which more trauma-affected students are attending, lack adequate funding for such initiatives; on average, urban schools receive an average of $5,721 less per pupil, which represents a funding gap of 29% (Wolf et al., 2017). The more knowledge that exists regarding the phenomenon, the more support that would ideally be given to fund programs in the urban core to assist students from trauma.

In addition to teachers and administrators, other intended audiences for this study include school support staff and adults, representing community and professional agencies, working with trauma-affected school-aged children in urban educational setting; including mental health professionals, behavioral analysts or interventionists, after-school program

directors, day care providers, and others. This large audience helps to confirm the level of significance of this study for professionals working with children.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Understanding the experiences of my participants was not possible without a solid understanding of the published research that exists about the topic. The aim of this study was not only to develop a comprehensive understanding of trauma as a concept, but of the secondary and tertiary outcomes that exist for those who are on the front lines and working with our children on a daily basis. In this chapter, I provide a discussion of empirical literature, concepts, and theories from multiple disciplines that guided this study. Turner (2009) helped to explain the role of theory in my research study:

> theory helps us to build an edifice of concepts and explanations to understand social reality…an argument in which the social theorist strives to convince others about the nature of social reality by the use of evidence, narratives, hunches, concepts, and even material objects as "exhibits." (p. 4)

Simultaneously, theory through concepts and explanations related to stories teachers tell about traumatized youth in classrooms helps to reveal the social reality of this phenomenon (Turner, 2009). Theory also derives meaning and the organization of the study. Maxwell (2013) suggested a number of ways this occurs:

- Informs the study's design
- Aids in the assessment and refinement of its goal(s)
- Helps to set realistic and relevant research questions
- Shapes the methods

Moreover, Turner's perspective is that theory calls for empirical data and without data it is meaningless; yet, empirical data also requires theory: "without theory we are blind" (Turner, 2009, p. 4). I sought to hear the secret, sacred, and cover stories of the lived experiences of teachers; and this foundation literature served to illuminate their stories.

I reviewed empirical studies, professional journal articles, books, and other reliable documents to develop a contextual understanding of the foundation literature of the study. Additionally, my aim was to discover studies and research similar to mine and to identify gaps so that my research can effectively contribute to the body of knowledge on the topic. I conducted a search of several data bases, including EbscoHost, ERIC, JStor, and Google Scholar to expand my understanding of trauma and the subcategories included in this review. Trauma, specifically in regard to the school setting, is a frequently discussed topic among educators and communities. Despite the growing awareness of trauma, there were some challenges finding current research that discussed the overall concepts in the study. For example, a search of the general term "trauma" on the EbscoHost database yielded 1,451,235 results, and refining that search to include "school" and its derivatives narrowed the results to 363,701. While there are plenty of studies to review, many were not empirically validated or were outdated by many years; a revision of the search to studies from the past three years yielded only 954 results. Trauma in schools is a bourgeoning research area, with much to discover.

Searches for compassion fatigue showed gaps in the research for compassion fatigue in educators. The broad term "compassion fatigue" yielded 3,565 results within the past three years. Narrowing that search to educators, teachers, and other similar terms decreased the number of results to 255. Empirical studies focusing on teachers were few, so the literature that was studied was primarily centered on those who work in other helping professions including nursing, hospice and palliative care, psychology, and counseling. This highlights the gap in research that focuses on the experiences of teachers working with trauma-affected students. While managing this gap was a challenge, it was promising that

this study will contribute much to the current small existing body of literature as the understanding of compassion fatigue among teachers grows and takes hold in educational research. A challenge that arose frequently in my research, specifically in the area of trauma and compassion fatigue, was that it is often researched within the medical or clinical field. It was an exciting challenge to read studies from these fields, and to apply the concepts to my study and to the work we do as educators. This issue notwithstanding, I was able to explore multiple resources and studies that helped to broaden my understanding of the topics that were to be examined in this study. My focus was on qualitative research studies, but I discovered many quantitative studies that served to inform my own study which points to the dearth of the knowledge base regarding qualitative literature in this area.

In this chapter, I begin with an introduction to the concept of trauma and the theories that surround it, including an overview of the brain science of trauma and how it presents in the classroom. Then, I examine the educational theory of whole-child education, a theory that explores the benefits of social-emotional learning on academic and personal outcomes for children. Thirdly, I explore compassion fatigue, which furthered my understanding of participants who may struggle or feel dissatisfied with their work. Finally, as this is a dissertation in educational leadership, I explore the leadership theory of servant leadership and how it promotes a healthy environment for both students and teachers who might experience the primary or secondary effects of trauma.

Trauma in Concept and Theory

To fully understand the lived experiences of teachers who work with trauma-affected students, it is important to first understand what exactly their students may be going through. The foundation on which this study is built is trauma; therefore, it is important to construct a thorough understanding of what defines trauma and why it is important when working with children. In this review of literature, I sought to develop a clear knowledge of not only the definition and historical context of trauma as a theoretical frame, but also specific information including the types of trauma, the effects of trauma on the brain, how it is represented in a school setting, and what protective factors exist to help children develop an ability to cope with traumatic events.

Definition and Historical Context

A search of the literature reveals many different definitions of trauma. Perhaps the most widely referenced definition comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), which describes trauma as resulting from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014a). Other definitions include notable distinctions: Perry (2002) defined trauma as a "psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experiences" (p. 38), highlighting the fact that many children experience events that others would consider traumatic but they consider normal. The Institute of Recovery from Childhood Trauma (IRCT) defined trauma as "an event or series of events such as

abuse, maltreatment, neglect or tragedy that causes a profound experience of helplessness leading to terror" (IRCT, 2015, p. 3). Also, important to recognize is that traumatic events can happen directly to an individual or can be witnessed or experienced by proxy (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; SAMHSA, 2014a).

Educators must recognize the distinction between stress, crisis, and trauma. Trauma transcends stress and crisis; most children experience stress, which can have positive impacts on a child's character development and resilience (de Thierry, 2017). Similarly, many children experience crises, but with the proper support and care, children can process through a crisis and go on to live a life free of negative consequences (de Thierry, 2017). Trauma occurs when there is a loss of power and a sense of helplessness that comes from an unresolved crisis or event (de Thierry, 2017; Perry, 2002). While trauma is a universally experienced phenomenon, children and adolescents are particularly susceptible due to their developmental tendency to absorb environmental cues without being able to cognitively grasp what is going on (de Thierry, 2017). In other words, when a child is in an atmosphere of fear and anxiety as a result of unresolved trauma, without the proper support and healing, they become afraid and anxious.

Historical Context and Early Studies

To fully understand the concept of trauma in modern society, it is essential to construct a background knowledge by studying the early work of researchers on the topic. The exploration of the connection between trauma and its effects on human minds and behavior goes back to the 19th century in France, when psychiatrist Jean Martin Chacot studied what was referred to at the time as "hysteria" in females (Ringel & Brandell, 2012). Chacot identified symptoms and behaviors such as paralysis, amnesia, sensory loss, and

convulsions (Ringel & Brandell, 2012; van der Kolk et al., 1996). Prior to this study, "hysterical" women were treated with hysterectomies; as a result of Chacot's very early work, the psychological community at that time began to study the connection between life events and adverse physiological symptoms (Herman, 1992; Ringel & Brandell, 2012; van der Kolk et al., 1996).

Trauma theory was further solidified after World War I as psychiatrist Abram Kardiner worked to treat post-war soldiers who had been traumatized by the war (Ringel & Brandell, 2012; van der Kolk et al., 1996). He noted that the soldiers often acted as if the war was still going on, despite the subject being safe at home and having returned to daily life activities with no existing imminent threat (Kardiner, 1941; Ringel & Brandell, 2012). Drawing the conclusion that the traumatic events were negatively impacting their health and well-being, Kardiner began to work to develop interventions including dissociation and hypnotism in an attempt to mitigate the effects of the war on their lives (Ringel & Brandell, 2012).

Additional veteran studies also contributed to the field of knowledge surrounding trauma. Krystal (1968, 1978, 1988) studied the effects of trauma on concentration camp survivors, noting the similarity of psychological and physiological responses as in previous studies. In a journal article highlighting Krystal's work, Ringel and Brandell (2012) pointed out the following:

> [Krystal] described the effect of trauma on the capacity to experience, identify, and verbalize feelings as well as physiological needs and these patients' tendency to somatize affective experiences, express themselves in an overly concrete manner, and their lack of capacity to symbolize and dream. (p. 50)

In a similar study of Vietnam veterans, Lifton (1973) developed a list of 27 common symptoms that were notable in their subjects, including depression, increased substance abuse, and tendencies towards violent reactionary behavior. This work resulted in the addition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) being included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, the main text used to diagnose mental health disorders (Ringel & Brandell, 2012).

ACES Seminal Study

Perhaps the most widely-known study on trauma, the ACES Study, or "Adverse Childhood Experiences Study," is one of the largest studies of the effects of childhood trauma on adult health and behavior. Preventative medicine physician Dr. Vincent Felitti found it mysterious that 50% of his patients continued to drop out of the obesity program he was running, despite being successful in the program and having lost significant amounts of weight (Felitti et al., 1998; Stevens, 2012). In order to gain insight, he conducted a study of former patients, during which he began to notice patterns in the past experiences of the patients who had dropped out (Felitti et al., 1998; Stevens, 2012). Over the course of the interviews he discovered that "of the 286 people whom Felitti and his colleagues interviewed, most had been sexually abused as children" (Stevens, 2012, p. 1). After giving a talk about his findings to other doctors and clinical professionals, he and his colleagues, Dr. Robert Anda and Dr. David Williamson, embarked on a two-year longitudinal study of adults and how their childhood experiences affected their health and well-being as adults.

A "questionnaire about adverse childhood experiences was mailed to 13,494 adults who had completed a standardized medical evaluation at a large HMO; 9,508 (70.5%) responded" (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 774). The categories of adverse childhood experiences

included psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or imprisoned (Felitti et al., 1998). The number of categories of these adverse childhood experiences was then compared to measures of adult risk behavior, health status, and disease.

The researchers "found a strong dose response relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults" (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 778). The researchers went on to describe that those who had indicated experiencing four or more adverse childhood events were at an increased risk for "disease conditions including ischemic heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease, as well as poor self-rated health also showed a graded relationship to the breadth of childhood exposures" (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 779).

Since the Felitti study (1998), medical professionals have continued to be interested in the long-term effects of ACEs on a person's health and well-being. Another well-known study by Burke et al. (2011) utilized retrospective review and analytics to examine the relationship between subjects who reported experiencing ACEs, or traumatic events, and their health and well-being as they progressed throughout their lives into adulthood. The two notable risks of children who had experienced traumatic events were an increased risk of learning and behavior problems, as well as increased risk for childhood obesity (Burke et al., 2011). This study underlined the need to screen for ACEs in children whenever possible, in order to fully understand the needs of the child (Burke et al., 2011). As the medical research body grows, educators are becoming more versed in what exactly trauma is, and its implications on the health and wellness of children.

Types of Trauma

To fully understand the theory of trauma, it is important to first recognize the various types of trauma that children can potentially experience. Different types of trauma can present with different types of reactions, which in turn lead to varying necessary interventions (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; de Thierry, 2017). Unfortunately, children may experience multiple types of trauma, which can magnify the stress response and create significant fear and helplessness in the child. Understanding the different types of traumatic events students are experiencing can help teachers to better establish a safe, trauma-informed classroom, and leaders to create a school culture where children's emotional needs are at the forefront of decision-making.

Traumatic Grief

Many children experience a significant loss of a close family member. This type of loss can change the course of a person's life forever. Everyone experiences grief differently, and many people experience uncomplicated grief, which is the "typical" grief response and includes symptoms similar to Major Depressive Disorder (Cohen et al., 2017). These feelings often fade over time and recur in brief instances when an individual is reminded of the loved one whom they lost (Cohen et al., 2019). However, some individuals experience a different type of grief that is much more severe. Traumatic grief, or complicated grief, refers to the loss of a close loved one in a traumatic manner; loss of this magnitude often disrupts the typical grieving process (Cohen & Mannarino, 2004; Kress, 2010). *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (5th ed.) (DSM-V) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) describes traumatic grief as an individual's unconscious effort to remain connected to the deceased individual. Children who experience this level of grief can present with symptoms of

yearning, longing, and pining (searching for the deceased), as well as severe loneliness (McClatchey et al., 2014). This type of grief can prevent the person from progressing through the stages of grief, therefore causing them to remain stuck in the phases of loss that can be most traumatic and painful (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Cohen & Mannarino, 2004; Kress, 2010).

McClatchey et al. (2014) utilized the Extended Grief Inventory (EGI) to assess 240 children who had experienced significant loss; the majority of participants had lost a parent or caregiver. The researchers compared the results to previous studies on traumatic grief that were similar and found that the existing information found in older studies still rings true today. Significant findings included that younger, female, non-White individuals were more likely to present with traumatic grief versus uncomplicated grief (McClatchey et al., 2014). The researchers explain that brain development in children contributes to this risk, due to children being more prone to experience symptoms of trauma (Brown et al., 2008; McClatchey et al., 2014). This is critical information for educators in all capacities to recognize; children in younger grades are much more susceptible to experiencing traumatic grief and will likely need varied interventions that go far beyond what can be provided within a classroom setting.

Abuse and Neglect

The type of trauma that is perhaps most widely recognized among educators is also the hardest to experience secondhand. Child abuse and neglect is one of the most critical public health crises in the United States, and it affects children and adolescents in every school across America (Martinez, 2016). Children can experience one or more of the following types of abuse: physical abuse, which involves the purposeful infliction of pain or

injury to a child; neglect, the failure of a parent or caregiver to meet the basic needs for the child's physical, educational, medical, and emotional well-being; sexual abuse, or forcing children to be exposed to or to engage in sexual acts; and emotional abuse, or patterns of behavior that harm a child's sense of self-worth including belittling, rejection, or withholding of love (Centers for Disease Control, 2020).

Child abuse and neglect awareness is but one cog that makes up the intricate machine that is a teacher's role. In addition to teaching students the content and curriculum, educators must also become familiar with the signs of abuse or neglect in their students, and to report those concerns to the state. After reporting, teachers and school staff must deal with the fallout that can sometimes occur from reporting suspected abuse or neglect; for example, a parent may become angry with school staff and refuse to send the child to school. For many educators, it is upsetting on a visceral level to learn that one of their students has been abused or neglected. Additionally, there are inconsistencies in the fidelity with which educators identify and report abuse, whether intentionally or unintentionally. In a qualitative study on the relational and systemic factors contributing to reports of abuse and neglect, Gallagher (2014) interviewed ten teachers and found that they often have the best intentions but lack the capacity to identify and report suspected abuse, or to treat the trauma that is associated with said abuse. Gallagher (2014) further explained:

> Educators' sense of responsibility to keep children safe is coupled by a sense that they lack the necessary tools to do so—by contrast, educators point to capacities on the part of children's aid, which they perceived as far exceeding their own institutional powers. (p. 272)

This is a prevalent challenge for educators who want the best for their students but feel powerless to help them. Administrators and other school personnel who work with teachers must understand the level of stress that this dynamic may place on their teaching staff.

Racial Trauma

Unfortunately, it is a disheartening reality that in the United States, racism permeates the systems that make up our societies. Racism is a social construct "based on erroneous principles of racial superiority [that] bestows power and privilege on those who define, enforce, and establish the institutional mechanisms that maintain it" (Franklin et al., 2006, p. 412). On a daily basis, children of color are exposed to situations and micro-aggressions that may result in dangerous outcomes simply because of the color of their skin.

Studies have shown that the fact that simply living in a racist society is traumatic to a Black Indigenous Person of Color (BIPOC)) and other People of Color (POC) and can have the same effects on health and wellness as other types of traumatic events. Scurfield and Mackey (2001) argued that "exposure to race-related trauma, in and of itself, may be the primary etiology factor in the development of an adjustment or stress disorder" (p. 31). The APA Presidential Task Force on Traumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents (2009) identified discrimination as a possible contributing factor to stress in the lives of BIPOC children. Henderson et al. (2019) asserted that racial trauma is "an adverse interaction, either continuously or daily, with institutional, symbolic, and individual acts of racism" (p. 927). Henderson et al. (2019) further explained that this racism, whether conscious or unconscious to the individual experiencing it, has similar outcomes for BIPOC students. Resler (2019) also acknowledged racial trauma as a significant factor in the lives of children of color, citing hyper vigilantism, increased sensitivity to threat, psychological and

physical symptoms, increased drug and alcohol use, increased aggression and loss of future hopes and dreams, as notable symptoms and effects of racial trauma. Unfortunately, even with the increasing knowledge base of racial trauma, it is often dismissed or denied (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006; Carter, 2007; Helms et al. 2012). "Despite evidence that individuals of color can be traumatized by historical, interpersonal, or vicarious encounters with racial discrimination within their communities, experiences with racial trauma may be misperceived, dismissed, or unacknowledged by clinicians" (Saleem et al., 2019, p. 3). The notion that racism is a form of traumatic stress is not widely recognized clinically in the field of psychology or psychiatry; it is notably absent from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (5th ed.) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) which is the officially recognized diagnostic guide for mental health professionals. Therefore, educators working with students of color must actively seek to understand how racial trauma is a real threat to students and why it is likely affecting their oppressed students. Further, educators must persist in advocating for the acknowledgment of racism as a form of trauma.

Empirical studies support the claim that racial trauma has similar effects as other traumatic events. A case study by Carter and Forsyth (2009) examined the behaviors and feelings that manifested in an African-American man who sued his employer for discrimination, finding that his experience mirrored almost all symptoms of post-traumatic stress symptoms as indicated in the DSM-V. While the subject was not officially diagnosed with PTSD, the authors noted the significance of his symptoms, specifically his experience of anxiety and depression (Carter & Forsyth, 2009). In a more recent study by Williams et al. (2018), 123 African-American undergraduate college students were assessed using the Trauma of Symptoms of Discrimination Scale (TSDS), which measures anxiety-related

symptoms in participants. Additional scaling measures were used including a scale to measure racial micro-aggressions experienced and additional symptoms of anxiety, obsession, and depression (Williams et al., 2018). The researchers found that everyday discrimination, major discriminatory events, as well as general micro-aggressions were all predictive factors in experiencing symptoms of PTSD (Williams et al., 2018). The authors advocated for further research in this area, as it is not a widely recognized problem and is often dismissed by clinical professionals (Williams et al., 2018). While more research is needed, it is clear that racial trauma exists and should be addressed.

Intergenerational Trauma

Another trauma type that is often overlooked is the concept of intergenerational trauma, which refers to a complex, collective trauma that spans generations by a group of people who share an identity (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Crawford, 2013; Gone, 2013; Mohatt et al., 2014). This type of trauma typically occurs within a family unit (Mohatt et al., 2014). Historical trauma is similar in that it spans lengths of time and generations, but rather than occurring within a family, it generalizes across groups of people that share similar circumstances (Mohatt et al., 2014).

Intergenerational and historical trauma are commonly connected to a specific race, ethnicity, or cultural group within a society that has experienced oppression and discrimination. Researchers have studied the historical trauma effects on Native Americans. SAMHSA (2014b) explained that “this population has been exposed to generations of violent colonization, assimilation policies, and general loss” (para. 5). As a result of the trauma of this loss, Native Americans are at risk of experiencing effects such as alcohol and substance abuse, depression and anxiety, increased exposure to abuse and neglect, general

loss of hope, and internalized self-hatred (SAMHSA, 2014b). With a lack of access to mental health care, combined with a stigma surrounding seeking this type of care, this unresolved trauma trickles down through generations and can have lasting effects on individuals who may not even realize it (Ehlers et al., 2013; SAMHSA, 2014b). This phenomenon was validated by Ehlers et al. (2013), who disseminated historical loss scales to 306 adult American Indians; these were the Historical Loss Scale and the Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale, including several supplementary trauma scales. Of the participants surveyed, 30% thought about their historical loss sometimes and 10-15% thought about their losses daily (Ehlers et al., 2013). Notably, 94% of participants indicated that they had experienced some sort of traumatic event in their lives, though the researchers were unable to connect the types of traumatic events to the historical loss of American Indian people. The researchers suggest that the results of the study indicate the potential for some American Indians to view traumatic events through the lens of their collective historical trauma (Ehlers et al., 2013).

African Americans are also likely to experience historical or intergenerational trauma as a result of the oppressive history of the African diaspora. Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary (2005) coined the term "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome" after twelve years of researching the effects of historical and intergenerational racial trauma on African-American families over years of oppression. She noted that the continued trauma and oppression without resolution, combined with the absence of opportunity or healing benefits that others in society are able to access, can result in symptoms and behaviors similar to that of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. DeGruy (2005) asserted that the buildup of this oppression has the potential to create a response that includes lack of self-esteem, a tendency towards anger

and violence, hopelessness, suspicion, and a perception of negative motivations of others, learned helplessness, literacy deprivation, and more.

The Trauma of Poverty

Recently, researchers have found that living in poverty is similar to living with chronic trauma (Collins, 2014). Often, families living in poverty struggle to meet the basic physical human needs of their children and themselves (Dobrin, 2012). Additionally, there may be limited access to physical and mental health care and other resources, creating barriers for care in lower socioeconomic communities (Dobrin, 2012). Barch et al. (2016) found that there is a direct link between brain volume in critical regions of the brain and poverty, with children living in poverty having significantly lower volumes of white and gray matter in the hippocampus and amygdala. Additionally, Barch et al. (2016) found that the connectivity in the brain is impaired for students living in poverty. This research indicates that children who are living in poverty may be predisposed to higher levels of toxic stress and may lack the capacity to process it as their same-age peers (Barch et al.; Cambria, 2016). While poverty is not a single traumatic event, it is important for educators to consider that the chronic stress of poverty in families may be creating similar stress responses in children.

One common tertiary effect of poverty is transience, or frequent student mobility. "According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), 10% of American middle school–aged youth (10-14 years old) changed residences between 2013 and 2014, and 70% of these moves were within the same county" (cited in Voight et al., 2020, p. 1). Children who move often are more likely to present with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder due to the effects of frequent transition between schools, neighborhoods, and communities (Sanderson, 2003).

Frequent moves can disrupt family systems of support which can lead to both academic and behavioral challenges for students. Engec (2006) conducted an analysis of mobility status, disciplinary action, and academic performance for students who had made one, two, three, or more moves throughout their school career.

There is growing evidence that student mobility may have a greater impact on student success than poverty itself (Metzger et al., 2015; Voight et al., 2020). Engec (2006) established that in-school and out of school suspension rates were higher for students who had moved multiple times throughout their lives. Additionally, Engec noted a negative relationship between mobile students and test scores. Cutuli et al. (2013) found that students who were highly mobile consistently scored lower on math and reading standardized tests than their counterparts. More recently, in a longitudinal study of students matriculating through school, Metzger et al. (2015) found that moving at least once over a 12-month period decreased the likelihood of graduation in half. The more we learn about student mobility and its potential to derail a student's success, the more important it is for educators to understand that poverty and high transiency are a form of trauma that needs to be recognized and addressed in children.

Crisis Trauma

While traumatic grief, abuse/neglect, racial trauma, intergenerational trauma, and poverty are the types of trauma that educators are more likely to experience secondhand, it is not outside of the realm of possibility for a student to experience a traumatic threat to health, safety, or sanity. These types of crises, also known as "critical incidents," are traumatic as well, though less frequent, and consist of any distressing event happening outside of the

range of normal human experience (Cole et al., 2013). Examples of such events include active shooter situations, car accidents, or floods, fires, and other natural disasters.

In some cases, the crisis or critical event can occur during school, which presents a different type of trauma in itself. While rare, it is essential that school leaders are prepared for this type of crisis response. Cowan and Rossen (2013) emphasized the need for both preparedness and a plan for recovery during crises such as school active shooters, fires, or other disasters that could potentially occur during a school day. The United States Department of Education (2013) stated that not only must schools have a plan for responding to the crisis as it occurs, but there must be ancillary services and support provided for long term effects of these significant traumatic events. Care must be taken to ensure students are supported, as well as teachers and staff who are likely to be significantly affected by these traumatic events (Cowan & Rosen, 2013). A meta-analysis by Lowe and Galea (2017) of over 49 studies on 15 different mass shootings helped to solidify the understanding that the effects of such an event can be long lasting. Beyond the expected post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, students and school staff were found to be at an increased risk of experiencing heightened fear and dissociation, as well as physical health problems and substance abuse (Lowe & Galea, 2017). When the traumatic event occurs at school—what most presume to be a safe place—it can distort the sense of safety and reality that was previously a given in the school setting (Lowe & Galea, 2017).

School shootings and natural disasters are not the only type of crisis that students and teachers are facing. As of 2020, a previously unconsidered type of trauma that everyone was experiencing was the shared trauma of a worldwide pandemic, with school systems being significantly affected due to closings and virtual learning. As the dissertation was being

constructed, a primary question that pervaded educational society was if and how the trauma from the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 would affect children and teachers. While there was minimal research at that time, there was some indication that the effects of COVID-19 lockdown, isolation, and underlying fear that permeates society could be similar to crisis trauma in children. Specifically, the lack of physical connection could be something that leads to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and depressive symptoms (Banerjee & Rai, 2020; Cornett, 2020). Boredom and loneliness lead to increased anger, frustration, and anxiety in both children and adults (Banerjee & Rai, 2020). Teachers were coping with the trauma of a national pandemic in both themselves and their students, while also managing other types of trauma in students (Cornett, 2020). This was a significant burden on teachers, due to an increased perception of incompetence and loss of power (Cornett, 2020).

Trauma and the Body

Knowing what trauma *is* leads to a greater understanding of what trauma *does*. To fully understand the experience of teachers working with students who are affected by trauma, it is essential to understand what exactly trauma does to an individual's physiological makeup.

Teachers should never be expected to be neuroscientists. However, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of how the trauma affects the brain's ability to function. The parts of the brain that are most affected by trauma are the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; McLaughlin, 2014). The amygdala is the part of the brain that is considered the "fear center" (McLaughlin, 2014; Sweeton, 2017). It is the part of the brain that determines whether a certain stimuli is a threat. In a person who has experienced trauma, this part of the brain is overactive and heightened. Therefore, trauma-affected

individuals can react to stimuli that may be harmless with a heightened fear response due to the overactivity of the amygdala.

Conversely, the prefrontal cortex along with the anterior cingulate cortex is the part of the brain that regulates emotion and reasoning. This part of our brain gives humans the ability to have "rational thought, problem-solving, personality, planning, empathy, and awareness of ourselves and others" (Sweeton, 2017, p. 16). When the prefrontal cortex is healthy, humans are able to make decisions, regulate emotions, and reason using logic (Sweeton, 2017). However, trauma affects the prefrontal cortex's ability to function appropriately, causing the fear response to take over (McLaughlin, 2014). Overall, studies have consistently found that the hippocampus is smaller in those who are exposed to traumatic events, leading to less rational thought and overall functioning in the brain during stimulation (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019).

While the dysregulated brain has effects on the emotional and behavioral functioning of an individual, it is important to understand the physiological impact of trauma on the brain as well. When a threat is perceived, the brain activates the fight, flight, or freeze reflex in order to subconsciously protect safety and survival, thus setting in motion multiple physical changes in the body (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019). Ogden and Fisher (2015) explained that when dysregulated, our body responds by either hypoarousal or hyperarousal; hypoarousal being what is commonly referred to as "shutting down," and hyperarousal being an increased level of physical activity and response that is a result of increased energy and adrenaline. Levine (2010) identified these physical responses as the body going into reaction mode to protect the systems if needed in a dangerous situation. Some examples of these

responses include pupil dilation, increased heart rate, shortness of breath, sweating, stomach aches, tightening of muscles, and flushed skin (Levine, 2010).

It is important to point out that trauma exists on a continuum. People experience traumatic events in different ways, and no two people will have the same response to an event. Researchers all agree that it is important to understand that children will respond to perceived threats in very different ways, so an understanding of the way trauma affects the brain and bodily functioning is important in order to be able to empathize and connect with students who are dysregulated.

The Trauma-informed School

The notion of a trauma-informed school is very popular in educational literature at the moment. Many schools purport to be such, but what does that truly mean? For the purposes of this study, I primarily use the term trauma-informed. This term is commonly interchanged with the terms trauma-sensitive or trauma-aware; however, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014a), there are clear differences to distinguish between each phrase. In the hierarchy of systemic approaches to trauma, trauma-informed is at the highest level in that all practices, systems, and policies are informed by a framework for trauma response (SAMHSA, 2014a). Trauma-sensitive means that the people who make up the organization are sensitive to the needs of trauma-affected students, but there may not be as many systemic supports in place officially (SAMHSA, 2014a). Trauma-aware, at the bottom of the hierarchy, simply means that the people are aware that trauma has or could occur in the lives of their students; some may respond appropriately while others may not (SAMHSA, 2014a).

In a trauma-informed school, the universal understanding is that student learning cannot take place until all students are regulated and at peace (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019). To achieve this goal, trauma-informed schools have supports in place that help to decrease triggers and stress and increase comfort and safety. Relationships are a primary focus in trauma-informed schools, and students have access to support staff such as counselors, social workers, and behavior interventionists that are specifically trained in ways to help students regulate (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019). This understanding and support applies to all students, whether there is knowledge of trauma or not: a truly trauma-informed school assumes that every event can be connected to potential trauma in a child's life and is treated as such (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019).

Several organizations have provided district and school leaders with guidance on how to implement best practices to support all children through a trauma-informed lens. The State Department of Education (2019) of the state in which this study was conducted has developed a framework for schools as a guide to full trauma-informed practices. This model explains that schools that are trauma-informed include personnel who are well-versed in trauma response and have made trauma-informed practices the norm (State Department of Education, 2019). Systems, policies, and procedures are encouraged to be viewed through the perspective of trauma response; for example, discipline matrices should always consider the importance of holding students accountable while providing opportunity for recovery and support (State Department of Education, 2019). State Department of Education (2019) acknowledges that being trauma-informed is not a "program model that can be implemented and then simply monitored by a fidelity checklist. Rather, it is a profound paradigm shift in knowledge, perspective, attitudes and skills that continues to deepen and unfold over time"

(p. 1). This statement highlights the fact that trauma-informed is not a program; it is a philosophy that must be shared by all who work with children.

The first step in a fully implemented trauma-informed school requires all adults to understand how trauma affects learning, behavior, emotions, and relationships; additionally, educators must understand how triggers in the school environment can create additional stress in a child who is trauma-affected, therefore leading to decreased learning and success in school. Below, I highlight some of the more specific information and research regarding what we know about trauma and learning, behavior, relationships, and emotion regulation.

Trauma and Learning

Researchers are continuing to study the way trauma affects a person's ability to learn and process new information. Clearly, this is a significant consideration for those who are responsible for educating children. "Broadly speaking, the problem is that when stress hormones repeatedly flood the brain, they have a negative effect on a range of executive functions, weakening children's concentration, language processing, sequencing of information, decision making, and memory" (Terrasi & Galarce, 2017, pp. 36–37). Ongoing toxic stress has been linked to problems with "perception, memory, organization, planning, processing, natural curiosity, interpreting information, interacting with others, and responding to the environment" (Sly, 2016, p. 32). The disruption of life events prevents children from being able to identify cause and effect patterns, or understand logical consequences; for example, a child who has experienced trauma may not understand that reviewing spelling words each day will help them to score better on their spelling test (Sly, 2016). Forbes and Post (2006) explained that the trauma-affected brain focuses more on survival and less on learning new information. Craig (2016) found that students who are

traumatized have "lower scores on standardized tests, higher referrals to special education, higher dropout rates, and are more likely than peers to engage in delinquent behavior" (p. 41). Burke et al. (2011) also found that if a student experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences, they were 32 times as likely to have problems with learning during school. Fifty-one percent of those students with four or more adverse childhood experiences actually showing lower academic achievement on standardized tests.

However, experts are quick to point out that expectations should remain high for students who are trauma-affected. Children's brains are resilient, and when they are in a safe and nurturing environment, learning can actually heal the brain and improve neuroplasticity that may have been disrupted by trauma (Terrasi & Galarce, 2017).

Behavior, Emotions, and Relationships

As Greene (2014) succinctly stated, "Kids do well if they can" (p. 11). Not all kids can do well, however. One of the most noticeable effects of trauma on the brain is the way it can prevent children from being regulated, thus resulting in unwanted behaviors in the school setting. As previously mentioned, in a dysregulated state, the brain's primary function is to survive. This can result in significant emotional and behavioral reactions in children. Emotional outcomes will certainly vary from child to child, but researchers have identified many commonly manifested concerns including hypervigilance, overreactions, self-regulation problems, difficulty labeling or communicating feelings, disassociation (shutting down or appearing in a trance), and more (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; Cook et al., 2015). In a study by Van der Kolk (2014), participants' brain activity was studied when they were presented with small words, sounds, or images (rather than entire scripts or stories) to remind them of their trauma. Participants' brain activity showed that the stress

response in the amygdala was heightened, while the speech and communication center was nearly deactivated (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; Van der Kolk, 2014). This explains the difficulties that children and adolescents may have in communicating their feelings when they are triggered by environmental cues that may subconsciously remind them of their trauma.

Similarly, children and adolescents who are trauma-affected may display concerning behaviors that make it challenging to maintain a learning environment. Alexander and Hinrichs (2019) stated that "behavior is never random" (p. 46) and encouraged educators to consider the following behaviors as a form of communication for trauma-affected students:

- Hyperactivity;
- Poor impulse control;
- Appearing attention seeking or demanding;
- Violence or other dangerous actions;
- Oppositional behavior;
- Difficulty with rules, points systems, and behavior plans;
- Trauma reenactment through aggressive or sexual behavior or play;
- Stealing or hoarding food, clothing, or objects;
- Self-harm;
- Being overly compliant;
- Eating problems;
- Sleep disturbances, bowel or bladder issues;
- Maladaptive self-soothing behaviors;
- Substance use. (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019, p. 47)

Many forms of trauma can stem from unhealthy attachments, or the overall absence of attachments, in very early childhood. Alexander and Hinrichs (2019) posited that "to help children whose earliest relationship patterns are not marked by secure attachment, we as educators must realize that students will attempt to reenact early relationship patterns in their relationships with us" (p. 39). Because of this, one of the key elements of trauma-informed practices at schools is the building and development of healthy relationships between

students and teachers or staff (Olson, 2014). These healthy relationships can give children an opportunity to repair or change negative relationship patterns and realize that there are trustworthy adults in their world (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; Olson, 2014). These types of secure attachments may not completely mitigate the behaviors that stem from a child's traumatic past, but they can certainly make it easier to work with the child and help them to feel safe and understood when they are dysregulated. As Blodgett (2013) stated, "Relationship is *the* evidence based practice" (p. 6).

Triggers in the School Environment

Children who are trauma-affected are likely to be triggered or stimulated by seemingly "normal" things during a typical school day. To a teacher or school staff member who does not have a comprehensive understanding of trauma and the brain, this can be frustrating and confusing. Understanding how some environmental stimuli can be triggering to a trauma-affected child is essential in knowing how to best cultivate a classroom that is sensitive to the needs of the children. Some examples of classroom triggers are rest or nap time, safety lessons, field trips, fire drills, assignments such as a family tree assignment or interviewing a grandparent, certain books or reading assignments, or sensory cues such as smells or sounds (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019).

Perhaps one of the most harmful triggers is the fear and shame response. The state of feeling embarrassed, guilty, or worried can trigger emotional dysregulation in a child (Alexander & Hinrichs, 2019; Siegel & Bryson, 2016). Unfortunately, sometimes the adults in the school can perpetuate these feelings without intending to. For example, verbally reprimanding a student when they arrive late to class may seem innocuous and necessary; however, inside, the student may feel triggered by the shame and embarrassment that the

comment created and may respond differently to that teacher in that moment, and perhaps in future interactions as well. Shame is the idea that who I am is not enough and my flaws will be exposed to others, thereby diminishing my social standing, proving that I am unworthy of belonging (Smith, 2018, p. 42).

Teacher Turnover

Educational leaders are continually seeking ways to ameliorate high rates of teacher turnover in schools where students are experiencing higher levels of trauma. Kamrath and Bradford (2020) defined turnover as "a teacher leaving the position to which they were assigned, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, regardless of the reason, and regardless of where they move to (e.g., retirement, school migration)" (p. 1). Kukla (2009) identified three types of teacher turnover: leavers, who decide to quit the profession altogether; movers, who decide to move to a different school or district; and stayers, who remain in the same place in which they were assigned. On average, high poverty schools experience 1.5% more turnover than low poverty schools; additionally, schools with 75% or higher BIPOC identifying students experience 3.7% higher turnover rates than their lower marginalized population counterparts (Holme et al., 2018). Based on what we know about the likelihood of higher instances of trauma in schools with these demographics, a clear connection may be drawn between higher annual turnover and trauma-affected schools.

However, there are ways to prevent significant turnover, and it starts at the top. In a case study of teachers at an urban school reporting high instances of student trauma as well as frequent teacher turnover, Kamrath and Bradford (2020) identified three major themes to consider regarding teacher attrition and retention at trauma-affected schools:
a) administrator support, especially when discipline and behavior issues occur; b) teacher

recognition, which drilled down to simply being recognized for the hard work that teachers do; and c) relationships between students and staff, and staff and administrators. These themes align with the major themes of this study in that the trauma-informed school must promote positive relationships and culture in order to cultivate an environment that is responsive to student trauma. When teachers feed devalued and unrecognized for their efforts, they are less likely to be responsive to the needs of children, focusing first on self-preservation, a normal human response. The following section explores the whole child theory as a way to meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of children (Santiago et al., 2012).

Whole Child Theory

The initiation of the No Child Left Behind Act began a series of swiftly implemented accountability measures for schools (Santiago et al., 2012). Among these accountability measures were teacher and principal quality, assessment measures, curriculum implementation, and standards-based teaching; conspicuously absent from these accountability pieces is the question of whether the school system takes care of its students' physical, emotional, and social needs (Santiago et al., 2012). However, because of the pressure that comes with this academic accountability, often school systems ignore the traditional Masai greeting: "And how are the children?" (Zalaznick, 2020, para. 12). While educating the minds of children, it is important to educate and nurture their bodies and hearts as well.

Most educators find it natural to want to place emphasis on academic learning and achievement, but many are expanding their focus to serving a child from the perspective of whole-child learning. Whole-child theory does not simply focus on students with adverse

childhood events—it advocates for the care of the mind, body, and spirit of all children whom we educate. Working with students from trauma, it is necessary to understand that the learning and development of academic skills cannot take place before the basic needs of the child are addressed (Santiago et al., 2012). Therefore, I decided to embark on a search of literature for this concept and examine the connections between whole-child theory and the experiences of teachers who work with students who are trauma-affected.

In my search for literature on the theory of whole-child education, I first searched for recent work, as my understanding of the concept is that it is fairly new to the research world. However, as I immersed myself in the concept of educating children's physical, social, emotional, and mental needs as well as their academic needs, I found that this concept has only recently been dubbed whole-child but has been around for decades as educators moved from strictly teaching the content, to caring for the child as a human (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2012; Jackson, 2017; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Santiago et al., 2012; Zalaznick, 2020). Upon this realization, I moved backwards into the literature to gain understanding of the background and development of this theory.

Definition and Historical Context

Griffith and Slade (2018) explained that whole child theory focuses on the "development of students who are well-rounded, engaged, and equipped to take on complex challenges—in short, a graduate who is college-, career-, and citizenship-ready" (p. 37). Whole child theory originated from Maslow's Theory of Hierarchical Needs (Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Maslow, 1943; Santiago et al., 2012). In his seminal work on motivation and human development, Maslow (1943) asserted that humans have a set of universal needs that must be met in order to self-actualize, or function at the highest cognitive and emotional level.

Needs start as instinctive and deficiency-based, such as food, water, shelter, safety, and rest, and progress into more social and interpersonal, such as the need to belong and connect with others and to feel self-esteem and importance (Maslow, 1943). Once humans have all of these needs met, they are better able to think critically and creatively, and are generally able to be the best versions of themselves (Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Maslow, 1943). This hierarchy is often depicted as a pyramid, showing the most basic needs on the bottom and self-actualization at the top. While it is unclear where or when the term "whole child" was originated, it gained momentum in 2007 when the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) developed a Commission on Whole-Child Learning that asserted that "the prevailing focus on one-size-fits-all education has marginalized the uniqueness of our children and eroded their capacity to learn in whole, healthy, creative, and connected ways" (ASCD, 2012, p. 5). Drawing upon Maslow's hierarchy, the commission questioned the high-stakes school reform initiatives that were prevalent at the time: How can educators expect students to learn and achieve academically when their very basic, low-level needs were not being met either at home, at school, or both (ASCD, 2012).

Research supports the notion that balancing social-emotional development with academic achievement results in positive outcomes for students; however, studies differ on the level and significance of these positive outcomes. Hart et al. (2020) examined this relationship in a study of the implementation of a universal social-emotional learning curriculum given to students in second grade. Utilizing analysis of state test scores and pretest academic skills, the students' academic achievement was analyzed during their third, fourth, and fifth grade years to determine whether the implementation of the social-emotional curriculum correlated with their scores (Hart et al., 2020). Findings consistently

showed an increase in test scores and testing categories; however, the researchers cautioned that the increases, though consistent, were nominal (Hart et al., 2020). Hart et al. also noted that while findings like these can lead to a perception that the focus should shift away from academic achievement, school leaders should find ways to continue to maximize academic growth while simultaneously nurturing students' social emotional needs (2020). In the words of the researchers, there is "nothing lost, and something gained" when social-emotional learning takes place (Hart et al., 2020, p. 5).

DePaoli, Atwell, and Bridgeland (2017) examined principals' perceptions of student learning and behavior in connection to a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, which yielded much more positive results than a solely cognitive-based curriculum. Principals, on average, indicated a general perception that there are significant benefits to implementing a social emotional learning curriculum (DePaoli et al., 2017). When examining the responses of principals, 97% reported believing that incorporating SEL into the curriculum has some benefit for students' coursework and college readiness (DePaoli et al., 2017). Researchers pointed out that while those percentages seem high, only 61% believed SEL would benefit coursework and 51% believed it would the benefit college readiness (DePaoli et al., 2017).

Key Concepts

Physical Development

One of the essential elements of whole-child education is to ensure that students' physical needs are met; this is not surprising, since these needs comprise the very baseline of Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1943). One prevalent issue under this umbrella is that of student hunger and food insecurity. According to Coleman-Jensen et al. (2017), "In 2016, 18

percent of children under age 18 (more than 13 million) lived in food-insecure households, and 1 percent lived in households with very low food security among children" (p. 5). Because of this, many schools are engaging the community resources and providing students with breakfasts, lunches, and/or snacks, free of charge. The positive outcomes of students being provided with access to healthy meals is evident in a longitudinal study conducted by Kimbro and Denny (2015). In this study, national data were analyzed for 11,000 kindergartners who had limited access to food. Academic records were reviewed, and teacher surveys were administered to determine the connection between food insecurity and student academic and behavioral performance (Kimbro & Denny, 2015). While the connection between food insecurity and academics was negligible, the researchers found significant correlations between a lack of access to healthy meals and negative behaviors, such as defiance, disrespect, and aggression (Kimbro & Denny, 2015).

A later study by Hearst et al. (2019) filled the gaps from the previous study by focusing on academic success when students had access to healthy meals at school. The researchers examined the effects of a school-provided breakfast on the GPA of 16 students over a school year; results indicated that GPA increased significantly among the students who were identified as low-income (Hearst et al., 2019). Based on the findings of these studies, it can be interpreted that if students do not eat, they are likely not performing to their full potential both academically and behaviorally (Hearst et al., 2019; Kimbro & Denny, 2015).

Many students are also without adequate shelter; for these students, school is the only stable physical environment to which they are exposed. Mitigating the effects of student homelessness is among the prevalent challenges faced by school staff seeking to

enact a whole-child philosophy. According to the McKinney Vento Act, the term *homeless* refers to any youth experiencing a lack of "fixed, adequate, regular housing" (p. 1), which includes students who are living in temporary housing such as shelters, hotels, or staying with another family, as well as families whose nighttime residence is a public place, and not private (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE, 2017). Students experiencing homelessness are at a greater risk for barriers such as absenteeism, transportation problems, transiency, experiencing caregiver instability, feeling socially disconnected, and having limited access to food, clothing, and other basic necessities (Canfield, 2014; Casey et al., 2015; Sulkowski, 2014). Tobin (2016) studied the academic implications for students who were experiencing homelessness. In a quantitative study of students in one district who were identified as homeless, the lack of shelter itself was not found to be an indicator, but low attendance was a significant indicator of lower academic performance. Students in this study who were identified as homeless and had rates lower than 85% average daily attendance, were found to be more likely to achieve lower on standardized assessments than their non-homeless counterparts (Tobin, 2016). Murphy and Tobin (2011) further asserted that one of the most significant issues facing homeless students is the lack of adequate hygiene and sanitary living conditions, which can lead to other health issues and create more significant issues. In a cruel cycle, these health issues often cannot be adequately dealt with, as homeless students often do not have adequate medical benefits or access (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). While federal programs including the McKinney-Vento Act have been established to support students who are experiencing a lack of shelter, the daily barriers that homelessness presents for students is something that teachers must be able to identify and address when adopting a whole-child mindset (ASCD, 2012; Koltko-Rivera, 2006).

Social and Emotional Development

Another key element to a dynamic, whole-child approach is a focus on the social and emotional development of children. Innumerable definitions can be found as to what specifically social-emotional learning entails; this makes it challenging to narrow down one specific definition among the many that have been created (Collie, 2020). However, it is largely agreed upon that the concept of social-emotional learning includes an examination of the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills a student exhibits (Collie, 2020; Zins et al., 2007). Rose-Krasnor and Denham (2009) elucidated that there are three things to take into consideration when developing social-emotional interventions for children: abilities, motivations, and behaviors. Abilities consist of the capacities that are present in a student currently; moreover, the social-emotionally competent educator knows and understands how to meet a student where they are in regard to their social-emotional ability (Collie, 2020; Eklund et al., 2018; Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Motivations refer to the aims and priorities that an individual has that drive certain actions (Collie, 2020; Eklund et al., 2018; Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Finally, behaviors reflect the action that an individual does as a result of the ability and motivation that they possess (Collie, 2020; Eklund et al., 2018; Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009).

In order to provide some clarity and focus to the somewhat broad concept of social-emotional learning, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2013) identified five key abilities or competencies that provide a comprehensive view of the social-emotional needs of children. First, self-awareness: students should be aware of their roles and responsibilities within their school, home, and community (CASEL, 2013). Children should be able to identify and recognize emotions within themselves,

recognize strengths and weaknesses, and develop self-efficacy and self-confidence (CASEL, 2013). Secondly, children should be able to have social awareness: the ability to have perspective and notice the feelings and emotions of others, to appreciate diversity and to display empathy (CASEL, 2013). Next, CASEL (2013) advocates for self-management, or the ability to regulate emotions, exhibit impulse control, demonstrate organizational skills, and set goals for success. Additionally important is the competency of relationship skills: being able to relate well with others, make friends, communicate, and participate in teams (CASEL, 2013). Finally, CASEL identifies responsible decision making as the final competency for social-emotional learning. This skill encompasses the ability to identify and solve problems, and to think ethically and critically (CASEL, 2013). CASEL (2013) asserts that these competencies should be addressed by family and community partnerships, school-wide practices and policies, and SEL curriculum and instruction.

Utilization of social-emotional learning has been proven to have significant benefits to student learning, including increased academic engagement, positive school attachment, positive behavior outcomes, and creating a protective factor for students who are considered to be at-risk (Elias & Haynes, 2008; Zins et al., 2007). Because of this, many educators are calling for the inclusion of social-emotional standards in school improvement cycles and assessment standards (Eklund et al., 2018). However, as noted by McKown (2017), quite a bit of research needs to be done in order to fully understand the impact of social-emotional interventions for students in a school setting. Notably absent from the literature reviewed as part of this study was empirical research to underline the positive outcomes for students who receive social-emotional learning lessons and interventions. Much of the research that exists is not grounded in quantitative data, but is more experiential and opinions-based (McKown,

2017). The experiential literature tends to utilize qualitative approaches, which are just as valuable as quantitative in that they communicate the why of the numbers and provide context to further the understanding of the concept. However, additional quantitative research is needed in order to provide statistical support for the qualitative literature that exists (McKown, 2017).

Identifying and Addressing Barriers

In order to support students' development, teachers, one of the key concepts of whole-child theory is to identify and address potential barriers to learning and help students chip away at those barriers. Teachers, administrators, and school support staff are never expected to remove barriers completely; however, a school staff that is dedicated to addressing barriers to learning can help support students in being able to focus more on learning and less on outside stressors. Immordino-Yang et al. (2019) identified the following significant and common barriers facing today's students as disabilities, family dynamics, anxiety and mood disorders, abuse and neglect, racism and discrimination, socio-economic status, and social media/societal pressure. There is a fundamental responsibility of educators to attend to the social-emotional needs of children by working to acknowledge these barriers, and for school leaders to build capacity in staff so that they are able to do so comfortably and adeptly (Immordino-Yang et al., 2019). Not only will more learning take place, but teachers will find that students are better able to engage with school and participate, thus getting more overall enjoyment and satisfaction from the overall school experience (Osher et al., 2016).

Research emphasizes the cyclical nature of identifying and addressing barriers to learning and how it relates to student success. Addressing barriers leads to better

engagement, less absenteeism, and fewer behaviors that can detract from student success. In turn, this increased success can be a motivational factor for students (Osher, 2016). While teachers may not be able to "fix" barriers that are coming from outside the classroom, they can certainly work to reduce barriers within the school setting. In a quantitative study by Martinez et al. (2016), teachers were surveyed regarding teacher collaboration practices, supervision and discipline practices, and instructional management practices within their building, and their perception of each practice in relation to overall student outcomes. The results of the study indicated that "better teacher instruction leads to more engaged students, which in turn leads to fewer barriers to learning and academic outcomes" (Martinez et al., 2016, p. 825). In other words, reducing barriers within the classroom by creating a positive and rigorous educational environment can help to reduce overall barriers to student learning, thus leading to increased student learning (Martinez et al., 2016).

Whole Child Tenets

One of the main concepts of the whole-child theory is that educators should be guided by a set of tenets in all elements and aspects of the school system (Jackson, 2017; Zalaznick, 2020). If the key concepts of whole child instruction is the vehicle, the tenets of whole child instruction are the engine. Below, each tenet is examined more closely, along with a study that supports the significance of the tenet as it pertains to student success in school and life.

Focus on Health and Healthy Lifestyle. One major understanding that proponents of the whole child theory share is that there is a significant connection between the physical body and the mind. Children's physical health directly impacts their ability to learn and develop (Slade, 2020). Centeio et al. (2020) provided an in-depth examination of the

relationship between physical well-being and academic achievement of 697 fifth and sixth graders, surveyed and assessed in the following categories in regard to student achievement in reading and math: perceived social support, enjoyment of physical activity, health self-concept, nutrition attitudes and self-efficacy, school attachment, global self-esteem, physical activity, cardiorespiratory endurance, fruit and vegetable consumption. Many of the behaviors were established as predictors for academic success, most notably physical activity enjoyment and nutritional attitudes and self-efficacy (Centeio et al., 2020). This study helped to further underline the need for teachers, parents, and community members to work to address the health of students as a basic level need and predictor for success (Centeio et al., 2020; Slade, 2020).

Physically and Emotionally Safe Environment. Schools must be a place where students feel safe and comfortable. One way to create this type of environment is to ensure that students have access to supportive adults beyond their classroom teacher. The utilization of school counselors is viewed as imperative in providing students with not just a support person, but a support system (O'Connor, 2018). Goodman and Young (2006) expressed that access to school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists was found to be a contributing factor in the academic success of students. Goodman and Young advocated for the use of public funding to increase such personnel, specifically for school psychologists, in order to promote student success. More recently, Wilkerson et al. (2013) found that schools with comprehensive school counseling models reported overall higher academic achievement and fewer discipline referrals, as well as increased attendance and student and teacher attrition.

An additional consideration of this tenet is that school culture and climate do not only affect teachers, but students as well. To better address the needs of the whole child, schools must work to create a culture of safety, calmness, and positivity. Meier (2012) identified a school culture as the values, norms, and daily practices that shape the unique feeling of a school building. Gruenert (2005) administered a survey to staff and administrators in an attempt to measure the perceived relationship between school culture and achievement. Results from the survey indicated a significant relationship between achievement and professional development, unity of purpose, and learning partnerships.

Selection of programs and systems that are used in a school building is a considerable part of creating culture and environment for students. One program that has gained popularity in creating a positive school culture is School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) program elements. A correlational study by Reno et al. (2017) examined the relationships between school culture and elementary student achievement on reading and math achievement tests, as well as student involvement in SW-PBIS. While the study did not show a statistically significant correlation between academic achievement and SW-PBIS participation, it was noted that there was a teacher perception that the program was effective in creating a positive school culture and addressing behavior concerns in students (Reno et al., 2017).

Student Cultural Diversity. In addressing the whole child theory, it is important to make a distinction between the culture of the school and the cultural backgrounds that students, teachers, and others bring to school. Ploumis-Devick and Follman (1993) explained, “Culture is basically a framework for behavior. It consists of human-made guidelines, written and unwritten, that people use to relate to one another and to their world.

Culture diversity refers simply to the differences which exist among cultural groups" (p. 4). An unintended finding of the Reno et al. (2017) study was that it "reinforced research that students most likely to be suspended, expelled, or removed from the classroom for punishment are students of color, especially African Americans and Latinos, males, and low achievers" (p. 434). Such disparities in discipline could be related to deficit thinking about students of color. Sometimes, the personal cultural backgrounds that students bring to school are not accepted or embraced by the teachers, administrators, and/or school support staff. Students' personal cultural background varies from the school culture and climate of a building, but they are not disconnected; deficit thinking about culture often shapes the behaviors and practices of teachers towards students of color (Auerbach, 2007; Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Delpit, 2012; Sharma, 2018; Thompson, 2004); and ultimately, the overall culture of the school.

Gay (2010) added to Ploumis-Devic and Follman's (1993) definition of culture; she described culture as "referring to a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others" (p. 9). Culture is more that race and ethnicity. Reno et al.'s (2017) study brings to light an additional consideration in regard to a learning environment where children feel emotionally safe. In order for students to feel safe, they must feel accepted as they are. Reno et al. (2017) found that African-American male students were overrepresented in Tier II School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports interventions. The researchers also noted that teachers wished for more punishment behaviors, and several open-ended interview questions revealed that there was an underlying bias that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to cause

disruptive behavior than others (Reno et al., 2017). Students may be at an unfair disadvantage if their cultural background is not respected by the adults in the school who are charged with their care and education. The whole-child theory advocates for education and training of educators in order to promote cultural sensitivity and responsiveness so that students feel welcomed and understood in their educational environments.

Further, understanding and valuing background cultures of students is essential in today's society given the increasing number of students from diverse racial, ethnic, economic, and language groups (Bonner et al., 2018). Yet, "over 83% of the teachers in P-12 public schools represent middle-class and White backgrounds that do not reflect the lives of today's diverse student body" (Bonner et al., 2018, p. 699). These changes require ensuring the tenet of collaborative linkages between schools and community is an integral part of the school's mission for embracing the whole-child theory.

Connected to School and Community. Schools are part of every community. But how often do we consider how communities are a part of every school? In his landmark work about humans and their relationships with their environments, Bronfenbrenner (1979) created the ecological systems theory, which asserts that humans' norms, roles, and rules shape a person's experience in life. As such, there is a significant connection between what occurs in a student's community or environment, and what occurs in other settings for them. It is imperative that school leaders understand the community in which they work, so they can address the needs that are particular to that specific community.

Including the stakeholders in decisions and being transparent can increase parental and community involvement, thus increasing student achievement (Bennett, 2017; Horvat et al., 2003; Jeynes, 2003). When student achievement increases, trust in the leadership

escalates, and staff morale is likely to increase as well (Bennett, 2017; Horvat et al., 2003; Jeynes, 2003). Trust must also be extended to parents, who are perhaps the most important stakeholder in this regard. “Parents who actively engage the school system— meet with teachers, attend PTA meetings, vote in school board elections, and attend school board meetings are more likely to obtain information and develop social networks that help their children attain academic success” (Rogers & Orr, 2011, pp. 4-5). However, Rogers and Orr (2011) pointed out that parent and community engagement look very different for schools serving different demographics, and that increased parental involvement is not always an easy thing for school leaders to achieve.

Williams et al. (2020) posited that parents have a unique set of skills that are socially, historically, and culturally developed bodies of knowledge for functioning as an individual and in a household, known as funds of knowledge from the work of Gonzalez et al. (2005). The researchers, using funds of knowledge, explored the types of knowledge three Hispanic families living in the same Texas city used to teach their children math. Interviews and field notes from observations were collected from the three families. Findings revealed the families intentionally or unintentionally supported the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) process standards of problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, connections, and representations.

There are many possible contributing factors to low parent involvement in schools, including lack of parental success in their own educational experiences, transportation issues, work schedules, or general lack of interest (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Bennett (2017) suggested that including a learning component for parents can foster a standard of

lifelong learning and can help to connect the purpose of the school to parents who may not have been eager learners previously, but are more likely to engage in school as adults.

Personal Learning by Caring, Qualified Adults. Another tenet of the whole-child theory or approach is that all children deserve to learn from someone who cares about them as a human being. Humans are social beings and thrive on validation and attention from others. Therefore, empathy and the ability to build relationships are considered to be prerequisites for teaching by many school leaders. Bostic (2014) explained that teaching involves more than just understanding the content; it involves letting students know they are valued and cared about.

> By illustrating empathy, the teacher establishes a positive climate of social interactions in the classroom that are conducive to learning while at the same time modeling positive social interactions for students that reduce anti-social behaviors that disrupt the learning environment. (Bostic, 2014, p. 5)

While kindness is a personality trait, empathy is a muscle that must be exercised to ensure that the feeling that comes across is genuine and authentic. This can be challenging for some teachers and can create an additional emotional burden. Warren and Lessner (2014) warned of the possibility of perspective divergence (PD) when seeking to empathize with students. Perspective divergence is the term given to the disparity in individuals' experiences or opinions (Warren & Lessner, 2014). "Minimizing PD requires that teachers learn to supplant their own perspectives, inclinations, norms, and judgments about students with the perspectives, inclinations, norms, and judgments of students" (Warren & Lessner, 2014, p. 129). Because of perspective divergence, educators must seek first to understand where their students are coming from, and then show students with their actions that they understand and care. It is through these opportunities for authentic understanding that

teachers can begin to develop meaningful relationships with their students, which is a cornerstone for whole child education.

Preparation for Global Contribution. Whole-child theory asserts that children who are provided with support and care for their personal and social needs early in life are more likely to matriculate through school and contribute positively to their communities (CASEL, 2013). Knowing about the impact of adverse childhood experiences on adult behavior and mental health is important as educators working with children and youth. If we can support the whole child at a younger age, they are more likely to heal from their trauma and become successful adults (Burke et al., 2011; CASEL, 2013).

WC and Trauma-Informed Care. Many parallels can be drawn between the whole-child approach and trauma-informed care. Benner and Garcia (2019) found in a meta-analysis of multiple studies that educational systems that adopt the whole child approach are more likely to provide trauma-informed care within the school setting, as there are considerable overlaps in both philosophies. Benner and Garcia (2019) further asserted that the lack of low-level hierarchical needs (lack of food, shelter, hygiene, and rest) are themselves traumatic events. The center of both approaches is that children are more than just a test score, more than just bodies in a building. They are human beings and deserve the care and support as such.

Compassion Fatigue

With all that educators are expected to internalize and know as practitioners, it is no wonder that teachers are feeling high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction. With that in mind, my research shifted from the more student-centered topics of trauma and whole-child theory, to the concept of compassion fatigue in educators. In this review, I sought to

understand the experiences of teachers working with possibly trauma-affected students, with an assumption that these teachers might express symptoms or feelings related to compassion fatigue as I peeled back the layers of their lived experiences.

In order to broaden the understanding of the theory of compassion fatigue as an underlying current for the study, I conducted a thorough review of the literature on compassion fatigue; its roots, derivations, and recommendations for practitioners. My aim was to define compassion fatigue, to compare it to other terms with which it is easily confused, and to explore the protective factors that can prevent a person from experiencing the effects of compassion fatigue in the helping professions, with a specific emphasis on education. This literature review presents the key research reviewed relative to compassion fatigue and is organized into subcategories that include: a) the historical context and development of the theory, and b) the protective factors that can be addressed by school leaders which may lead to increased teacher retention.

Compassion Fatigue Defined

In preparing to study the lived experience of teachers working with students affected by trauma, I wanted to construct a foundational knowledge of the concept of compassion fatigue and the role that it plays in teacher retention and attrition. Compassion fatigue, often connected to terms such as burnout, vicarious trauma, or secondary traumatic stress, is the result of helping professionals experiencing trauma or suffering in direct result of exposure to the crisis and trauma of those they are helping (Mescia & Gentry, 2004). Compassion fatigue is the cost of caring and aiding others, which can be detrimental to the provider's own emotional and physical well-being (Mescia & Gentry, 2004). Compassion fatigue has been associated with "a gradual desensitization to patient stories, a decrease in quality care

for patients and clients, an increase in clinical errors, higher rates of depression and anxiety disorders among helpers, and rising rates of stress leave and degradation in workplace climate" (Figley & Mathieu, 2012, p. 4). The phenomenon of compassion fatigue is important for school leaders to consider as they support teachers who work with trauma-affected students, as it directly correlates to teacher retention and attrition, especially in educational settings where toxic stress affects students at more significant rates (Fowler, 2015).

Historical Context and Development of Compassion Fatigue

Burnout

The construct of compassion fatigue has roots in psychology and originated as the concept of burnout. The first use of the term burnout is credited to American psychologist Herbert J. Freudenberger (1980) to explain his own personal feelings of "exhaustion, disillusionment and withdrawal resulting from intense devotion to a cause that failed to produce the expected result" (cited in Coles, 2017, p. 9). Soon after Freudenberger's work, Maslach et al. (2001) developed a tool to determine the level of burnout experienced by providers using the components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. In the landmark mixed-methods study used to develop this burnout assessment tool, Maslach et al. (2001) discovered that the phenomenon of burnout can be attributed to six "mismatches" that result in a feeling of uneasiness and discomfort. Table 1 provides a list and description of each of the types of mismatches identified by Maslach et al. (2001).

Table 1

Burnout Mismatches

Type of Mismatch	Description
Workload Mismatch	State of withdrawal due to excess stress
Control Mismatch	Lack of responsibility or authority that leads to discomfort or stress
Reward Mismatch	"Insufficient financial compensation, social recognition, or self-acknowledgement or pride in a job well done-causing feelings of inefficiency" (Coles, 2017, p. 1)
Community Mismatch	Feeling isolated or alone socially in the workplace; a provider who feels a lack of connection to their colleagues may experience this regularly, leading to feeling dissatisfied at the workplace
Fairness Mismatch	Pertaining to any instances of disparity in the workplace, including pay, disciplinary issues, or grievance responses
Values Mismatch	Occurs when people "must do things they believe are unethical or work for an organization with a mission that does not match the product or practice" (Coles, 2017, p. 8)

Workload mismatch is commonly experienced by teachers working with students affected by trauma; many teachers do not feel adequately prepared or trained for working with students who have experienced significant trauma (Elliot et al., 2018). The scope of this issue is noteworthy: in one example, a study conducted among teachers across a large urban school district found that 64% of teachers indicated feeling the effects of compassion fatigue, along with 80% of administrators and 56% of district leaders (Elliot et al., 2018). Many providers experience a balance of these "mismatches"; for example, a person who feels that the workload is too

significant may feel that their salary is sufficient, neutralizing the feeling of a workload mismatch. However, when these mismatches are imbalanced, it is likely that the provider will experience burnout. Gentry et al. (2004) explained this phenomenon as "the chronic condition of perceived demands outweighing perceived resources" (p. 4). Higher levels of burnout are associated with depressive symptoms, which is significant in that the mental health of helping professionals, teachers included, is essential to their ability to adequately perform the duties of their position (Gentry et al., 2004). Imbalances of mismatches can also lead to a feeling of numbness, detachment, or disenchantment in the position (Cherniss, 1980; Coles, 2017). This numbness and detachment, when experienced by teachers, can be detrimental to the educational and personal success of the students for whom they are responsible.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

If burnout was the first term to begin to describe the phenomenon of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress is the second. Secondary traumatic stress is defined as natural behaviors and emotions that occur when a helping professional has knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a client, thus creating stress from attempting to help the client (Bride, 2007). Ludick and Figley (2017) asserted that it is an experience that is often unavoidable in helping professions and may be heightened among providers who have themselves experienced trauma; and, thus, are reminded of their traumatic experience when they experience the traumatic experiences of others. Secondary traumatic stress places more emphasis on the outward symptoms that are observable, rather than internal emotional and cognitive changes that occur when experiencing trauma secondhand (Newell & McNeill, 2010). These symptoms include isolation, withdrawal, and heightened arousal to stimuli and

decreased job satisfaction and can also include somatic symptoms such as racing heart, headaches, stomach aches, and raised blood pressure (Newell & McNeill, 2010).

Studies related to secondary traumatic stress and educators indicate that a level of empathy and a motivation to help others is a key element in experiencing the phenomenon, which separates it from the concept of burnout, which is more motivated by a drive to achieve a certain goal (Tepper & Palladino, 2007). In a qualitative study of five educators between the ages of 25 and 40, three significant contributing themes were uncovered in response to questions regarding teachers' levels of secondary traumatic stress: inclusion, personal investment in meeting students' needs, and limited resources to support student success (Ziain-Ghafari & Berg, 2019). Each of these themes can be attributed to a greater need for the educator to support student success as motivated by a desire to help students, not just to achieve a specific goal or test score (Ziain-Ghafari & Berg, 2019).

Vicarious Traumatization

Compassion fatigue is often used interchangeably with the term vicarious traumatization. Pearlman and Saakvitne explained that vicarious traumatization is "the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured" (1995, cited in American Counseling Association, 2011, p. 1). This term can be synonymous with the term countertransference, or misplacement of trauma from the affected person to the person receiving the information (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

One important consideration about vicarious traumatization is that it is not always easily identified, specifically when the provider or helping professional does not have a high level of self-awareness. Halevi and Idisis (2018) explored the relationship between vicarious

traumatization and counselors' sense of self and found that counselors who reported a strong sense of self were more likely to be able to identify the symptoms of vicarious traumatization in themselves, and thus were more likely to access support. Additionally, the term itself can make it challenging for providers to identify it in themselves. While the term compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization are very similar, compassion fatigue may be a more palatable term for educators, as it expresses where the fatigue comes from—the level of empathy that educators feel for their students, that helpers feel for their clients or patients; it sounds less clinical and more easily identifiable. Not only can vicarious trauma lead to decreased job satisfaction and emotional duress for the provider, it can also lead to errors in job performance and errors in judgment. This is especially important for educational leaders to consider, when determining how to support teachers who are affected by vicarious traumatization.

Compassion Fatigue

The term *compassion fatigue* was coined in 1992 by practicing nurse Joinson (1992), who posited that the qualities that led one to becoming a nurse were the same qualities that put one at risk for experiencing compassion fatigue (Merriman, 2015). From that initial use of the term, compassion fatigue has been studied by many researchers in many helping fields. Compassion fatigue in counselors was studied by Figley (1997), who "described compassion fatigue as a state of tension and preoccupation with traumatized clients in which the counselor re-experiences traumatic events disclosed by the client, avoids reminders of client material, and experiences persistent anxiety associated with the client" (Merriman, 2015, p. 371). Compassion fatigue has been explained as a "depletion of internal emotional resources" (Merriman, 2015, p. 371). Additionally, Alkema et al. (2008) described

compassion fatigue as a deep physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion accompanied by acute emotional pain, which is possibly explained by the professional not only knowing about their client's pain, but having a strong desire to relieve or remove that pain. Specific symptoms of compassion fatigue include "diminished job performance, increased tardiness and absenteeism, declining physical health, poor morale, low energy, stressed personal relationships, increased substance abuse, depression, and irritability" (Mescia & Gentry, 2004, p. 11). Important to note is that most researchers acknowledge that the difference between burnout and compassion fatigue is that burnout can occur without empathy (Coles, 2017; Merriman, 2015). It is that empathy piece that creates the emotional exhaustion that is often unexplained in helping professionals; with the development of research leading to an increased understanding of the concept, it is easier to address the symptoms of compassion fatigue in providers. Merriman (2015) postulated that compassion fatigue is magnified in a workplace where the supervisors or leaders do not acknowledge, address, or understand compassion fatigue; therefore, it is essential that leaders of helping organizations provide support to their professionals in order to increase workplace productivity and attrition.

Compassion fatigue is prevalent, and is proven to be more likely to occur among newer professionals. Sheehy-Carmel and Friedlander (2009) measured moderate levels of compassion fatigue using three separate instruments in a sample of 106 counselors. All 106 counselors experienced moderate levels of compassion fatigue; however, it was found to be more prevalent among 78% of counselors who were new to the field (Sheehy-Carmel & Friedlander, 2009). Symptoms of compassion fatigue were more manageable among participants who indicated feeling connected and supported at their jobs.

The concept of compassion fatigue is often confused with other terms and concepts. Many educators and helping professionals struggle to find the right way to describe their feelings. Compassion fatigue can be viewed simultaneously as a convergence of burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious stress as well as a standout term that does not directly match any of the other terms. For the purposes of this study, compassion fatigue is the primary focus throughout the collection and analysis of the data, as compassion fatigue appears to be a more comprehensive definition of the phenomenon that may be experienced by the participants.

Assessment of compassion fatigue is something that school leaders should consider when determining how significant the issue is within a particular school. Mescia and Gentry (2004) advocated the use of self-monitoring of the Five Phases of Compassion Fatigue, which include: 1) zealot, in which the provider is motivated and ready to solve problems, a bit of an idealism; 2) irritability, during which the provider's job performance starts to slack and small issues become frustrating and concentration is lost; 3) withdrawal, wherein the provider begins to withdraw or isolate themselves from others and loses patience with both clients and coworkers; 4) zombie, when the provider begins to view others as incompetent and becomes enraged easily, and 5) pathology and victimization, maturation or renewal, the phase in which the provider can either recognize and address what is occurring, leaving the position or continuing in the "zombie" phase. Educational leaders who are able to help their teachers realize what stage they may be in and address it by promoting protective factors among teachers, are less likely to experience teachers resigning due to compassion fatigue pathology (Mescia & Gentry, 2004).

Protective Factors and Teacher Retention

Effective school leaders should familiarize themselves with the prevention and intervention measures necessary for supporting teachers who are experiencing compassion fatigue. Individuals can possess protective factors that contribute to their ability to cope with the effects of compassion fatigue. While protective factors are based mostly on internal personality traits and qualities, educational leaders can develop and enhance these qualities in their teachers through a systems approach. In reviewing the research, two common protective factors emerged: self-care and self-efficacy, which are described in more detail in the following sections.

Self -Care

Self-care is a protective factor that can lead to better management of symptoms of compassion fatigue (Schroeder, 2017). Self-care includes coping skills that preserve one's own health; it is often said that "you can't pour from an empty cup," which illustrates the need to prioritize self over others (Brunette, 2004). Some important self-care skills include setting healthy boundaries, taking breaks, exercising, understanding one's own threshold for stress, developing coping skills, and meditation and mindfulness practices (Brunette, 2004). Mindfulness practices are an emerging trend in psychology and studies have indicated the effectiveness of such practices on the mental and physical well-being of people of all ages. In a study by Zylowska et al. (2007), 16 adults and 7 adolescents were introduced to a mindfulness program, and 78% percent of participants reported experiencing a 30% or higher reduction in feelings of stress and increased impulse control. Mindfulness is impactful for school leaders who are experiencing compassion fatigue as well. Wells and Klocko (2018) determined that leaders who practiced mindfulness for just ten minutes per

day reported increases in positive mood, productivity, and peace, with decreased stress and anxiety. Additionally, Wells and Klocko found that "mindfulness provides opportunities for educational leaders to grow in resilience, emotional regulation, and gaining accurate perspectives" (Wells & Klocko, 2015, p. 117). Furthermore, mindful leaders are able to approach school leadership in a way that benefits staff and students, thus increasing student achievement.

Some argue, however, that teacher self-care is not enough. Benson (2017) asserted that while self-care is important, schools must develop a systemic approach to manage expectations of educators and to address student trauma and pain that has a ripple effect on educators. When systems are in place to address student trauma and mental health, teachers will not have to rely so much on their own self-care and will be more empowered to thrive in the classroom and beyond (Benson, 2017).

Self-Efficacy

Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE) is one of the highest indicators for attrition in educators working with trauma-affected students, and the development of TSE in teachers should be considered one of the primary protective factors when considering a teacher's likelihood of experiencing compassion fatigue. TSE is described as an ability "to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). A teacher who exhibits self-efficacy is able to make decisions confidently in the face of adversity and is more motivated to push through obstacles and challenges (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003).

TSE also correlates with a teacher's ability to believe in their students despite barriers to success that may occur in children, specifically children who are affected by trauma (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). Teachers who do not understand the effect that

traumatic experiences have on students may have less patience or empathy, therefore resulting in an attitude or perception that they "can't help 'these kids'" (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017, p. 39). Ineffective responses to trauma—such as disciplinary practices seeking to remove students who are exhibiting problem behavior and pathologizing students and trying to figure out what is "wrong" with them—hinder teacher self-efficacy in classroom management. Instead, appropriate responses should seek to develop and strengthen social support for these students (Crosby et al., 2015; Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). This claim is backed in part by a meta-analysis conducted by Aloe et al. (2014), which analyzed 16 studies for a relationship between classroom management self-efficacy and burnout, finding that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are less likely to feel burnout. Savas et al. (2014) also examined the relationship between teacher efficacy and burnout and found that the higher the self-efficacy score, the lower the score on the burnout scale. This indicates a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and burnout, confirming the theory that self-efficacy is a crucial component of a teacher's ability to cope with compassion fatigue. Leaders should take this into consideration daily when planning and implementing systems to support teachers who work with high populations of students who might be affected by trauma.

Servant Leadership through a Trauma-Informed Lens

In order to support teachers who, work with trauma-affected students, the culture of a school must be one of safety, trustworthiness, accountability, and support. Leaders of high trauma schools must strive to create systems that provide this type of learning environment for students and teachers alike. To ensure that the notion of trauma-informed care starts at the top, school leaders utilize servant leadership as a primary theoretical framework for

leadership practices. Use of servant leadership allows the school leader to model for teachers the level of support and empathy that is needed when working with trauma-affected students; this creates a school-wide culture of trust and safety. In this section, I review the theoretical development of servant leadership in both seminal and more current studies. Further, I examine the alignment of servant leadership theory as it pertains to the lived experiences of teachers who work with significant populations of trauma-affected students, and how leaders can utilize servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and the pillars of trauma-informed care to support teachers who serve trauma-affected students. I also examine the scenarios in which servant leadership may not be appropriate, and when alternate leadership theories may serve students and teachers better.

Definition and Historical Context

The broad concept of servant leadership was introduced by Robert Greenleaf in 1977 (Kiker et al., 2019). Greenleaf, who spent the majority of his career serving employees in managerial and directorial positions at AT&T, is considered the founder of the modern servant leadership movement (Center for Servant Leadership, 2016). Greenleaf described the servant leader as one who places serving and giving over leading and encourages growth and development in members of the organization they lead (Kiker et al., 2019). Greenleaf (1977) presented some qualifiers as to how to determine whether a leader is a servant by nature. He maintained:

> The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged of society; will they benefit, or at least not further be deprived? (pp. 13–14)

However, it is not until later that researchers began to further define the role of a servant leader and to develop a more robust description of this style of leadership.

Spears (2004) expanded on Greenleaf's work by identifying ten characteristics of a servant leader, "many of which continue to guide research on servant leadership today. These characteristics are: (1) listening, (2) empathy, (3) healing, (4) awareness, (5) persuasion, (6) conceptualization, (7) foresight, (8) stewardship, (9) growth, and (10) community building" (Kiker et al., 2019, p. 174). Spears (2004) explained that these characteristics, when used in harmony with one another, lead to more positive workplace outcomes for those who are led by one who exhibits these attributes and behaviors. While much of the body of research on servant leadership exists for more non-educational, corporate organizations, it is clear that this effective style of leadership spans fields and is a comprehensive and complete way to lead others with compassion, empathy, and heart.

Current research exists that supports earlier claims that servant leadership is beneficial to employees. In a meta-analysis conducted by Kiker et al. (2019), researchers found that servant leadership has significant positive effects on many areas of employee productivity and attrition. The meta-analysis aimed to clarify the role of servant leaders and synthesize this information across occupations and fields by reviewing and analyzing studies related to the topic over a period of time (Kiker et al., 2019). The approach also sought to increase the current empirical research base centered around servant leadership and to analyze whether the current literature supports the original research claims that servant leadership is effective. Kiker et al. (2019) found that, indeed, servant leadership has held up over the years as a meaningful leadership theory that increases happiness and productivity. According to Kiker et al. (2019),

> the results regarding employee attitudes are consistent with the servant leader's emphasis on listening to followers, understanding their needs, and placing these needs above their own self-interest. Also, servant leaders provide direction to followers, and tailor the job requirements in ways that inspire and empower employees to be, and create, more. (p. 190)

Additionally, the researchers found that servant leadership has more significant positive effects when it is felt across the entire organization; that is, all leaders at various levels demonstrate servant leadership qualities consistently and completely (Kiker et al., 2019).

Kiker's et al. (2019) study provided a broad example of how servant leadership can positively impact organizations. However, there is little mention of how school leaders specifically can utilize servant leadership in school programs. Sergiovanni theorized as early as 1984 that a school's culture or culture is essential to influencing a team's purpose, importance, and significance. Sergiovanni (1992) later applied servant leadership theory to schools and suggested that it is based on trust; stakeholders in a school are more willing to work hard, and as a team, for a leader they trust with a strong vision. Crippen (2005) suggested that servant-leadership has the power to build collaborative, empowering, and democratic relationships between schools and community. Moreover, Crippen stated, "servant-leadership is built upon the premise of individual respect, stewardship, and service to one's community and is useful as a foundation for building a democratic school culture. . . an inviting and safe haven for many children" (2005, p. 329). As school leaders become more concern with meeting the academic needs of students and forging relationships with communities, servant leadership has a significant place in the leadership literature.

While new studies in this area are minimal, some researchers are finding a relationship between servant leadership and student achievement in schools. Abdul (2013) examined the correlation between servant leadership and student outcomes. A combination

of student achievement scores, leadership survey results, and teacher morale survey responses were analyzed for relationships. The researcher found that servant leadership may lead to more community-based perceptions of the school environment, allow teachers to feel more autonomy and trust, and overall lead to higher job satisfaction and student achievement outcomes (Abdul, 2013). More research is needed in this area, but with the emerging need for trauma-informed programs, many school leaders are adopting a servant leadership approach to foster a more collaborative and autonomous program.

Servant Leaders and Trauma-Informed Schools

Servant leadership is an effective theory for trauma-informed leaders to adopt, as it allows leaders to put the needs of the students and teachers above their own, thus increasing overall comfort and retention. There is a significant body of existing literature that emphasizes the need to address teacher compassion fatigue when working with high trauma populations in order to increase retention. Fowler (2015) explained that because teachers are so open and available to their students, it is natural for a buildup of emotion to create symptoms in teachers that mirror the symptoms that occur in their trauma-affected students. For example, teachers can experience numbness, irritability, and overly emotional responses to stimuli as a ripple effect of hearing and experiencing their students' trauma (Fowler, 2015). Therefore, in a fully trauma-informed school, leaders may seek to support their teachers in the same way that the teachers support their students. I contend the emotional intelligence of the leader plays a significant role in identifying and resolving stress among teachers that may lead to compassion fatigue.

Emotional Intelligence

A major cause of stress in leaders is mishandling emotionally charged events (Patti et al., 2018), especially when helping teachers to support and meet the needs of traumatized students. The emotional intelligence of the leader is important in this respect. Goleman (1995) categorized four domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management. The extent to which leaders use these four domains will bolster the emotional climate of the school and help to regulate and cope with the stress and compassion fatigue of teachers as they address the often-charged behaviors that emanate from trauma. Emotionally intelligent leaders learn "to recognize the behaviors and triggers" (Patti et al., 2018, p. 48) of teachers that lead to stress (Patti et al., 2018, p. 48). Yet, this aspect of their leadership is often not as effective as demonstrated in a Quebec study.

Poirel and Yvon (2014) examined six Quebec principals using their coping skills to regulate emotions; they were measured by stimulated recall, filmed during their work days with behaviors coded for coping skills, and shown their videos during semi-structured interviews. Poirel and Yvon observed two types of coping: problem-focused coping and emotional coping. These principals were highly effective at problem-focused coping strategies, including information seeking, support seeking, and confrontation. However, they struggled with effective emotional coping strategies. Poirel and Yvon (2014) wrote:

> Principals sometimes cope using wishful thinking and optimism, or they distance themselves from the situation and avoid the problem instead of confronting it. By doing so, the principals are able to protect themselves from the emotional tensions which arise from the perceived stress. It seems, however, that in most situations, it is not possible for the principals to be optimistic, to avoid the problem, or to minimize it. (p. 14)

Adults within schools, including leaders, must constantly work towards improved emotional intelligence. “Emotions matter in schools, especially for learning, decision-making, relationships, and everyday performance” (Patti et al., 2018, p. 49). Emotions have an impact on leader’s behavior, and a leader’s behavior has an impact on school culture and climate. A leader’s emotional intelligence, combined with servant leadership practices, shapes the culture of the school. Principals who struggle with effective coping strategies transfer their behaviors to teachers, and, ultimately, to struggling students, creating a domino effect.

Servant leaders, who by nature are more in tune with the emotional needs of their colleagues, are well positioned to support teachers who are experiencing the tertiary effects of student trauma. While teachers utilize the pillars of trauma-informed care to work with students who are affected by trauma, the servant leader also utilizes the same pillars to support teachers. Not only does this create a network of support for teachers, but it allows principals to model what they expect of teachers by creating the culture at the building level. Adults must constantly work toward improved emotional intelligence to effectively practice servant leadership. A leader’s emotional intelligence should be a point of development for educational leaders to support the pillars of trauma.

The Pillars of Trauma-informed Care for Teachers

School leaders are increasingly addressing the need for implementing trauma-informed practices in order to address symptoms of traumatic stress that prevent learning. Servant leaders demonstrate qualities when leading staff that are similar to those that they encourage teachers to utilize when working with students. Through a lens of servant leadership, utilizing these general ideals of trauma-informed care, which include

understanding and empathy, collaboration and choice, and safety and trust, can allow leaders to support teachers with maximum impact.

Understanding and Empathy

Spears (2004) argued that empathy and listening are among the most important of the ten characteristics of a servant leader. Empathy at its core means to seek first to understand how one feels, and imagine how they must feel (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2018). Creating a place where teachers and students feel comfortable to share how they feel, and are supported in regulating their emotions, has positive outcomes for both student emotional well-being and academic achievement (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2018). Tomlinson and Murphy explain that the empathetic leader would begin to establish this culture of empathy by "seeking to understand and respond more effectively to the needs of all members of the school community and to expand the reach of that community by learning from its diverse perspectives" (p. 24). In a study by Lussiez (2010), teachers and principals were surveyed to determine the outcomes of perceived empathetic behaviors of principals on teachers' reported efforts in and out of the classroom. The researcher found that the relationship between the two variables was statistically significant and further elaborated that the empathetic nature of transformative leadership was more likely to yield positive results than transactional leadership (Lussiez, 2010).

Collaboration and Choice

In trauma-informed care, teachers are encouraged to provide students with choice and collaboration so that they are part of as many decisions as possible throughout their school day (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016). This collaboration and choice can be empowering to students in their work and increase self-esteem. The effects of collaboration and choice on

students can also be seen in adults as well, and servant leadership may allow teachers to feel more empowered in their day-to-day decisions. Betz (2012) conducted a narrative case study of a new principal who demonstrated attributes of servant leadership while tasked with the job of reforming an underperforming school. The study aimed to explore the principal's philosophical alignment to servant leadership, as well as the level of empowerment his staff felt as a result of his servant leadership attributes and behaviors (Betz, 2012). The researcher spent a significant amount of time at the site and utilized in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document reviews to examine the level of servant leadership and its outcomes for teachers (Betz, 2012). The findings showed that teachers responded positively to this principal's servant leadership attributes, and that teachers felt a sense of empowerment and autonomy due to the level of service and support provided to them by the principal (Betz, 2012). Of particular note was the frequency with which teachers mentioned classroom management and discipline response (Betz, 2012); in education, the servant leader aims to assist and support the teacher and to help the teacher grow as opposed to other leadership styles, which may create more punitive measures for teachers who struggle with classroom management. The problem solving and systemic focused nature of this particular principal was beneficial to the overall effectiveness of the teachers and the culture of the school, thus creating opportunity for student learning and growth (Betz, 2012).

More recent studies support Betz's findings that teacher empowerment is boosted in a culture of servant leadership. In a quantitative study by Hammond (2018), the relationship between servant leadership and teacher empowerment is explored using the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) and the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). The Servant Leadership Questionnaire measures teacher perceptions of the servant

leadership attributes of the principal, and the School Participant Empowerment Scale measures the perceptions of teachers of their own empowerment levels (Hammond, 2018). The participants were K-12 teachers in parochial schools across several western states, with a total of 236 participants comprising 60% female and 40% male (Hammond, 2018). The study revealed a significant positive relationship between teachers' reports of principal servant leadership attributes and their own level of personal empowerment as a teacher (Hammond, 2018). The results of this study provided support to the claims made by other researchers, and further shed light on the positive impact that servant leadership can have on teachers and students.

Safety and Trustworthiness

In order for growth and learning to take place, a person must feel safe and able to trust those who lead them to be consistent and reliable. Students expect this from teachers; similarly, teachers expect trust from principals and those who lead them. Safety and trust allow a person to feel that they can rely on those in charge to take care of what needs to be taken care of; in trauma-informed care, this is important because the person affected by trauma has learned to avoid trusting others due to the trauma that took place (Anderson, 2015). While physical safety is an increasingly emphasized area of concern for school leaders in a changing society of increased school violence (Kennedy, 2018), it is important to consider both physical safety and emotional safety for all learners, but especially for those affected by trauma.

School leaders can utilize servant leadership to improve the overall sense of safety among both teachers and students. A mixed-method study conducted by Black (2010) examined the relationship between servant leadership and school climate in Catholic

schools. Using a combination of surveys and semi-structured interviews, Black (2010) researched the qualities of a leader that create a safe environment. Black's participants consisted of 231 Catholic school teachers and 15 principals across a broad metropolitan area. The study found that, while there was some variance among principal and teacher perceptions, overall, those who worked with those they identified as servant leaders expressed feelings of both physical and emotional safety in their schools (Black, 2010). The results of this study show that, as expected, a school leader who promotes a culture of service and growth will create a teaching and learning environment that feels safe and secure for both teachers and students.

Servant Leadership Shortcomings

While servant leadership leads to many great outcomes for trauma-informed programs, it may create problems for some school settings. In a study on servant leadership within the school setting, Carolyn Crippen (2005) pointed out that certain types of schools may require more transactional leadership styles; for example, a school that is in chaos or crisis, perhaps failing academically or financially. For some schools, certain procedural changes may be necessary to implement prior to beginning the journey to a true servant leadership model; these changes and needs may require a more decisive leadership approach (Crippen, 2005). "Also, certain school issues require a more ordered approach, i.e., fire drills, medical emergencies, and other immediate response procedures" (Crippen, 2005, p. 86). Servant leadership is best implemented in schools that are at least moderately successful, and for staff and leaders who wish to make positive change over time.

Additionally, servant leadership may lead to boundary issues for principals who do not balance service with the ability to address difficult conversations. Servant leaders may

be taken advantage of and seen as “pushovers” if clear boundaries are not set (Spears, 2004). To address this limitation, leaders must set boundaries and deliver uncomfortable news or feedback in empathetic ways (Crippen, 2005). In order to do this, leaders must create foundational knowledge that the leader’s role is to serve and allow the teacher to grow; thus, some difficult conversations may be held in order to foster that growth. Teachers must feel safe to fail or to struggle and know that support will be provided to them so that they can reach their full potential.

Further Research

A growing body of research exists on the benefits of servant leadership in general. However, in my research I found that there is a lack of current empirical evidence for the positive impact of servant leadership in schools. While there are studies examining the relationship between the identification of servant leadership and teacher attrition, other focuses of research in this broader topic appear to be limited. Further research in this area would allow school leaders to learn how to implement servant leadership more specifically in a school setting, and how that would foster a more trauma-informed school climate and culture.

Additional research examining the relationship between servant leadership and trauma-informed programming would benefit leaders seeking to increase the level of trauma-informed practices in schools. This is a concept that is significant when considering the lived experiences of teachers when working with students who are affected by trauma, as the type of leadership style the principal has will contribute to the overall lived experience of the teacher.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapters, I outlined the "what" and the "why" of the study: the purpose of the study, the problem which it addresses, and the literature that serves as a theoretical underpinning for the study. In this chapter, I identify and describe the "how" of the study: the methodology. Careful identification of the way in which this study was conducted is critical in making sure that the study answers the research questions in a way that is done ethically and effectively. This chapter provides a brief overview of the problem, purpose, and research questions for framing the methodology. Additionally, insight is provided regarding the overall design of the study with attention given to limitations, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

An unfortunate reality is that many children are facing significant trauma that may cause challenges in the classroom, both academically and behaviorally. Students who have experienced trauma may be ready to fight or flee what they perceive as danger, and this manifests as behavioral concerns, such as disruptions, anger, aggression, violence, and disrespect (Burke et al., 2011; Ko et al., 2008). This trauma does not only affect students. Educators may also be experiencing their own fallout that is secondary to the trauma that is experienced by their students, but is just as impactful.

The concept of trauma in schools is not new. The landscape of education is changing to embrace trauma-informed pedagogy based on recent research and information that has been brought to light. There is a significant amount of existing research that confirms the challenges that students face when attempting to learn and cope with trauma concurrently. However, there is limited research that focuses on what teachers experience in terms of this

phenomenon. Those who are not in the classrooms daily may not understand the level of need that exists for educators to understand and respond to trauma effectively.

The purpose of this heuristic narrative inquiry was to delve into stories of teachers, who work with trauma-affected students, thus creating a greater understanding of what it really means to work with students who are struggling because of something in their lives that may prevent them from learning. The increased understanding of the experiences that teachers are having with trauma-affected students is important for those who are tertiary to the classroom, including administrators and counselors, so that appropriate supports and measures can be put into place in order to provide whole-child care to students, thus increasing academic success.

Maxwell (2013) emphasized the need for the operational pieces of a study, specifically the methodology, to be connected closely to the research questions. With this in mind, my study began with two central questions, each with several sub-questions. These are outlined below.

Central Question 1: What stories do teachers tell of their lived experience in the classroom who work with students who may have experienced traumatic events?

a) What is the experience of the teacher in terms of behavior or discipline issues with children who may have experienced traumatic events?
b) What is the experience of the teacher in terms of relational issues with children who may have experienced traumatic events?
c) What is the experience of the teacher in terms of curriculum and instruction with children who may have experienced traumatic events?

Central Question 2: What stories do teachers tell of their lived experiences outside of the classroom, or on a personal level as result of working with students who may have experienced traumatic events?

a) What personal experiences do they reveal about their lives outside the classroom as a result of working with students who may have experienced traumatic events?
b) How do teachers manage secondary traumatic stress that may be present as a result of working with students who may have experienced traumatic events?

In focusing the study on these specific questions, my goal was to explore the stories of participants through in-depth interviews that are at the core of the study. I hoped to capture their secret, sacred, and cover stories, described in this chapter.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the methodological constructs of this study, including the use of qualitative research and the selected theoretical traditions, the role of the researcher, and the design, which consisted of setting, participants, sampling techniques, data collection, and analysis. Finally, I address the limitations of the study, including validity and reliability and ethical considerations. The section directly following this describes my use of qualitative research in this study and the importance of selecting the appropriate traditions or perspectives to tell the stories of the participants.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is most appropriate in this study that explored the lived experiences of the teachers who work with trauma-affected students. Qualitative research is an overarching term for the specific style of research that examines natural experiences within society (Saldaña, 2011). Qualitative research is personal in nature and involves not just hard data but the experiences, interests, and reflection of the researcher as well as those

of the participants (Patton, 2015). The information collected in qualitative research is "primarily non-quantitative in nature" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 3) and involves incorporation of interviews, observations, field notes, documents, arts, and other forms of expression. Using qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to make meaning of the phenomenon in context with a greater sense of making meaning; qualitative researchers can draw inferences from data with multiple layers and components (Patton, 2015). Qualitative inquiry leads to exploration of systems and the consequences of those systems on people's lives (Patton, 2015). Therefore, qualitative inquiry allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of trauma in schools, with consideration to the systemic barriers that may be in place in an educational setting. The goal of qualitative research is to enlighten the reader as to the cultural and societal implications of the experiences of the participants; the purpose of this study mirrored this goal (Saldaña, 2011).

Narrative Inquiry

As the study takes shape, I included the use of narrative inquiry to serve as the major theoretical tradition for this study. Narrative inquiry allowed me to explore the experiences of my participants via "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). This tradition involves using the participants' stories as data and honoring their experiences in that way (Patton, 2015). Narrative inquiry considers the tenets of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Temporality reminds us that even as we are conducting the study, the narrative is changing due to the dynamic nature of life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Sociality is the understanding that the experiences of the participants are unfolding under milieu, or a social environment, that is part of the overall

experience of the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Finally, place examines more of the physical environment, "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). This is significant to the story, as our identities, memories, and experiences are often linked with certain physical locations (Clandinin & Huber, 2007). Understanding these three tenets allowed me to gain insight into the stories beyond the spoken word of the participants as the study progressed.

Teacher Stories

Schools are often filled with programs and initiatives that are implemented by people who never set foot into a classroom; policy makers, board members, and legislators all seem to know what's best for children without the knowledge or experience it takes to make decisions that impact them. We must listen to the stories of those who have firsthand experiential knowledge of the delicate intricacies of education (Crites, 1971). Teachers possess within them a landscape of experience and knowledge (Berry & Forgasz, 2018). According to Clandinin and Connelly (1996), teachers tell three types of stories: "sacred stories," "cover stories," and "secret stories." "Sacred stories" are those official stories that are communicated to stakeholders including school boards, community members, and lawmakers, by school and district leadership. Secondly, the "cover stories" are those that teachers tell other interested parties, including other teachers, parents, administrators, and people in the public. "Cover stories" provide the highlight reel for the listener; the positive and agreeable aspects of the work are shared to escape harsh scrutiny or judgment. Finally, tantamount to narrative inquiry in the field of education is the idea that many of the experiences that shape a teacher's life are "secret stories"; in other words, teachers are free

to practice within the safe, scrutiny-free walls of their classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). “Secret stories” realistically depict the difficulties and challenges of the work that is done by teachers. If these stories are shared, they are typically shared with other teachers; often, they are shared under a veil of expertise that molds to the expectations of whoever is listening (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

The different types of stories do not always exist harmoniously. Sometimes, tensions arise in that stories may compete or conflict with each other (Clandinin et al., 2009). The sacred stories” that are told often shape educational policies and practices that reach far beyond the school walls; teachers’ secret stories may vary greatly from the sacred stories that are more widely known and shared. Olson and Craig (2005) argued that often, “what teachers know becomes entangled with what they ‘should’ know” (p. 165). However, these tensions provide a space for understanding and learning by explicating the conflicts and differences between each type of story. My aim in this study was to uncover the secret stories of my participants, in an effort to provide a full understanding of their experiences and create a space for those tensions to decrease over time, and for the sacred stories to more closely resemble the cover stories and secret stories. If those in leadership listen to the stories of teachers, I believe real change can occur.

Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic inquiry provided additional guidance for the research and collection of data. Heuristics is a “passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving; an effort to know” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 43). During heuristic inquiry, the researcher becomes the instrument, leading to a greater understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further elaborated that during heuristic inquiry, the researcher

engages so deeply with the data that all senses are used, including being receptive to body language and visual cues. Heuristic inquiry is valuable to educational research in that it places value on the experience of the researcher and does not require objectivity (Moustakas, 1994). There is value placed on both the explicit and implicit knowledge of the researcher. Moustakas (1994) identified this as "tacit knowledge," which is our implicit knowledge based on our own experiences, values, and world view. This type of knowledge can be difficult to communicate or recognize, so as a researcher it was vital that I acknowledged my own tacit knowledge as I conducted the study. "Coded," or explicit knowledge, is that which we are able to explicitly identify and communicate.

Heuristic inquiry occurs in six phases that align with the research process. The first phase is initial engagement. During this phase, the researcher develops the interest and passion about the topic (Moustakas, 1994). The next phase is the immersion phase, during which the researcher becomes one with the research questions and immerses themselves into the process of conducting the study and gathering data. During incubation, the researcher takes a break from the research immersion in order to gain clarity and focus. The fourth phase, illumination, as well as the fifth phase, explication, are the phases during which the data analysis takes place, as well as restorying the data to create a comprehensive picture of the participants' experiences. During this phase, tacit knowledge is combined with coded or explicit knowledge to conceptualize the data. Finally, the heuristic researcher experiences creative synthesis, which involves the depiction of the stories in a way that is meaningful to the understanding of the lived experience. The phases of heuristic inquiry are explained further in the plan for data analysis later in this chapter.

Another hallmark of heuristic inquiry is that the participants in the study become co-researchers, with a similar vested interest in the knowledge and information to be gleaned from the study (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout this study, I use the terms participants and co-researchers interchangeably.

Role of the Researcher

Berger (2015) posited that in qualitative inquiry, the researcher must position themselves within the study by examining their role in the creation of knowledge. I am an educator of fifteen years, with five years of experience as a school counselor. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I shared the story of my work with David and my challenges to help him overcome academically and emotionally after a significant traumatic experience. My experience with David, along with many other students, led me to develop an interest in social-emotional learning and the role it plays in a child's education. This special interest guided me to this particular research topic and to my current profession as a counselor. My work as a white female educator in urban settings has also shaped my understanding of the racial disparities and structural inequities that plague our educational system and society as a whole; as a white educator, I do not share the same experiences with structural and systemic racism, but it is my responsibility to continuously engage in learning and seeking to understand about the world that my students are in. While my background helps to create a context for my research, my focus is on my co-researchers. Creswell (2013) emphasized that we must address personal biases within our own background in order to fully engage with the data.

As I considered my own position within this study, I also considered my participants' positions and how it may feel for them to share their stories with me. If I

expected teachers to divulge their secret stories to me, they needed to trust me. Because I was a relative stranger, it was natural for teachers to be hesitant in sharing their secret stories with me. However, trust can be established, and several strategies were utilized to do so. I prioritized prolonged engagement or being present within the field to learn as much as possible and to develop a rapport with those I meet (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Pseudonyms were used for protection of my co-researchers' privacy. I made sure that my questioning was open, clear, and that no leading questions were asked. I honored all assigned meeting times and made every attempt to be a reliable, responsible researcher at all times. I was also acutely aware of reactivity, and the fact that my presence may cause certain responses within my participants and with other school personnel as well. Finally, I prioritized reflexivity, or an ongoing self-awareness, considering the possible power differential between researcher and participant. To capture my reactions, as well as the reactions of those around me, I employed reflective journals and examined these notes as part of the explication phase of data analysis in addition to the data gathered from the participants.

Design of the Study

Description of Site

Selection of a site for data collection is an essential step to the overall phenomenological process (Patton, 2015). First and foremost, the site must include participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Since my study focus was narrowed to students who were from low socioeconomic status neighborhoods, the most appropriate setting was a school that was situated in a district that has a high percentage of free and reduced lunch recipients. The school that I selected is located in an urban, Midwestern city and has a free and reduced rate of 100% (State Department of Education,

2019). There are 709 students enrolled in grades K-8 (State Department of Education, 2019). The demographic information for the school listed on State Department of Education (2019) for year 2017 is reported as, 86.3% African American, with other races being too minimally reported to yield a percentage. The school is reported as having a 48.3% economically disadvantaged population (State Department of Education, 2019); 1.8% of the population is reported as being migrant (State Department of Education, 2019); 11.7% of students are identified as English Language Learners; and 14.42% of students are identified as having a disability (State Department of Education, 2019). The school is in an urban setting, within a midsized city's urban core. Also notable is the level of retention of teachers over a three-year period, which is only 37.9% (State Department of Education, 2019).

Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized the need for selection of a site that provides access needed for full completion of the study. When I considered this need, I decided that an essential attribute would be the overall "buy-in" of teachers and the level of understanding that leadership and teachers have of trauma-informed practices in education. The school that I selected has a strong leadership team who is interested in development of more trauma-informed practices. I believed that they would be truly invested in the study and would be interested in contributing to the existing research.

The school where I conducted my study was unfamiliar to me in that I am not currently, nor have I been, employed at the school. While it may be easier to achieve research goals at a familiar school, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that to avoid ethical implications, it may be better to select a site that is new to the researcher. Therefore, I selected a school in which I had an acquaintance as a contact, but had no additional relationships and no preliminary knowledge of the school or setting. This allowed me to

enter into the study with a blank slate and construct my knowledge organically without bias regarding the site itself.

Participants and Sampling Strategies

Careful consideration must be made when determining the participants for the study. The strategy that was used primarily in this study was purposeful sampling, which allowed me to select individuals who expressed an interest in participating as well as a rich experience to offer to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some preliminary surveying was done, which guided my selection of the participants. This survey also gathered perceptual data from teachers regarding the level of trauma experienced by students, and the implications that those traumatic events may have on learning and behavior. From that data, I selected eight participants. This small number of participants allowed me to delve deeply into their experiences for a rich, thick understanding of their experience of the phenomenon.

In addition to purposeful sampling, some criterion sampling was utilized. Criterion sampling involves selecting participants based on a specific set of criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are criteria that each participant were required to meet; first, they needed to be a teacher in the building who works directly with students whom they perceive to be trauma-affected. Heterogenous sampling was also used in order to ensure diversity among participants. Considerations were made to racial and ethnic background, gender, years of experience, and previous trauma experiences. This allowed me to create a group that was somewhat diverse in demographic information, but whose members shared the same experience of working with students affected by trauma.

The process for sampling and data collection began with a survey to teachers that gathered baseline information and demographic information. The survey asked teachers to

identify whether they would like to participate in the interviews. In this survey, I ascertained interest in participation of the study, gathered demographic data, and surveyed teachers on their perceptions of their students' trauma and the perceived implications of that trauma on the students' learning and behavior. Based on these data, I selected eight participants and conducted the semi-structured interviews. The data from the surveys were used as a baseline to design interview questions that were relevant to the experience and background shared by the participants in the survey. I also asked them to elaborate or clarify survey responses during the interview, if necessary. Then, I conducted my observations and did follow-up interviews with each teacher whom I observed. I also conducted a review of documents pertaining to the professional development that teachers experienced related to the topic. Interviews, observations, and documents were all coded for interpretation as described later in this chapter.

Data Sources

When considering the types of data to be analyzed and interpreted in a qualitative study, it is important to utilize multiple forms of data to connect concepts and themes and to develop a rich, thick description of the phenomenon in context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Geertz, 1993). Incorporating the use of varying methodology increases the crystallization of data, or the combining of "symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionality, and angles of approach" (Richardson, 2000, p. 934). Simply stated, increasing the types of data that is collected increases the validity of the study (Ellingson, 2009).

Interviews

I chose to utilize semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary source of content for this study. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) described interviews as where "knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee" (p. 4). In selecting interviews as a data collection method for this qualitative study, my aim was to further my understanding of the teachers' stories of their lived experiences when working with students who may have experienced trauma. In the responsive interviewing model, Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasized that the first step must be to determine what research questions will be answered by the interviewees. The interview questions asked were developed ahead of time, based on the research questions. Follow-up questions were asked, as well as questions to clarify or to gather additional details. The structured questions are detailed in Appendix D.

Documents

While the primary content came from in-depth interviews of my participants, documents served to enhance the interview data by "additional meaning and depth, and supplement depictions of the experience obtained from observations and interviews" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49). Bogden and Biklen (2007) further explained the use of documents as supplemental to the research and beneficial to the interpretation of the overall concepts and theories uncovered during the interviews and interpretations.

There are three types of documents: personal documents, which include first-person narrative materials such as autobiographies or diary entries that describe an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs (Bodgen & Biklen, 2007; Plummer, 1983). Official documents consist of documents that are designed for consumption by a specific audience or

organization (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). These include documents such as handbooks, guides, or memos, and are generally available and accessible to the general public (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). A third type of document, pop culture documents, show cultural and societal materials that impact public opinion (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). This type of document is less common as I searched for documents that connect to my study topic; the study of trauma, while prevalent in educational empirical research, does not lend itself to pop culture document creation. I utilized official documents in the form of training newsletters that were sent to staff as part of their ongoing professional development in trauma-informed practices.

The use of documents as a data source was important in structuring the methodology of this narrative, heuristic inquiry. Incorporating documents assisted in illuminating the lived experiences of teachers working with students who have experienced traumatic events and allowed me to address my research questions in a more comprehensive way.

Observations

To further illuminate the lived experiences of teachers working with students who have experienced trauma, I included an observation in my instrumentation. The purpose of an observation is ultimately to "describe in depth and in detail the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities, and the meanings of what was observed from the perspectives of those observed" (Patton, 2015, p. 332). While my primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews, observations provided me with an opportunity to gain further insight into the true feelings and emotions of teachers by seeing their nonverbal cues as they work directly with students. Angrosino (2005) explained that "even studies that rely mainly on interviewing as a data

collection technique employ observational methods to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed" (p. 729). In my observations, I attempted to observe unstructured educational time through the lens of trauma-informed systems and how teachers' actions provided more clarity and depth of understanding of how they experience working with students from trauma. I was a nonparticipant observer, with the understanding that children may engage me as an unfamiliar adult in the school. Within my observations, while maintaining neutrality in my recording of the events taking place, I recorded my thoughts and reflections, which became part of the data to be interpreted (Patton, 2015). An observation protocol is provided in Appendix C.

ACE Survey

In order to gain insight into each participant, I sent them the Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) survey developed by Felitti et al. (1998). This tool has become a widely used instrument in assessing the level of significant trauma a person has experienced in their lives. Inclusion of this data source helped me to provide a thicker description of the co-researchers' stories and to help them to draw connections, if any, from their own traumatic past to the work they do with students. The co-researchers took the survey on their own and did not turn in their survey. Rather, they reported their overall number to me during the interview. As a general rule, any ACE score higher than four has implications for adverse mental and physical health diagnoses as adults (Felitti et al., 1998).

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was informed by the theoretical traditions that are the foundation for this study. I primarily utilized the phases of heuristic analysis to provide me

with a process for engaging with the data as it became available. I also utilized elements of narrative data analysis to ensure I was able to fully understand how the lives and experiences of my participants were woven into their responses to my interview questions. Thematic coding was utilized to make meaning of the data and to aid me in restorying the data. I provide more detail about my plan for data analysis in the following sections.

Heuristic Analysis

In heuristic phenomenology, the researcher must follow a certain process to ensure that their own experiences are appropriately reflected within the data interpretation and analysis (Moustakas, 1994). In essence, the participants became co-researchers alongside me through the entire process. (Moustakas (1994) identified the phases of heuristic research as initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. Each phase has its place in regard to data analysis.

In initial engagement, "the investigator reaches inward for tacit awareness and knowledge, permits intuition to run freely, and elucidates the context from which the question takes form and significance" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27). This involves the researcher's previous experiences with the phenomenon and bringing those experiences to the forefront in order to connect them to the current study. For this study, I reviewed my journal from my two years of teaching high school in an urban setting, which brought back many memories of what it truly felt like to be a teacher in front of a class of students, a majority of whom had experienced significant trauma.

The next phase is immersion, which is similar to initial engagement but involves the researcher wrapping the phenomenon around all aspects of life. As this study unfolded, I found myself examining all aspects of my career and home life through a trauma lens. This

helped me to make meaning of the data that were collected. The next step is incubation, which allows meaning to develop as the researcher simmers in the knowledge and previous experiences. Illumination is the phase in which new understandings are awakened as the previous experiences combine with the data that are collected within the study.

Essential to the data analysis process in heuristic research is the phase of explication. During this phase, the researcher makes efforts to understand and make sense of the information that has been gathered, which also includes the use of thematic coding to help make sense of the data in narrative context (Moustakas, 1994). Upon completion of the explication phase, the researcher begins creative synthesis, which focuses more on making meaning of the data and applying it to the larger context. During the creative synthesis stage, restorying of the data occurs; in other words, the data is broken down into definable aspects, and then reconstructed into a narrative that tells the same story, but retold through the lens of the overarching theme of the study (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). During these final phases of this heuristic research study, I was more equipped to understand the data while incorporating my own interpretations based on my life experiences.

Narrative Analysis

As Dewey (1938) stated, “Life is education” (p. 16). As humans, we are naturally inclined to be curious and to seek to understand the experiences of others. The data collected in this study were a story of an individual participant and were meant to educate and enlighten the reader. Stories of my participants were analyzed using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The use of these three dimensions is necessary to give structure to the data that is obtained (Adama et al., 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These dimensions include interaction/sociality, which details the

interactions between social and personal elements to the story; continuity/temporality, which explains how the story exists in time and place; and situation/spatiality, which shows where the story takes place (Adama et al., 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Of particular import is the concept of sociocultural context analysis, which plays a part in my analysis of the stories told by my participants. The broad assertion by sociocultural narrative analysis is that stories provide insight to both the participant and the researcher's lives, and that there are outside forces that cause people to experience things differently. While the participants in my study were all educators, they had very different societal and cultural experiences that shaped their experiences and perceptions. Grbich (2013) posited that researchers should analyze data through the socio-cultural lens by identifying boundaries of the segments within the interview transcripts; exploring the content and context of the story; compare the stories of others, link stories to relevant structures and systems within the culture; and interpret stories with an awareness of one's own feelings and reactions. With an aim to capturing the stories that teachers told, the analysis of the data in this study gave credence to the humanity of stories and how they shape our world view. Adding this layer to my data analysis helped me to make the connections between my own experiences and feelings, the experiences and feelings of my participants, and the narrative that emerged from the data.

Thematic Content Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used for all data sources to combine all codes that were connected in concept (Miles et al., 2014). Attribute coding, or the coding of basic descriptive information, was the primary method used for coding data (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic analysis in qualitative phenomenological data is described as " a method of

identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The process involves thoroughly reading the data, coding the data into descriptive and interpretive codes, and identifying major themes within the findings using the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Grbich, 2013). Thematic analysis can be described using a house as a metaphor, with the major theme being the whole house, the interpretive codes being the walls of the house, and the descriptive codes being the bricks that make up the walls (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethnographic content analysis was also foundational to the process of analyzing data, which included identifying relevant documents pertaining to the research, developing and testing an analysis protocol, and interpreting meaning within the broader context of culture and society (Grbich, 2013). This process guided me as I worked to synthesize additional data analysis strategies and processes into my work, which are described below.

Organization and Management of Data

It was crucial to consider the management and organization of the data for many reasons. First and foremost, it is an ethical issue; when data is mismanaged, there is an increased likelihood for breach of confidentiality of participants. Additionally, mismanaged data can lead to issues with accuracy in interpretation, thus skewing the overall findings of the study. For example, if a page of data is lost, that data is not analyzed, and in turn there is missing information which alters the findings of the study. In order to prevent any issues resulting from mismanagement of data, I employed strategies to ensure that data were kept secure. I kept electronic data files, including interview transcriptions and observation protocols, stored on a password-protected cloud drive, and I was the only person with access to the password. Electronic files were backed up to a flash drive in order to prevent any

issues with data being lost. Any paper copies were kept in a locked file cabinet, and I was the only person with access to this as well. Both electronic and paper copies were organized in files based on type of data source (observation, documents, interviews, and journals).

Interview Transcriptions and Field Notes

Because they were the primary data source, care was taken to ensure the security of the interview transcripts. The interviews were recorded using a device specifically created for audio recording. When not in use, this device was kept in a locked cabinet security. A third party transcribing service was used, and the data were coded and maintained by me. Field notes, journal entries, and observational protocols were hand recorded and then typed into a document on a password-protected cloud drive. This helped to ensure the security of all data sources.

Limitations, Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Weaknesses and Biases

Weaknesses are present in the timing and sampling of the participants. Interviews were approximately one hour long, which provided opportunity for deep and meaningful conversation; however, the duration of time spent with the participants was brief. I did not spend any time before or after the interviews with my participants, save for follow-up interviews. Because of this, participants may have perceived me to be a "stranger," which may have limited their responses and caused dishonesty or failure to elaborate on concerns, and to be more likely to share cover or sacred stories rather than secret stories. To address this weakness, I ensured that participants were in a comfortable and familiar environment, that they fully understood the purpose and process of the study, and that they understood that their participation was voluntary and they could opt out at any time.

I do possess some existing biases which may have presented challenges to the objectivity of the study. I have experienced working as a teacher for students who come from traumatic backgrounds, and I am very invested in the appropriate training and support that is needed for teachers who work with this population. I have experienced firsthand the classroom implications of working with these students. Therefore, I employed bracketing to ensure that my own personal experiences, though woven into the thread of this study as it was heuristic in nature, did not impact the outcome of the research. I did so by journaling my own biases and feelings during the process of data collection. This allowed me to address my biases as they arose, and to reflect upon the process as I journeyed through my research.

Validity and Reliability

In planning my study, I actively considered the importance of internal and external reliability and objectivity and how it would affect my research. Angen (2000) argued the need for two kinds of types of validation: "ethical validation and substantive validation" (p. 388). "Ethical validation means that all research agendas must question their underlying moral assumptions, their political and ethical implications, and the equitable treatment of diverse voices" (Angen, 2000, p. 381). In this section, I examine the means by which I worked to ensure the ethical and substantive validity of my study and how I addressed potential threats. I also explore potential ethical considerations that were present in the planning and execution of this study.

Reliability in qualitative research is difficult to obtain, as the concept of reliability involves the repeatability of observations (Joppe, 2000). Healy and Perry (2000) asserted that reliability in a qualitative study should be assessed using the study's own standards.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that rather than use the measure of reliability, qualitative researchers should assess for credibility, neutrality, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability; in other words, in qualitative research, a test for reliability is also a test for validity. Validity in research is the analysis of accuracy and truthfulness in findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, validity looks very different than it does in quantitative research, but the overall question is the same: Does the study measure what it asserts it measures? (Patton, 2015). Internal validity is substituted for credibility or trustworthiness, which means the methods in which validity is assessed in qualitative research differ greatly than those for quantitative research (Cho & Trent, 2006; Patton, 2015).

In examining the internal validity of this study, I was aware of potential issues to the validity and reliability of the study. First, there are some concerns regarding the use of recorders and transcribers. In order to ensure full and thorough analysis of the data, I utilized audio recorders for the interviews. Participants may have felt nervous due to the presence of the recorders, and this might have altered or impaired their ability to respond accurately, thus affecting internal validity. Additionally, I utilized transcriptions to record interviews, which could also be done incorrectly, which would affect the accuracy of the interviews. I addressed this by ensuring that participants understood that they would be recorded ahead of time, and provided them with the opportunity to opt-out if the recorder made them uncomfortable. Additionally, I reviewed transcriptions myself multiple times to ensure that they were accurate and asked participants to engage in member-checking, through which they reviewed transcripts for clarity of message.

Additionally, to assess validity, Cho and Trent (2006) suggested utilization of interactive processes between the researcher and participants, such as triangulation, bracketing, and member checking. Here triangulation is substituted for crystallization, which is a more post-positivist process. Many researchers expound on this process by seeking crystallization of data rather than triangulation in order to increase transactional validity. Ellingson (2009) explained:

> Crystallization combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p. 4)

The process of crystallization involves gathering rich and complex descriptions, complex analytics, use of more than one form of inquiry, and rejects the notions of conventional truth and knowledge and seeks to create new knowledge (Richardson, 1997; Tennley & Bute, 2009; Tracy, 2010). I used crystallization as a framework for data analysis and interpretation, thus increasing transactional validity in my study. I also used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) additional transactional validity strategies of prolonged engagement, which entails building trust and protecting against misinformation, and persistent observation, which consists of in-depth analysis of the research and providing ample time and attention to ensure that it is done completely. Maxwell (2013) emphasized that generalizability in qualitative research should be substituted for transferability. In order to ensure that the study could be replicated at a future time, I conducted an audit of findings with my dissertation chair. This audit made clear the study was trustworthy and dependable (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Consistent use of these strategies aided in the development of a study that measured what it claimed to measure.

Ethical Considerations

When exploring the ethical considerations of the study, it is important to always remember to "do no harm" (Dooly et al., 2017). Qualitative research frequently involves the use of human subjects, so it is essential to understand the ethical dilemmas that may present themselves and the implications of those ethical dilemmas. An ethical study means more than just following the protocols and processes in place to protect the human subject; most importantly, ethical studies mean that the researcher is always considering and anticipating any ethical issues that may arise and planning to address those issues at any point during the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In qualitative research, often the researchers become closely linked with their participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2007). This can create an ethical gray area, and it was important to remember my role as the researcher in this study. Additionally, it was my responsibility to honor the stories of my participants and to represent them well (Clandinin & Huber, 2007).

The Belmont Report

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) produced a report that emphasized a need for the ethical treatment of human subjects. This report identified the need for equitable treatment of people of color, lower socioeconomic status, or other vulnerable subjects (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The report explained that these subjects might be subject to wrongful exclusion, or

inclusion, in research studies (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). In order to mitigate this concern, all research projects should utilize three major ethical areas: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Rogers and Meek Lange (2013) further explained that human subjects display three types of vulnerability, and the first step is identifying these vulnerabilities in order to best address them. First, there are inherent vulnerabilities, which we are subject to from birth. These vulnerabilities include risk of death or injury, or feelings of loneliness or sadness (Rogers & Meek Lange, 2013). Second, there are situational vulnerabilities, which occur when a subject is exposed to environmental vulnerabilities, such as violence or poverty (Rogers & Meek Lange, 2013). Finally, pathogenic vulnerabilities are situational vulnerabilities that are exacerbated by systemic oppression (Rogers & Meek Lange, 2013). Understanding the potential for ethical dilemmas due to the vulnerability of human subjects is tantamount to being able to prioritize both the emotional and physical safety and well-being of my subjects.

University Review Protocol

In keeping with the university's requirements for sound and ethical research when involving human subjects, I followed the university protocol, which states that Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was sought prior to selecting and involving participants in the research. The IRB approved the study on March 31, 2021. Additionally, I successfully completed the coursework and exam for the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), which increased my knowledge and understanding of working with human subjects ethically and effectively. I ensured that my participants had informed consent and were able

to opt-out at any time. Participants were clearly informed of the goals and intentions of the study as well as the potential validity issues. I made every attempt to be as transparent as possible to ensure that my study was ethically sound, and I consulted when ethical issues arose so that they were addressed quickly and efficiently and in the best interest of the subjects.

In this chapter, I reviewed the methodology of the study including the site information, participant selection, types of data, and data analysis process. I also highlighted the concerns of reliability, validity, ethical considerations, and limitations. In the following chapter, I present the results of the study by sharing the study process and timeline, exploring the themes and codes found, and sharing the co-researchers' stories as part of the major themes.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this heuristic, narrative study was to explore the stories of lived experiences of teachers working in an urban Midwestern school with students whom they perceive have experienced adverse childhood experiences or traumatic events. As humans, we live storied lives, and our experiences provide the lens through which we view the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In the study, I aimed to uncover the secret, sacred, and cover stories of my co-researchers as I explored their journeys both in and out of the classroom, allowing me to increase my understanding of their experiences and broaden my knowledge of how trauma can create a ripple effect throughout a school community. The study consisted of the ACE instrument, interviews, observations, and field work, including journals and document reviews; the unit of analysis was the teachers' stories of their work with students whom they believed to be affected by trauma in various forms. I was interested in learning about not only the work that teachers do with students, but how that carries over into their personal lives as well.

In the previous chapter, I outlined the significance of qualitative research in this study and discussed the methodology used in the study. In this chapter, I begin by providing contextual information, including the research timeline, review of methodology, issues related to reliability and validity, and conducting a study during the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, I present the restoried narratives, consisting of multiple interviews, and observations, for each of my co-researchers, Finally, I share the overall themes and interpretive codes identified in the multiple data sets that assisted in answering the research questions.

Study Components and Contextual Factors

The study sought to illuminate the lived experiences of teachers who work with students whom they perceive to have experienced trauma, and their perceptions regarding trauma both in and out of classrooms. The deeply personal and human nature of trauma, and the experience I have with both experiencing personal trauma as well as working with trauma-affected students, steered me towards heuristic inquiry as a theoretical tradition through which to tell the stories of my co-researchers. Heuristic inquiry requires a direct experience of the phenomenon in question in order to fully identify and relate to the experiences of others (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). In heuristic inquiry, the researcher is also viewed as a participant, allowing the researcher to further experience the phenomenon through self-reflection and exploration (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). As a heuristic researcher, I was guided by the theory that "heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1984, p. 42). A journey into deep, meaningful conversations about trauma and its presence within our educational systems was closely aligned with the concepts of heuristic inquiry and the constructs associated with it including; (a) *i*dentifying the focus of the inquiry, (b) engaging in self-dialogue, (c) identifying tacit knowledge, (d) indwelling, (e) intuition, (f) focusing, and (g) accessing the internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1994). During the stages of heuristic inquiry, which are described in further detail later in this section, I utilized each of these concepts and actions to fully develop my understanding of the experiences of my co-researchers as my own experiences were woven throughout. Early in the research process, when I was deciding on the topic of this study, I identified the focus of the inquiry by seeking to connect

with the topic, more so than I already assumed that I had. Spending time reflecting on my own experiences, as well as what I hoped to achieve by conducting this study, I worked to establish a relationship to the phenomenon in order to attach meaning to it. Engaging in self dialogue was done primarily through the use of journals kept at all phases of the research process, in which I recorded my thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and questions about the information that I was learning during specific phases of the study. This dialogue not only served as a data source but allowed me to fully flesh out my own experiences during my lifespan—understanding my own experiences allowed me to better understand the experiences of my co-researchers.

Identifying tacit knowledge is a significant element of heuristic inquiry. Polyani (1967) defined tacit knowledge as truths about a topic that are deeply ingrained, so much so that they become almost involuntary; knowledge that individuals acquire at some point in their lives that are difficult to identify or explain—we just know. The level of tacit knowledge that I brought to the study was more experiential in that I knew what it was like to not only experience trauma, but to work with others who had experienced it as well. As part of the research process, I explored my implicit knowledge about trauma, therefore bringing it to the surface of the study.

Additional elements of heuristic inquiry that were utilized in this study included intuition and indwelling. Intuition or the recognition of my current knowledge supported the understanding of the thoughts and behaviors of my co-researchers. I was able to use my own knowledge as a frame of reference as I constructed their narratives through their authentic voices (Moustakas, 1994). With indwelling, defined as "the heuristic process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality

of theme of human experiences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 24), I was also able to better interpret and make meaning of the stories and experiences of my co-researchers by exploring my own lived experiences and interpretations of those experiences, and in turn, synthesizing them with the stories that were shared.

Finally, I relied on the heuristic elements of focusing and internal frame of reference. Focusing required me to become aware of things that were outside of the overall scope of the study—stones left unturned, so to speak (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). By engaging in focusing, I was able to determine that I had limited context as an elementary school teacher. I had to face the stark reality of having only worked as an elementary school counselor and not being able to experience a typical day as an elementary teacher. While my experiences with trauma were shared with co-researchers, there was some uniqueness to the experiences co-researchers shared. This was an area that I felt important to highlight in my internal reflection regarding their secret, sacred, and cover stories. Moustakas (1994) also emphasized the need for researchers to understand that the internal frame of reference held by the researcher that may influence the interpretation of the study elements. For this study, my frame of reference regarding the implications of trauma on both students and teachers helped me to construct meaning from the co-researchers' experiences and stories. Put simply, I understood where they were coming from and felt they picked up on my empathy, which was helpful for developing trust and allowing them to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences.

Additionally, the selection of narrative inquiry was paramount to this study, as it was critical to provide data in the form of storytelling that acknowledges the humanity of the co-researchers. In order to fully gain access into the truth of the experience, I attempted to

uncover the cover stories told by teachers, which are those that teachers tell each other in order to hide any incompetencies or insecurities, and encouraged the sharing of secret stories, which are the truth that happens behind closed doors (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Olson & Craig, 2005). This was achieved by establishing trust and ensuring confidentiality by positioning myself as their colleague; and ensuring that co-researchers understood my nonjudgmental stance. I sought only to learn about their stories of trauma.

Research Timeline

The study began with my initial engagement with the topic at the start of the doctoral program. According to Moustakas (1994), initial engagement occurs when the researcher discovers an "intense interest" that holds significant meaning and is rooted in experience. As the program progressed to the point of exploring potential research topics, I engaged in self-dialogue to reflect inwardly as I searched for a topic that I felt was the most meaningful in my work as a teacher and counselor. I realized that my true initial engagement into the topic of trauma and its reach within and outside of the classroom began with David, my student from many years ago, who I feel changed the trajectory of my career as a secondary teacher, counselor, and now, researcher. On a typical school day that turned out to be not-so-typical, David shared with me that he was unable to turn in his assignment because he had been held up by gunpoint at the bus stop that morning. Shaken by this story, I realized that trauma was all around the school, not only with David, but other students and adults in the building as well. I noticed a difference in the way I taught, the way that I acted in my personal relationships, and the level of stress and burnout I felt that school year. After reflecting on this initial experience with trauma-affected students and its tertiary effects within the school, I decided to make this the topic of my study. As I honed in on the topic, I reflected inward to

discover my own tacit knowledge and awareness of the topic and used this context to structure the study. I utilized this time to narrow my focus, develop research questions, and solidify the methodology. It was also during this early stage of research that I developed a research calendar, which was revised and postponed several times due to the timeline of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Once IRB approval was granted on March 31, 2021, I was ready to move forward with the next steps in the study.

During the next phase of the research process, I engaged in immersion—in which the researcher "lives the question in waking, sleeping, and dreaming states" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 28). It was during this phase that everything that I came across in reading, working, and life felt in some way connected to this topic. I began to explore the phenomenon of compassion fatigue as it related to myself, my colleagues, and my family. I advocated for a group at my school for teachers who were experiencing compassion fatigue and planned and implemented professional development about the topic. I was eager to share the knowledge I had gained up to that point and felt that it would continue to serve my study in that I would be motivated to hear the stories of my co-researchers and connect it to my own life events.

During this phase of the research process, the initial survey was sent, the interviews and observations were scheduled and conducted, and the majority of my journal entries were created. The general timeline for this process was from the beginning of April through the middle of May 2021, approximately six weeks. It was a challenge during this time, as it is one of the busiest times for a school counselor, and I found that juggling the study with my responsibilities was a challenge that provided me with an opportunity to grow my skills in time management and organization. This is evidenced by one of my journal entries from April 16, 2021:

> The challenge of creating and implementing an interview schedule with eight participants is one that I thought would be easy but is proving to be incredibly challenging. I am struggling to balance this with everything else that I have going on. I am hoping that I can be organized enough to ensure that enough attention is paid to each participant, that I don't forget details about their stories or neglect to ask appropriate follow up questions. (April 16, 2021)

After the immersion phase, in which the majority of the research was conducted, I retreated into the incubation phase. During incubation, the researcher detaches from the topic in order to develop understanding and knowledge—sometimes, stepping away is the best way to discover new learning (Moustakas, 1994). The timing of this was propitious, as it aligned with the end of the school year. I was able to take a break from living and breathing trauma and compassion fatigue and enjoy my family as we began our summer vacation. My primary responsibilities at work as a school counselor subsided, and I found myself with significantly more time to relax and reflect. During this time, I was able to refresh my understanding of the topic and became newly motivated to derive meaning from the research previously conducted. The approximate dates of this phase spanned the end of May 2021 through the end of the first week of June.

As I slowly made my way back into the research process, I embarked on the illumination phase of the study. According to Moustakas (1994), illumination "opens the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or an altogether new discovery" (p. 30). As I pieced together the content from the interviews and observations, I identified gaps between what I thought the teachers' stories would tell, and what they actually told; conversely, I was also able to confirm many of my original theories pertaining to the relationship between compassion fatigue and working with trauma-affected students; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. At the

close of this phase, I readied myself to really dig into the data and identify patterns and themes in order to reconstruct the stories of my co-researchers.

Next, during the middle of June, I engaged in the explication phase, which involved the exploration of various layers and details of meaning within the data. I analyzed interview and observation transcripts for themes (Moustakas, 1994). Each interview and observation was coded separately, and I continued to journal as I analyzed the data. A codebook of themes was developed, first for each interview and observation, and then for both data sets as one collective group. During this phase, I was able to elucidate major themes of the study to make meaning of the data. The major themes that illuminated as common threads in the lived experiences of the co-researchers included experiences and factors related to trauma, students and trauma, teachers and trauma, and strategies and supports. The themes are explored in greater detail in the stories of co-researchers.

Finally, during the creative synthesis phase of the study, I compiled the data using the knowledge gained from all of the other steps of the process to construct the narratives for each of my participants. This phase of heuristic inquiry provided the opportunity to transform "components and core themes into a creative synthesis" that depicted the overall themes of the study in the form of a narrative or other such creative method (Moustakas, 1994, p. 32). It was enjoyable to be able to revisit the interviews and observations to creatively restory the data so that they made chronological, narrative sense (Creswell, 2005).

Secret, Sacred, and Cover Stories

This study was focused on the stories of teachers and how they experienced working with students whom they perceived to be trauma-affected. This is a sensitive topic, and it is

not always easy to talk about. In order to provide a more rich, thick narrative, I aimed to uncover the secret stories of the teachers—how did they really feel about this school year?

Sacred stories are those that are so ingrained into the school as a system, that they are considered to be second nature (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). These are stories that drive leadership decision making, that are shared with stakeholders, and that promote the positive perception of the school among stakeholders (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Cover stories are those that teachers tell others, or themselves, to appear competent and capable (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Secret stories are those that teachers only feel safe to share with a select few and are typically only shared within the walls of their classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Many of the secret stories were about their feelings about virtual teaching and learning. Their cover stories told to stakeholders were positive, upbeat, and optimistic, while their secret stories shared ranged from exhaustion, disappointment in their lack of student connection, all the way to considering a new profession. While many of the co-researchers were willing to share their secret stories, I wondered if some of them were telling cover stories in terms of their mental wellness. As much as I worked to develop trust and rapport, it is understandable that they would be guarded in sharing how they really felt about their levels of burnout and compassion fatigue. In some of the co-researcher stories, I note where I reflected on whether they may be sharing a cover story with me, and maybe with themselves.

Review of Methodology

In Chapter 3, I discussed in detail the methodology that was used in the study. In an attempt to answer the research questions, as well as to uncover the secret, sacred, and cover stories of co-researchers as they pertained to their lived experiences, I utilized a variety of data sources which included an initial survey, two in-depth interviews, an observation, and the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score of each co-researcher. The survey was used primarily as a recruitment tool, with questions pertaining to the demographics and background information for co-researchers, as well as their general perceptions and experiences related to student trauma. The survey questions are provided in Appendix D.

The majority of content was derived from in-depth interviews. The first interview primarily focused on content similar to the surveys, but asked co-researchers to elaborate on their responses and to provide a comprehensive background including their own traumatic experiences, their knowledge and comfort level in working with trauma-affected students, specific stories that they wanted to share about the traumatic experiences of their students, and what they perceived to be the outcomes of trauma on themselves and their students. The questions for the first interview were primarily derived from the research sub-questions, but in a more conversational way as recommended in narrative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018).The survey responses also helped me to design the interview questions based on the responses, or lack of responses, found in the survey results. There were several key survey items that I wished to expand upon, and I did so by including them in the interview questions. In the follow-up interview, co-researchers were asked questions pertaining to the professional development initiative at Underoak, about their access to support staff and other structures in place that they felt were supportive. Additionally, the follow-up interviews

were used as a way to probe co-researchers to delve deeper into previous responses, to provide clarity or elaboration, and to discuss questions that came up during their observations. An interview protocol for the initial interview can be found in Appendix A, and the follow-up interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

In addition to the use of in-depth interviews, I incorporated observations as a way to increase my overall understanding of the experiences of my co-researchers. In between the in-depth interview and follow-up interview, I conducted a classroom observation for most of the participants; due to the timing of the study, two of the eight co-researchers were not holding any more virtual classes, so I was unable to schedule observations for them. The purpose of the observation was to gain further insight into and context for the lived experiences of teachers; in other words, to be an observer of the teacher during a typical point in their workday. The observations occurred via Zoom, which was a very different experience. I was a nonparticipant observer (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and was not actively observing anything in particular. Though the focus of the observations was the teachers, it was hard not to notice the level of engagement and participation that I saw in the children. I was able to note various trauma-informed practices that were put into place by the teachers, including their use of structure, routine, and community building. The use of an observation protocol allowed me to write both descriptive and reflective notes as well as my own reactions (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). The observations were coded separately, and the findings are discussed in detail as well as incorporated into the co-researchers' stories later in this chapter.

Prior to the initial interviews, I asked co-researchers to complete the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) survey in order to further understand their background and

how it might connect to their work with trauma-affected students (Felitti et al., 1998). The co-researchers were asked to take the survey and report to me at a minimum, their overall number. According to Felitti et al. (1998), anyone reporting a score higher than four on the ACES survey are at an increased risk of experiencing physical and mental health complications. In order to protect the confidentiality of the co-researchers, as well as to establish trust and rapport, they were not asked to share details about their personal trauma unless they chose to. Each co-researcher's ACE score is further discussed in their individual narrative story.

While it was not used as a data source, another significant part of the study methodology was related to my role as a heuristic researcher. As a heuristic researcher, it was necessary for me to employ journaling as I worked to acknowledge my own experiences and perceptions without allowing them to influence my analysis of the co-researchers' stories (Moustakas, 1994). I incorporated reflective journaling during all phases of the study and included relevant journal entries within the stories of the co-researchers.

Reliability and Validity

In earlier chapters, I discussed the conflict between the traditional definition of validity and its role in qualitative research. Validity is broadly defined as the ability to measure accuracy and truthfulness in a study; reliability answers the question of whether the study produces consistent results if repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1992; Patton, 2015). However, qualitative inquiry presents a unique challenge when assessing for validity since Maxwell (1992) asserted that instead of seeking validity in qualitative research, the focus instead should be on quality, rigor, and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further argued that researchers should substitute the term "authenticity" for validity in

qualitative research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that rather than focusing on validity and reliability, a qualitative study should rely more on transparency, verisimilitude, and transferability. With this in mind, I sought to incorporate these elements in my study in order to increase the overall credibility. I utilized crystallization of multiple data sources by including various methods of data collection in order to solidify my claims (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ellingson, 2009). Additionally, I utilized Lincoln and Guba's (1985) transactional validity strategies of prolonged engagement, or building trust and protecting against misinformation, and persistent observation or in-depth analysis of the research; providing ample time and attention to ensure that it was done completely. To address the need for transferability and to assess whether the study could be replicated in full, I conducted an audit of the study findings with my committee chair.

Despite the short time I spent with my co-researchers, I was able to develop a trusting relationship to increase the authenticity of their accounts. To do this, I provided transcripts and used member checking for each interview. ACE scores were discussed in the first interview, and during the second interview, a discussion and reflection of the observation was part of the conversation. I also engaged in several brief conversations after the interviews were completed, in order to clarify or increase my understanding of a statement or expressed thought. I was clear and transparent about the focus of the study, and I worked to maintain a trusting relationship by following through with meeting times, providing informed consent, and maintaining confidentiality.

Conducting a Study During a Pandemic

In March of 2020, the world became a very different place within a very short timeframe. The COVID-19 virus was spreading rapidly, and as schools, businesses, and offices closed, the world seemed to quiet down as people were spending nearly all of their time at home. Local officials emphasized that we would be "safer at home" and that individuals should remain at home in order to "flatten the curve." COVID-19 and "Coronavirus," once unknown terms, became part of the daily conversations. Individuals donned masks, engaged in frequent hand washing, and sought the wisdom of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to know when, where, and how we could leave the safety of our homes. The summer dragged on with no concerts, beach visits, pool days, trips to the zoo, or other summer activities we had previously looked forward to.

As August approached, many wondered what the school year would look like. Most schools in the state opted to begin the year virtually, requiring teachers to continue teaching using an online platform, but with higher stakes. Parents and community members were divided; many were indignant about virtual school, while others were comforted by the notion that their child could remain safe at home—and still others were conflicted when faced with the decision whether to send their child to school or keep them home. As the year began, most schools settled into a virtual schedule. Teachers familiarized themselves with online platforms in order to provide their students with an education of as high quality as they would have been able to in person. Students attended school from their bedrooms, kitchen tables, or back porches. As teachers and students adjusted to this "new normal," I began to plan the inception of this study.

It is essential when understanding this study to have a contextual understanding of the school year that the students and teachers had up to that point. The site at which I conducted my study, Underoak Elementary School, is a small K-8 school led by a board and a small district office. The leadership of Underoak determined that the best way for school to happen that year would be for it to remain virtual. At the beginning of 2021, when I was initiating plans to conduct my research, the officials at the school indicated to me that the decision to remain virtual had potential to change, and that there was a chance my study could be done in person. However, as my interview dates drew nearer, the decision to conduct school virtually remained firmly in place; and, at the time of the study, the whole school was virtual with no change planned. I began to worry that my study would yield significantly different results than what I originally planned when entering into this research; however, while some changes were necessary, I truly believe that the heart of the study remained. Below are my observations as to the most notable variations and considerations due to the shifting of the study from a "typical" school year to a fully virtual one.

First, it is important to note that the interviews were conducted over an online video platform. In my initial call for participants, I offered a choice between in-person and virtual interviews, and all of my co-researchers opted for the latter. While this was not ideal, I was surprised at the level of vulnerability and comfort that my co-researchers exhibited. I attributed this to experience; up until that point, each of my co-researchers had been conducting class via this platform and were comfortable with this alternative delivery of instruction. Additionally, conducting interviews virtually allowed for more flexibility with schedules, both on my end and theirs. I noted this in a journal entry from May 1, 2021:

> Part of me is actually very excited to do the interviews over Zoom. I know that it may not yield the same results as in-person interviews would, and that it might not feel like a true interview. However, the ease with which I've been able to schedule these interviews has made me a believer. Teachers can use time during their school day, and so can I, as long as we are able to keep it confidential. I am used to talking to people over Zoom, but I should make sure to adjust my view so that I can only see them, in order to replicate as close to an in-person conversation as I can. (Reflective Journal, May 1, 2021)

While I was surprised at the level of openness and trusting conversation that came from the virtual interviews and observations, there were some drawbacks to it as well. What seemed to be lacking with the online platform was the energy and connection that comes from a face-to-face interaction. If time allowed, I would have liked the opportunity to meet personally with each co-researcher, but unfortunately with the timing of the study, this was not possible. Additionally, it was more challenging to read body language and nonverbal communications. There were minimal distractions during the interview, but some technical issues arose: for example, during my interview with Addy, her audio went out and I had to ask her to repeat a significant portion of her story.

Furthermore, the timing of the study in comparison to the COVID-19 pandemic and the virtual teaching format is important to take into consideration when assessing the stress and burnout level of the participants. For example, Phillip indicated that he was experiencing what he referred to as "Zoom fatigue," and many other participants brought up the difference between burnout in a typical school year—that work just felt different, stressful still, but in a different way. This emerged as a critical element to the lived experiences of teachers and is explored more within their stories.

The pandemic and its effects did not only change the way teachers experienced learning this school year. Some emerging research suggests that there has been a rise in the

occurrence of adverse childhood experiences during the pandemic (Bryant & Damian, 2020). The rise in traumatic experiences, mostly identified as instances of abuse or neglect, can be attributed to multiple factors, including the economic impact of the pandemic creating stress and anger for caregivers due to income insecurity, the increase of substance abuse among caregivers during the pandemic, and the overall risk for challenges to parent/caregiver mental health as a result of anxiety, depression, and/or social isolation (Panchal et al., 2020.) With teachers separated physically from their students, abuse and neglect reports decreased significantly in most states—not because abuse and neglect decreased, but because students' proximity to mandated reporters was minimal (Panchal et al., 2020). Due to the nature of the study, the assertion that student traumatic experiences are likely to have increased during the pandemic is an essential sociocultural context to consider when seeking to understand the experiences of the participants during this school year.

Co-Researchers

The city in which I live and work is large, but in my experience, the network of education professionals within the city is small. With nearly 16 years in education in the area, as well as attending graduate school here with fellow educators, it is unusual for me to meet a teacher whom I have never met nor heard of. At the very least, I typically am able to identify at least one mutual friend in the field. Despite this, in the early stages of my research I committed to finding co-researchers who were unknown to me, in order to avoid bias and increase the comfort of teachers who may not want to share such personal details of their lives with someone they work with. I felt it would be less complicated to assure participants of their confidentiality if they knew I was an outsider, rather than someone who

knew and worked with the same people they did. While it would have likely been easier logistically to work with co-researchers within my own building, I was confident that I could find other teachers through my network who would be interested in participating. I also wanted to interview elementary teachers for two reasons: first, because my assumption was that their student relationships would be different since they spend a majority of their time with the same group of students; second, because my experience within the elementary school is limited to school counseling, I wanted to broaden my own understanding by hearing about experiences that were likely to be significantly different than my own. Additionally, I was interested in individuals who were teachers, or were in a role where they worked directly with students. Two of my co-researchers were special education teachers, and two were interventionists, but each of them had spent many years prior to the study as classroom teachers, so they had other experiences to draw upon. The remaining four co-researchers were current classroom teachers. I also attempted to recruit people who represented various age ranges, genders, educational background, years in education, and other demographics in order to achieve maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2015). Table 2 provides a comprehensive look at the various demographic information of the co-researchers.

With the help of my former colleague who is presently in leadership at Underoak, I was able to find eight co-researchers who met these guidelines. Participants chose their own pseudonyms, and any identifying details have been redacted or changed by me in an effort to protect their confidentiality, while maintaining the message within the study. Each participant appeared motivated and eager to share their stories; there was some variation with rapport and comfort level, which was to be expected, but all participants willingly took

part in each stage of the interview and observation process with one minor outlier. Table 2 depicts the demographic information of each teacher. The age range of the co-researchers spans 25 years of age to 44 years of age. Experience in education ranged from 2 to 18 years. Co-researchers were predominately women, and only two racial identities were represented (African American and white). Three of the co-researchers obtained their certification in a non-traditional route, including alternative certification programs or teacher residencies. Two co-researchers also attended a specialized program in graduate school to focus their learning on working with students in urban settings.

Table 2

Demographics of Co-researchers

	Alice	Arielle	Marie	Phillip	Addie	Christine	Stacy	Haley
Age	28	39	25	33	34	31	44	30s
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Race	White	White	White	African American	White	White	African American	African American
Highest LOE	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Master's Degree
Cert Route	Traditional with Urban Focus	Traditional	Traditional	Non-Traditional	Traditional	Traditional	Teacher Residency	Non-traditional
Years in Education	6	19	5	2	12	10	18	4
Position	3rd Grade	Sped	4th Grade	4th Grade	Interventionist	Sped	5th Grade	Kdg

In the previous sections of this chapter, I presented a review of the major study components including the rationale for the selection of a heuristic narrative inquiry, components and textual factors including the research process and timeline, a review of the methodology, considerations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and basic information about the co-researchers. In the next section, I report the findings of the study for each data source and share the stories of each co-researcher by blending all of the data from each source to create a restoried narrative to illuminate their lived experience and address the research questions.

Reporting Findings

Initial Survey

The first step in conducting the study was to develop and send a survey to assess the interest level of the staff at Underoak School (pseudonym). I utilized a former colleague who is presently in the leadership at Underoak as my connection to the school staff. With their assistance, I sent the survey to all teachers (approximately 35 in total.) The survey consisted of initial demographic information, questions about their perceptions of trauma and how they believe their students to have experienced it, a general assessment of their own levels of compassion fatigue and burnout, and a question asking whether they would like to move forward with the study. Survey questions were primarily multiple-choice or closed questions, but respondents were invited to elaborate on responses as they felt appropriate. To my surprise, there was barely any interest at first. I began to grow concerned that I would not be able to find my eight co-researchers by using this method. Then, after about a week, the interest began to grow, and soon I was able to identify eight co-researchers and obtain their consent to participate.

Once the co-researchers were selected, I pulled their survey responses and utilized them to develop the interview protocol. Since co-researchers' responses on the surveys were generally brief and many did not elaborate, I replicated the survey questions into my interviews and noted any differences between the two data sources in the stories of the co-researchers. Incorporating the survey responses as a data source provided me with an opportunity to add thick, rich description to the secret, sacred, and cover stories of the co-researchers.

Interviews

The primary source of data for this study was interviews. Each co-researcher joined me for two interviews; one initial, in-depth interview and one follow-up interview. During the initial interview, the aim was to understand the teachers' background and experience and how they perceived it to influence their lived experience in and out of the classroom. I asked co-researchers to engage in conversations about their students and their trauma stories, as well as their own experiences with students in both the current school year and previous school years. The follow-up interview consisted of three common questions that were asked of all participants as well as specific follow-up questions in order to probe co-researchers to provide additional context and details in responses to certain initial interview questions. The follow-up interview helped me to further elucidate their experiences within their story. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by a service. Once the transcriptions were reviewed, I began the process of analyzing the data.

Miles et al. (2014) identified pulling together themes as a way to make sense of the stories, which on initial analysis, seemed disjointed and separate. As I read and analyzed the interview transcripts, I first noted the descriptive codes mentioned by each participant,

which were then categorized into interpretive codes, which were then further clustered into overall themes. While the nuances of each participant story were unique, I was able to draw from the data four common themes which included experiences and factors related to trauma, students and trauma, teachers and trauma, and strategies and supports. The theme of experiences and factors related to trauma was the overarching theme that included stories about the background of the co-researchers, including their own trauma background and life experiences as well as their knowledge and dispositions of trauma through the lens of education. This theme also included the life experiences and factors of students that may have created a trauma response or contributed to their ability to regulate and process. Students and trauma included any stories related to the way that trauma may have changed the academic, behavioral, or social/emotional outcomes for students in the school setting. Teachers and trauma consisted of stories and statements shared by the co-researchers that indicated feelings of burnout, compassion fatigue, work/life balance, and other far-reaching effects. Finally, the overall theme of strategies and supports examined the ways that teachers provide interventions to students who may be trauma-affected, as well as focusing on the supports needed to help themselves through the challenges of this unique school year as well as their previous years in education. These themes, as well as the specific interpretive codes uncovered by each co-researcher, are elaborated upon in the co-researchers' stories.

Observations

The observations were a beneficial way for me to feel more connected to my co-researchers and to give us more to talk about in the follow-up interviews that occurred afterwards. I enjoyed the general experience of being in an elementary classroom, which brought a lot of joy and levity to the study. In one of my journal entries, I wrote:

> Despite my attempts to stay anonymous by muting and turning off my camera, I was busted today! I could not help but laugh when a student called out loudly "WHO IS MISTER NORF-CRUT?" Sometimes these little funny moments are the reminders we need that our kids are inherently joyful and sweet, and I definitely will continue to try to find humor daily as a way to cope. (Reflective Journal, May 25, 2021)

My primary goal in observing the classes of my co-researchers was to immerse myself in their routine for a moment in time and to get a greater sense of context that helped me to understand their stories. During the observations, I utilized a protocol to record my observations and reflections. I took notes about what I saw that was relevant to the topic of trauma-informed care and teacher support. I coded my notes from the observations and uncovered the singular major theme of student relationships, which included the interpretive codes of *routine and structure, student choice and empowerment*, and *classroom culture*.

The major theme to emerge was student relationships. In class, teachers were observed to utilize multiple strategies to support the development and maintenance of student relationships. It was interesting to observe the way that teachers were able to do this on the virtual learning platform. The primary observable relational strategies were *student empowerment and choice, routine and structure*, and *classroom culture.*

Students were provided with opportunities to lead and take control. Often, students who are trauma-affected feel a loss of control, which can inhibit learning (Souers & Hall, 2020). An example of this was when Arielle provided choice in the form of activity. She had a student who was struggling with a particular task, and she offered him the choice to do a different task first.

Classroom routine and structure were also significant in the observations. Marie began her class with a scripted mantra including a mission statement and goals for the day.

Not only was it comfortable for the students to participate in this routine, but it was one that allowed them to progress as leaders and develop their social-emotional skills, which is a dual benefit for students.

Classroom culture was also an observed element during my time in the classrooms. Teachers worked to foster a sense of community by engaging the students in games, activities, and making connections. Haley read her students a book about classroom community, which shared the message that there are different types of families, and that they are a classroom family and will always be that way. Students really seemed to connect with the content of this book, and it was great to see such young students feeling so excited about being in school.

Documents

As I got further into my interviews, I continued to hear from co-researchers about a trauma professional development opportunity that was implemented at Underoak that year. Nearly all of the co-researchers mentioned this professional development; some had positive experiences with it and felt that it was beneficial, while others had a less positive experience with it. The professional development initiative, Trauma Smart, consisted of monthly training sessions and newsletters to provide insight into how trauma impacts the mind, and to equip teachers with tools and strategies to work with trauma-affected students. The curriculum was designed and delivered by professionals in the community and is local to the city in which the research was conducted. The program consists of 20 hours of programming that is broken up into ten two-hour sessions per month (Orapallo et al., 2021). The training focuses on the domains of healthy teacher-child relationships, positive child socioemotional development, including feelings recognition, coping, and self-regulation, and resilience in

the face of potential future stressors (Orapallo et al., 2021). The objective of the training is to provide information and support teachers in the development of skills related to classroom support of students who are trauma-affected (Orapallo et al., 2021). Table 3 shows the order and schedule training modules provided by Trauma Smart.

Table 3

Trauma Smart Training Schedule

Module	Title of Training
1	Why Become Trauma Smart?
2	Developing a Common Language
3	Caregiver Affect Management
4	Attunement
5	Routines and Rituals/Consistent Response
6	Affect Identification
7	Affect Modulation/Affect Expression
8	Grief and Loss
9	Executive Functions
10	Self Development and Identity/Trauma Integration

Through my connections to Underoak leadership, I was able to obtain six newsletters that were sent by Trauma Smart as a follow-up resource to the training materials. As part of the study, I conducted a document review of these newsletters as a data source. I requested additional documents to review, both from my co-researchers and from the Trauma Smart organization, but I was not able to obtain more than the email newsletters sent to staff. Each newsletter contained strategies and reminders for staff. These were coded as part of the

thematic analysis process. The overall theme of the newsletters was singular in that it provided *strategies and supports* for working with students from trauma. The interpretive codes that emerged under this overall theme were *preventing dysregulation* and *responding to dysregulation*.

The newsletters provided support to teachers in helping to *prevent dysregulation* in several ways. One newsletter explained how to help students recognize their emotions and asserted that teachers should "be the thermostat, not the thermometer" (A. Witt, personal communication, April 27, 2021, para. 1). In other words, teachers should help students to be able to identify and regulate their emotions like a thermostat, not just to identify them like a thermometer (A. Witt, personal communication, April 27, 2021). This also is referred to in other newsletters as attunement (B. Hallberg, personal communication, May 18, 2021; A. Witt, personal communication, April 27, 2021). Some strategies for this include helping students to identify their feelings in the moment, validate and connect with students by saying "yes" to the emotion but "no" to the behavior, and identify teachers' own feelings in the moment (A. Witt, personal communication, April 27, 2021). Additional information provided to teachers highlighted the ways to rebuild executive functioning in students who are trauma-affected, including allowing brain breaks, joining the child in problem solving instead of trying to correct behavior, and viewing all things through the lens of trauma (B. Hallberg, personal communication, May 18, 2021). Finally, newsletters explored the ways that teachers can help students to develop a sense of identity and self by sharing with them what you see in them that is unique or special, helping them to identify the roles they play at school and in their family, and thinking about future plans and their place in the community (B. Hallberg, personal communication, May 18, 2021).

The second interpretive theme to emerge from the document review was *responding to dysregulation.* Overall, Trauma Smart advocates that teachers should respond, not react to dysregulated behavior (B. Hallberg, personal communication, May 18, 2021). Additional strategies that support students who are trauma-affected included creating classroom rituals and implementing a consistent response which includes time for children to work to regulate themselves (J. Smith, personal communication, April 20, 2021). Other newsletters reviewed responding to grief and traumatic loss with strategies such as providing activities for expression, incorporating opportunities for sharing, and referring to counselors as appropriate (D. Fisher, personal communication, May 11, 2021).

The co-researchers identified varying levels of satisfaction with the training; however, it was valuable to see the foundational knowledge that the staff at Underoak were provided in order to fully understand the role that teachers play in working with trauma-affected students.

As the interviews progressed, I was able to uncover the stories of teachers and how they experienced the professional development opportunity. The overall experience was positive, but some co-researchers expressed levels of dissatisfaction with the training which could mostly be attributed to the perceived relevance of the information to the students and families at Underoak.

Adverse Childhood Experience Survey (ACE) Scores

Until recently, and certainly within the span of my own career, “leave it at the door” was a commonly shared idiom during meetings meant to help remind teachers to keep a stiff upper lip in situations with students in order to garner respect and maintain an appropriate student-teacher relationship. I recall being told early in my career as a teacher, “Don’t crack

a smile until Christmas." However, more recently, it is becoming clear that the experiences and sociocultural backgrounds of the individual cannot be separated from the teacher. Teachers are often carrying their own invisible backpack, as well as their students' invisible backpacks. The heavier the existing load, the harder it may be to take on the additional trauma of their students. Benson (2003) asserted that teachers should be acutely aware of their own place within the world, and before seeking to understand students, it is essential that teachers seek to understand themselves. In doing this, teachers establish a more relational classroom that is centered on humanity and personal experiences rather than reading, writing, and arithmetic (Benson, 2003). Gross and Lo (2018) studied overall grief responses in teachers and students and found that teachers were often hesitant to broach the topic of grief with their students, citing fear of bringing up previous traumatic grief experiences as one of the reasons for this hesitation. Conversely, some researchers assert that traumatic events in teachers' lives may support relational teaching in that teachers have a more realistic understanding of the events that have affected the student (Blaustein, 2013; Gross & Lo, 2018; Zacarian et al., 2020). In this vein, during the interviews I found it essential to explore the co-researchers' own backgrounds, in order to get a full understanding of the perspectives that they shared regarding their students and classroom experiences. As part of the study, I asked each co-researcher to take the ACE questionnaire (Felitti et al., 1998) and to report their overall number during the interview, with the aim to explore if they felt that their score, whether positive or negative, had any implications for their experience with students who are trauma-affected. The ACE questionnaire consists of ten items that include the primary categories of trauma which include neglect; loss of a parent due to abandonment, divorce, death, or otherwise; parental mental illness; parental

alcohol or drug abuse; witnessing physical abuse or domestic violence; parental incarceration; parental verbal abuse; parental physical abuse; feeling unwanted or unloved; and unwanted sexual contact or abuse (Felitti et al., 1998). In order to maintain trust and to acknowledge the sensitive content of this survey, co-researchers were asked to share only their number, and were given space to elaborate if they wanted to but were not pushed to do so. Overall, the traumatic experiences of the co-researchers varied, but it was clear that teachers felt that their own traumatic experiences allowed them to feel an increased sense of empathy towards students who may have been experiencing something similar. In my journal entry during data analysis, I reflected on the following:

> My underlying assumption going into this study was that teacher trauma would be a deficit, that it would hinder teachers' job performance and lead to greater instances of compassion fatigue. However, it was overwhelmingly the opposite with my co-researchers. Those who had a moderately traumatic past shared that they felt that it helped them to empathize and understand their students, and those that did not have much of a traumatic history felt that maybe it was a way that they weren't able to connect with them. I wonder how much of that is due to the Trauma Smart training—maybe it is something that is addressed in the training, to view one's trauma as a tool rather than a barrier? But if they don't have trauma, is that a barrier too? This would be an interesting thing to explore with staff in trauma trainings.
>
> When I had my miscarriages I know that I was impacted at work, but it wasn't really something that I could use to empathize with my students. What would that type of trauma be like for other teachers? Obviously that was a barrier for me. Perhaps channeling it/combining it with the grieving process helped me understand my students who were grieving, more than I realized at the time? (Reflective Journal, June 5, 2021).

Table 4 shows the ACE score reported by each participant. The lowest reported score is 0, and the highest is "higher than 4."

Table 4

ACE Scores of Co-researchers

Co-researcher	ACE Score
Alice	1
Arielle	3
Marie	0
Phillip	3
Christine	1.5
Stacy	1-2
Haley	>4

Journal

As previously discussed, I utilized reflective journaling throughout the process. This provided me with the chance to identify my own thoughts, feelings, behaviors, experiences, and questions—to document my connections to the co-researchers and to participate in the study alongside them. Journals were done electronically, using an ongoing word processing document. Throughout this chapter, parts of my journal are included where relevant to reveal my personal connections and thoughts related to various parts of the research process. In this section, I provide a narrative representation of the teachers' thoughts, feelings, and comments in order to illuminate their overall lived experiences in the form of a story. Each story was constructed as a synthesis of all data sources to create a narrative that includes the secret, sacred, and cover stories of each co-researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

Embedded within each story are the overall themes as well as the interpretive codes within each theme.

Alice's Story

I just feel like after a good night's sleep, I'm sometimes ready to just try it again. I feel like the students deserve that. So it's my job to serve my students and give them the best version of me whether I'm frustrated from yesterday or not.

Alice

Alice is a 28-year-old white female who, like many of us in education, remembers always wanting to be a teacher. Growing up, it was just a known fact that she would enter into education one day. However, she would have never predicted that her path would lead her to a career in urban education, which was a world very different from her own suburban, middle class upbringing. Her university had an urban education immersion program, and with a sense of curiosity paired with a passion to change lives, she pursued that option in order to push and challenge herself.

> I was kind of just like, placed into it, because of the university I went to...and I really just fell in love with it, because I just felt like my impact could be greater. I felt like I could help achieve—closing the achievement gap. I just felt like it just gave me a purpose.

Six years later, Alice shared her experience with me in a series of interviews that allowed me to witness that passion and motivation firsthand. At the time of the study, Alice is immersed in a doctorate program for educational technology and is not sure where her career will go from there—but she is excited to continue to work to make a difference in the lives of her students.

In terms of her own traumatic background, Alice reported an ACE score of one. Alice admitted that she was surprised to have such a low score. However, she did share that "that one thing...it really sticks with you," which is an important reminder that we all

experience trauma differently. As she shared her ACE score during the interview, she reflected on the difference between her past trauma and her husband's: "I read it to my husband and his score was like a five or a six. And I was like, wow, the two of us can come together with completely different childhoods and different traumas and we work together so well." Ostensibly, having limited traumatic experiences should make a person feel thankful, but Alice mused that in a way, it is a hindrance to working with trauma-affected students. She felt that had she experienced more difficulty in life, she may be able to relate better with her students: "Obviously, it makes it harder for me to understand. I don't know or always have a solid grasp of what my students would be going through, because I haven't lived their life."

If a teacher does not have firsthand experience with trauma, how can they possibly learn about what their students may be going through? As a part of the overall theme of *experiences and factors related to trauma*, one interpretive code introduced by Alice was that of *teacher knowledge and dispositions about trauma*, including their own experiences as well as what they had learned during professional development opportunities. Alice shared that Underoak had been partnering with Trauma Smart to ensure all staff had similar knowledge and understanding of trauma and its implications in practice. Overall, Alice's experience with Trauma Smart was largely positive. She shared that she felt that it was the first time that professional development on trauma was prioritized and done with fidelity:

> I have learned so much more about being trauma informed this year than I ever had before. And I just love the sessions, because I get the most out of it. I'm able to bring something from every session that we have and change my teaching. So, I feel like it's really impactful, it is at the right time.

Alice also shared that she feels it will probably be necessary to repeat or relearn some things from this year's training, since this year was so anomalistic. As she put it, "our trauma lens is going to be so different next year in person." She mused that students will likely struggle with the return to a typical school day and that they are coming from over a year of doing school from home, which will likely create some stress and anxiety for them.

> I feel like never before has school been a trauma. But I think that could be it now. When the students were at home, we're not completely sure exactly what's happened over the past year, what traumas might have occurred, but now, going back to school might be the traumatic thing. So just helping them through the school day, teaching coping skills...I feel that there's going to be a lot of that social emotional and trauma stuff before we can ever get into education.

While she wasn't able to share many specific examples of the reach of trauma in her particular classroom, Alice acknowledged that with many of her students, it was easy to observe their behaviors and connect those behaviors to traumatic events, even if she was never informed of such an event. One example she shared was that a student who she was fairly certain had a difficult home experience, would come to school and attempt to provoke her and initiate an argument. "They would come to school, and see my face, provoke me...and that's a barrier to our relationship." Viewing these behaviors through her lens of trauma understanding has helped her to avoid escalating the student, or herself: "I am still going to love you the same, I'm going to treat you the same, and I'm going to support you."

Even with her increased capacity from Trauma Smart, and her relatively new comfort with teaching students who may be experiencing trauma, this was not always the case. Alice reported having experienced *emotional responses*, especially during her first few years of teaching:

> A few years ago, I was in a bad co-teaching situation. And she was asked not to come back. So I was alone for awhile, and that was the, I hate to say it, but the

> hardest class that I've ever had, and I had to do it on my own after a really hard year. Also, I had some things going on personally. So, that was just a catalyst for burnout. And then I stayed. I have stayed with it every time I felt burned out.

While her coping skills have improved as she grows in experience, she still has days that feel impossible and make her consider leaving teaching. To cope, Alice frequently reminds herself of why she became a teacher in the first place—to change lives—and will look for examples of positive experiences throughout her day, as small as they may be. However, Alice also shared that sometimes she cries on the way home after a particularly challenging day, and that she has seen it carry over into her time at home:

> This past year's craziness has definitely made a lot of teachers burnt out. I definitely feel compassion fatigue as well. My poor husband, sometimes I just don't have words or energy at home for him. There's just some nights, like Thursday nights, I'm just like, I just want to say, "Hey, I want to watch TV in silence" and he understands, and that's what he wants too. But I would say right now, at this current moment. I'm definitely feeling burnt out, not like I want to quit tomorrow, but sometimes I just have to remember why I'm in it, and what I love about the job.

After talking about Alice's emotional responses and the toll that teaching can sometimes take, we turned our focus to the ways that she feels she and her students are supported at Underoak through a trauma-informed lens. Arielle was the first co-researcher to bring up the belief that *relationships* were a crucial step in working with trauma-affected students, but she certainly was not the last. The interpretive code of *relationships* emerged under the overall theme of strategies and support for students who may be trauma-affected. Alice pointed out the significance of various types of relationships within the school building, specifically those with her students, her colleagues, and the parents of her students. In her training, Alice has learned that strong, trusting relationships can help trauma-affected students to feel secure and to develop healthy attachments when they may not otherwise be able to have those relationships. Souers and Hall (2020) emphasized that the elements of a

positive trauma-informed relationship include safety, predictability, and consistency; when a teacher establishes these tenets of a positive relationship, students can feel free to learn and be safe from judgment. During her observation it was evident that Alice created a safe, predictable, and consistent classroom community by establishing routine and structure. Students moved quickly through the routine during the morning meeting. There were few interruptions or questions. It seemed that students knew what to expect after each transition. In my journal after Alice's observation, I wrote:

> Alice had her class moving like a well-oiled machine. Students knew exactly what was coming. They participated and responded frequently in the chat, more frequently than verbally. I wonder if this is common across all classes. I know that it is pretty common at the secondary level but these students are not as effective at communicating in writing, so does engagement suffer?

Student experiences were a big factor for Alice, but she acknowledged that they were not the only relationships that matter as a teacher. Alice also discussed the role that her colleagues and administrators play in her burnout, in a secret story pertaining to her administration:

> I would say, for me everything goes back to my school, my administration, and my peers. I feel like, currently I feel burnout because I don't feel support from my administration on certain issues, and I just wish for better with that situation. I just kind of feel insignificant to them. There's been times where I wanted my administration to back me up to parents when they've been upset with me. And they just more empathized and tried to work with them instead of building me up in their eyes, and helping me with the situation.

Finally, in her reflection on the importance of relationships in supporting trauma-affected students, Alice acknowledged that parent relationships are also paramount, but are much more difficult for her. Alice experienced barriers in developing relationships, and explained that there seemed to be a lack of connection due to differences in sociocultural and racial backgrounds:

> Getting respect and trust from parents have been [difficult], especially as like a young, white female teacher straight out of college, it was not always easy to gain that respect and trust of parents, especially lately after the past year of racial issues being brought to light. I feel like I'm fighting an even harder battle of just getting respect and keeping respect. And just be careful with my communication.

Research supports the claim that parent relationships can improve outcomes for students who are trauma-affected. Lang et al. (2020) asserted that a positive relationship between parent and teacher is mutually beneficial and has positive implications for student achievement. Leenders et al. (2019) found that the best way to establish relationships with parents is to have open lines of communication but acknowledged that this is often challenging as parents are not always able to communicate during school hours due to work or other constraints. Mutton et al. (2018) reminded teachers that communication should be a balance between formal and informal, and positive and negative, in order to develop a healthy relationship. Teachers should ensure that they view parents as partners, and not as passive recipients of information, in all communications (Mutton et al., 2018). It is not always easy to develop relationships with parents, and even the most proficient and experienced teachers may struggle to connect with certain parents. It is important to anticipate barriers to healthy and positive teacher/parent relationships. These barriers may include differences in racial or sociocultural backgrounds, previous negative interactions, and communication challenges.

I found it salient to note how Alice, along with another co-researcher, mentioned perceived lack of trust as a potential barrier for parents who were racially and socio-culturally different than they were. This signaled both a perception and assumption, but also showed that teachers were making a conscious acknowledgement of their own white

privilege. After I noticed a similarity in the discussion about parent trust in two of the white female participants' interviews, I journaled the following:

> Something really interesting that's coming up in my interviews in 2 of them so far, is that (white, female) teachers mentioned feeling like they are struggling to form relationships with their kids' parents because the parents hesitate to trust the teachers, and don't think they understand the community since the teachers have had different life experiences because of race. Which is warranted, obviously, and 100% accurate, and runs deep. But the teachers were not sure how to build that trust. I wonder if that might be an interesting study too....How white female teachers who work in a predominantly Black attended school, can work to establish trust with parents and community members? (Reflective Journal, May 5, 2021)

In seeking to answer this question, I looked at some of the existing literature about teacher and parent trust and whether racial or sociocultural background might be a barrier. Santiago et al. (2016) found that in general, "ethnicity and eligibility for a free or reduced-price lunch may not be statistically associated with parent trust while parent education and child gender may be statistically associated with parent trust" (p. 1003). Weissburd (2009) acknowledged that there may be some disconnects due to differences in backgrounds, but if both the parent and teacher can identify biases and misconceptions prior to the interactions and seek to understand first, the likelihood for trust to be built is still there. Oberthur (2020) developed a model for establishing trust that is rooted in questioning: the first question a teacher can ask to gain trust is "What do you need?" (p. 62). The next question might be, "What do you imagine that looks like in the classroom or our school?" (Oberthur, 2020, p. 62). The third question is to ask parents is if there is anything else they would like to ask about or discuss (Oberthur, 2020). The use of these questions, along with a response that is collaborative, helps to develop trust between the parent and school due to the parent feeling like they are joining, not just receiving, the educational experience (Oberthur, 2020). It seems that teachers are underestimating how parents perceive them—most parents believe

that teachers are to be respected, that they are well-educated and the expert on all things school-related (Oberthur, 2020). Essentially, this concern shared by the co-researchers is not unwarranted, but it is likely a perception that they have, and additional research is needed regarding parents of color and the establishment of trust with white teachers.

As we talked more about the different supports that were available at Underoak, Alice brought up her story about co-teaching. Use of a co-teaching model was also identified as a s*ystemic support* that is in place at Underoak. This model was put into place a couple of years ago as a general support for students, both academically and behaviorally. Friend and Cook (2007) defined co-teaching as occurring "when two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a single physical space" (p. 113). Co-teaching most often occurs as a service delivery model for special education services, but can be implemented in any classroom (Conderman et al., 2009). Co-teachers must have mutual goals and shared philosophies and must communicate effectively with each other. Often, there are barriers to implementation such as cost, conflict, and ineffective communication that prevent schools from fully embracing this type of model. Co-teaching, when implemented effectively, can have positive outcomes on student performance. Carty and Ferrell (2018) found that teacher perspectives of co-teaching were positive and that the combined knowledge was a benefit to student learning. In this study, co-researchers generally spoke positively about their co-teaching experiences, but a few negative experiences were shared. Overall, it seemed that co-teaching was put into place to support teachers and students and to provide smaller ratios in an attempt to increase overall achievement.

In Alice's experience, co-teaching was effective the previous school year but was not exactly positive during other school years. Alice told of her positive co-teaching experience here, and the way it provided her with a surprising friendship:

> I would say I'm an introvert, I'm a little bit more of a loner. But at my school, we have co-teaching. So it's kind of like a wingman built in. I've had some not great experiences, and I've had some really great experiences with co-teaching. My co-teacher from last year, we've become really close. She comes over for dinner, our husbands are friends, we hang out. So it's just that level I haven't gotten before but also, I believe being at work should be working, and professional, not to make friends.

I have experience with co-teaching, which was, in my perception, a staffing accident by administration and was not done intentionally with student achievement in mind. However, I found the experience generally positive and wrote about it in my journal:

> I think co-teaching is hard, and I was lucky to be with a co-teacher who I feel complimented my skills well. We were able to provide small group instruction almost all year, and our students' reading scores saw significant improvement. I asked multiple times for professional development training for co-teaching and was ignored. We were successful, but we could have been much more so with more support and fidelity of implementation. (Reflective Journal, May 18, 2021)

Teacher protective factors also emerged in Alice's story as a significant component to the overall theme of strategies and supports. Alice identified several protective factors, including resilience, close family and friends as a support system, and hope. At the time of the study, she had only considered mental health counseling, but was not able to find the time or the funds to be able to move forward with it.

Arielle's Story

I had a kid yesterday, he had been out for a couple days. And I was like, "I missed you. Where were you?" He was like, "We had church." A few weeks ago, he had told me he was going to pray for my sanity. I go, "Did you pray for my sanity?" He goes, "I tried, but God ran away when I was trying." I just started laughing.

Arielle

Arielle began her journey in another big city, across the state. After she graduated high school, she made the bold decision to pack up and move ten hours away to another state to attend undergraduate college. She explained that her reasoning behind this was that she wanted a fresh start and had also heard that the state she went to for undergrad was ripe with teaching jobs and that by the time Arielle graduated, she would have her pick of teaching positions due to a massive retirement wave in the state. Unfortunately, that did not pan out, and she found her search for an entry level position to be frustrating and fruitless. She took this as a sign to move back home and soon found a teaching job in a small town a few hours away from her hometown.

> I taught kindergarten for four years, and I never want to teach kindergarten again. It was just like baptism by fire...because I was hired mid-September. The principal didn't split the class, she just told the other teachers how many to give me. It's not a good situation.

After that experience, Arielle moved to the current city, where she has been for the past 16 years. Prior to attending Underoak, she taught at another charter school in the area that had a high immigrant and refugee population, which became an interest and passion of hers. It was at this time that she realized she had a skill for working with students with special needs, so she decided to go back to school to earn her master's in special education. She came to Underoak for an opportunity in special education about four years ago, and she expressed that Underoak is the right fit for her.

Arielle, a 39-year-old white female, has worked with students who have experienced varying types of life events. She expressed that her experience as a teacher in lower socioeconomic areas has opened her eyes to the way that students' backgrounds and experiences shape their learning, which is true for all of us. She shared that she was

interested in participating in this study to learn more about how her students' experiences played a role in her own teaching.

Arielle shared her ACE score, three, and elaborated a bit on what gave her that number and connected it to her students:

> At my last school, two years in a row, we had a student pass away. I didn't have the kid in class, I had the siblings the one year and then I had friends of the other kid this year. And when I was in high school, one of my classmates was killed in a car accident. And about a week or so before that accident, we were on a senior retreat together. And the icebreaker question was, 'What's your most valuable possession?' and he said, 'My car.' So it was like, that kind of got me. When the kids were going through that time, I was like, 'I know what you're going through. Like, it's okay, just know that we're here.'...because my parents were there for me. It's like...I wasn't friends with this kid that had passed away but I was acquaintances with him...my parents were like, 'You gotta let it out.'...the kids know that I'm there to let it out, I've been there...it's not fun.

She further shared that she lost her dad unexpectedly fairly recently, and that presented challenges during classroom activities in which she was asking students to share about their families. When a new student asked her about her dad, she smiled as she recalled the other students loudly whispering to him to "Sshhh, don't ask about it" in order to protect her, and this moved her to tears. Arielle feels that her experiences, while difficult sometimes when recalled during school activities, help her to connect to her students.

In addition to her own traumatic background, Arielle also has participated in trauma professional development training to grow her knowledge base and self-efficacy. Arielle shared that in addition to the monthly professional development sessions, she enjoyed the presentations at the beginning of the school year prior to the return of the students. However, due to her teaching responsibilities (special education teachers saw students in person on Fridays this school year) she was unable to attend most of the sessions. She shared, however, that "the ones I have kind of opened my eyes to some things...it's great to have a

school that has recognized that our kids are going through trauma, and you need to help us as much as we can, to help the kids too."

Arielle recalled several stories about her *students' contact with trauma*, and what seemed to stick out the most to her were stories of food insecurity and how that can sometimes be overlooked as a type of trauma. The United States Department of Agriculture (2021) defined *food insecurity* as the indication of disrupted eating patterns and/or reduced food intake. Over 13% of Americans experience food insecurity (Mott et al., 2018). Unfortunately, that number is likely higher as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19 (Hetrick et al., 2020). Food insecurity can leave children feeling more than just hungry. A qualitative study by Mott et al. (2018) explored the lived experiences of adolescents experiencing food insecurity, and they found that the participants primarily expressed feeling out of place around others. Aurino et al. (2019) found "heterogeneity in the relationship between temporal occurrence of food insecurity and cognitive skills, based on developmental and curriculum-specific timing of skill formation" (p. 554). The researchers noted that children who experienced food insecurities earlier in life were less likely to demonstrate achievement in literacy and language acquisition (Aurino et al., 2019). Well-intentioned programs such as BackSnacks have been established at various schools, but without proper implementation, these programs can make students feel even more marginalized and singled out among their peers—students are faced with the decision of being hungry, or being hungry and everyone knowing about it.

In Arielle's experience, students do not typically disclose this type of trauma, and teachers need to keep a keen eye on student behaviors to identify when this may be an issue. She told a story of a little boy who would consistently steal snacks that she would bring in

from home, and how instead of applying consequences to the child for this behavior, she worked to identify ways to help him get what he needs:

> It's like they don't know where it is, when the next meal is coming. I had a kid that was stealing like that. Another teacher tried to [submit] an office referral...and I was like, "no, I know he took that, I know it's not appropriate. But at the same time, he's not doing it to steal, he's doing it because he's got food insecurity." So then I worked with the cafeteria lady at my school and said, "hey, this is what's going on." She's like, "let me know which is his backpack." So she would come in every day after lunch, and she had packed up some of the extra leftover lunches, and put it in his bag.

She went on to describe a system developed by Underoak where the students were given lockers, and the cafeteria staff and teachers worked together to put food and hygiene items directly into the students' lockers in a way that was discreet and protected their confidentiality. Arielle reported that after this need was being met for this particular student, she noticed the stealing steadily declined and soon it stopped altogether.

Arielle shared additional stories of student trauma as well. She talked about her previous school setting, which had a high immigrant and refugee population, and how she saw students experiencing the trauma of moving to a new country and not knowing the language or customs of their new home. She recalled a student who was in a refugee camp, and according to law, he had to enroll in school within two weeks of arriving in the United States. Naturally, this student had some significant challenges becoming accustomed to the norms of a typical American school.

> If he needed to go to the bathroom, he would just leave to go to the bathroom. Like, I had to train him and train the rest of the kids to be like, this is what we do, this is what happens. He is not doing it to be defiant. This is just normal and I think it's part of it.

Arielle emphasized several times the need to simply meet students at their level. She talked about another student whom she could immediately tell when he entered the classroom

whether he would be ready to learn, or whether he needed a nap. She would allow him to take 30 minutes to nap, and he was ready to learn after that. “I don’t care, because that’s what he needs...sometimes their needs aren’t always academics, so, sometimes you have to meet those emotional needs first.”

How does trauma look in Arielle’s classroom? She reported seeing some *academic challenges* which emerged as an interpretive code under the overall theme of *students and trauma.* The most prominent of these challenges that Arielle sees in her classroom is the difficulty in focusing:

> I think the biggest thing for my kids is no ability to focus. I have a lot of students that are ADHD, and sometimes it’s like, for the most part, I can tell the difference between when it’s their ADHD, or when there’s something else going on. Like earlier when I told you that he was going through a divorce, like, he has ADHD, but something was just not right. He was just so sad coming into school.

She acknowledged that the focus is detrimental to the overall progress in that it not only prevents students from attending to the academic tasks, but it creates issues with behavior in that they do not listen well or pay attention to directions. This led to an increase in Arielle’s frustration level on most days this school year.

Arielle also recounted a story about a student who exhibited behaviors that were perceived by other teachers as unmanageable. He had a history of having to go to the recovery room due to behaviors in the classroom that were challenging and disrupting the learning environment. He was physically destructive, highly active, and loud. She shared that other teachers were quick to dismiss his behaviors as disruptive, but Arielle wanted to learn more about him. She took the time to get to know him, and with this increased understanding, she has been able to provide him with some interventions that have helped to get him on the right track at school.

> The child was described as a Tasmanian Devil....He doesn't do anything to be malicious or mean or anything. But he is just one of those very active kids, like all around. And I could tell earlier this week that something was off. He's like, "I didn't have my medicine because my sister had a surgery."

Arielle was able to leverage her positive relationship with the parent that had already been established, to identify for her that he was struggling and to get her support in obtaining the medication that the student needed. She also set up a mentorship with the student and the PE teacher, to help him to have a physical outlet for his energy as well as to develop another trusted relationship with a school adult. She shared that after these small changes to his school day, the student was having to leave the classroom less frequently, resulting in increased instructional time. "Instead of punishing the kid for misbehavior, we were able to steer it in another way."

As a primary method of support, Arielle spoke extensively about her *relationships* with students, which she felt strongly as being an essential strategy in helping students to progress in a healthy way through their school experience. This was also evident in her classroom observation. She spent the entire time providing dedicated focus to each of her students, and at one point, she told one of her students who was attending another school the following year: "You may not be at Underoak next year, but I am always going to be your teacher." She shared that one of her favorite ways to develop relationships is to help students see that she cares about them outside of being a student.

> One of my last years at my last school, I had two brothers and they were playing football, and they were like, "Can you come to one of our games?" and I was like, "Well, give me a schedule!" I figured out that I could come. And that's like all they talked about the rest of the year.

As a special education teacher, Arielle considered herself lucky to have had some time in person with her students; at Underoak, special education students received in-person

services three times per week during the school year in which this study took place. However, Arielle acknowledged the vast difference between seeing students three times per week and seeing them daily. She shared that relationships changed, and that students just seemed distant and not as accessible. She also discussed the way that *virtual learning* contributed to her overall understanding of the students' home environments:

> While I was doing a virtual session with him, and I noticed his mom was telling him "Go to your room," I noticed that there is no bed or anything...turned out Mom had just moved, and didn't have the money to get him a bed.

With that observation, she was able to connect the family to the Family Support Office, who was able to provide her with a bed for the children as well as a weekly delivery of meals. She acknowledged that while there have been many challenges to virtual learning, this is one of the few benefits she experienced.

Arielle also shared a story that highlighted the importance of being able to access the school counselor, who was a significant resource during a particularly challenging student situation.

> I have a little new one that we've only had for about a month, month and a half. He showed some very concerning behaviors, and he's like, telling me has access to certain things at home. But...then he drew this really concerning picture yesterday. I was like, "I need the counselor down in my room ASAP because something's not right here." He is saying the same stuff, I have some concerns where like...he would be a kid that would act on it and bring the gun to school.
>
> [The counselor] talked to the mom, she has suffered a stroke in the past. So she's aware of it, she knows that it's not right but for her to know what the next steps would be, she doesn't know that. So the counselor has helped me like, well this could eventually lead to a hotline issue and you don't want to...that's a whole other avenue we gotta go down. It's just been a total change of behavior, and he said something in class [that made me think] something is not right, like...my gut is telling me. That's when she talked to him and he said, "Well I have access to a gun in my home...an unlocked gun." That's when the counselor was like, "This is a different issue now." Mom admitted she's concerned because she sees these

> behaviors at home, Dad's recently come back into their life the last month or so. That is a lot of emotions for a little kid.

It was clear that Arielle has a great love for her students and is very in tune to their personal needs and stories. While there are plenty of system supports in place at Underoak, she shared that her depth of knowledge of student situations can sometimes be too much for her to bear, and she carries a lot of worry home with her when she knows they are going through something hard. When telling a story about a student who received a bed and food from the school, she shared that when a situation is resolved or a student gets the help that they need, "It puts me at ease. I can sleep better that night as I know this kid's taken care of."

Arielle acknowledged that this year has been particularly challenging for her mental health. In her words:

> This school year there's been so many days when I am just mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted. It's just, Wednesdays are usually, don't even ask me to do anything Wednesday night because OT is there. I would say 75% of my kids have OT services. So like, I have like all ten kids from 8-10 in the morning, I'm a little overwhelmed. I can feel myself tensed just from [telling] that.

Arielle told a story about a time where a student comment created significant anxiety and worry for her, and made her almost throw in the towel. She shared:

> I would say probably this year [my burnout] between an 8 and a 10. I had an incident where a kid, about six weeks ago now...we know there's more mental health issues going on and he came in saying he was going to put a bullet through me. That's just kind of, like, there were a few days there where I was just like, I'm out. I was just trying to help this kid and he says this, and I know that it really isn't him saying this, it's everything he has going on. And thankfully my administration stepped up and got everything on their end, but...it's just definitely been exhausting this year. In a normal year, I would probably say it's much less than that. This year, we were just talking about this the other day while like, it's been the most stressful year, the most exhausting ever, and it's from just dealing with so much we can't control as teachers. We like to be in control of things, and when we can't be in control of things it stresses us out.

In my journal, I agreed with Arielle:

> Arielle nailed it when she mentioned control. I completely agree with this thinking of this year. Not being able to control the pandemic, the decisions made by the school board, the actions of other people...that has added a very thick layer of stress to an already stressful career. The lack of control is also what makes dealing with student trauma so challenging too...we sometimes wish we could just change the situation for them. Philosophically, I believe that we don't want to necessarily change student circumstances, that the idea of "saving" students is marginalizing, and that trauma makes us who we are. Realistically, I sometimes wish we could just take their pain away (Reflective Journal, May 6, 2021)

When supporting students from trauma, teachers indicated a need to establish *protective factors* to promote mental wellness. Protective factors, or characteristics that reduce the effect of trauma, include family support systems, connectedness to resources, and utilization of coping skills (Gardner & Stephens-Pisecco, 2019; Mezzacappa, 2018). Arielle identified some protective factors in place, including a large support system and an active hobby life. Within the building, she reported being close with her department and said that she relies on them heavily to help on the hard days. She shared that she sees her mom regularly, whom she loves to talk with. She has friends who are teachers in other districts, and she loves to get together with them to share stories. She also is a hockey fan and is always planning her next sporting event. When I asked her if she had ever sought therapy, she shared that she was interested, but hesitant to step out of her comfort zone. She did share that she felt it would benefit her to speak with a mental health professional, especially when something especially troubling or challenging happens at school.

Marie's Story

The actual content, for me...it's like the easiest part of teaching as a whole. Even when you're not teaching the subject matter, you are still fully immersed in their whole world. And I think that goes to show that teaching is just...way more.

Marie

A 25-year-old white female and the youngest of the co-researchers, Marie is relatively new to the field of teaching. At the time of the study, she was finishing up her fifth year and expressed happiness in her current teaching position. She discussed her former school, where she was for three years, and the lack of systems and structures that were in place there to support her as a new teacher caused her to make the change to a new school. In her words, "they kind of try and sweep a lot of things under the rug and not really deal with the traumas and the realities that a lot of their students and families face." She felt compelled to move to a smaller school setting where she felt like there was support built in not only for students, but for teachers as well. At the time of the interview, Marie was looking forward to a busy and fun summer with her family and friends. She has an active support system that she relies on heavily as she moves through the challenges of a typical school year. She also keeps busy with plenty of hobbies and a second job during the summer at another area school, doing office administrative work.

Marie did not identify with any of the traumatic categories on the ACE survey and reported a score of zero. "I've been really fortunate in my life that I haven't had to experience a whole lot of trauma. I've been really grateful and really fortunate for that." She shared candidly that when she began teaching, her expectations of students were different based on her lack of understanding of what they may have been going through. Despite her minimal traumatic experiences, she felt she had grown in her ability to empathize with her students, thanks largely to the support of her colleagues, her own individual research and learning, and her experiences paired with the professional development opportunities provided by Underoak, which she found to be positive. She shared that it was different from

her previous districts in that it was ongoing and based on the unique needs of the student population. She recounted her previous trauma professional development experiences: “At my old district, counselors just kind of did a little just at the beginning of the year, and then in the middle of the year, about what trauma is and how it can potentially affect students.” She also shared about her undergraduate experience learning about trauma and its impact on literacy. With the combination of these professional development opportunities, Marie expressed feeling that the training was adequate, but would always be willing to learn more if given time and resources to do so.

After discussing her background and knowledge, we shifted focus to Marie’s students and what their exposure to trauma may look like in the classroom. Marie began by sharing how she believed trauma changed the *social and emotional skills* of some of her students. During our interviews, Marie shared a few examples of how she sees trauma coming through in student behaviors and relationships.

> I feel like in my experience with students, and like their traumas and how they process it, and how it comes out, a lot of times, I feel like it comes up more in peer interactions. So I feel like maybe, a barrier is how students interact with their peers and how that kind of affects their academic success, and also how they carry themselves outside of school too.

Research supports Marie’s assertion that trauma hinders social-emotional development in children. Tyler et al. (2021) found that students who are trauma-affected may have lower levels of self-awareness, self-expression, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. They also may struggle with social skills that help in fostering peer relationships including perspective taking and conflict resolution, which can be limiting in a school setting when such a large portion of the day is spent around other children (Osher et al., 2010).

Marie also shared a story about a specific child from a previous year of teaching, at a different school, that left a significant impact on her:

> I had a student a couple years ago. He came to our school from a previous school where he was sent to the office every time. The mom would say that there would be four times a day that the student was sent to the office, and no one really wanted to deal with what was happening. He had some trauma going on at home. Very, very intelligent student, super smart. He didn't know how to handle the emotions he was feeling. And that came out in violence at some point, anger, frustration, and having to deal with that on a daily basis, having to call home….I called home every day and gave two positive and one negative and that was probably one of the most exhausting things. I went to sports events...I did all of that stuff outside of school to try and build that with him because Mom had said no one ever tried to do that. So, I figured if I was able to build that relationship that it wouldn't be as bad in the classroom. He was one of those students that would say mean comments to other kids under his breath. But when someone would say something, no one heard it. So it was kind of like one of those things where you know he did it, but no one was there to see it...He ended up picking up a student and throwing him across the hall. And for me, that was traumatic to see as a teacher and traumatic for the students to see.

This event made her second guess herself and highlighted some differences in the way she would have handled situations compared with the administration at that school:

> I just feel like I was burnt out with empathy. I didn't feel bad for the student who threw the kid. He was like, "Well he said something to me!' and I was just like, at that point I was like I don't care. And the student had been to buddy rooms where he would say mean things to kids in other rooms. He couldn't get sent to certain buddy rooms. And my principal was just like, "Don't send him to the support room either, because he says things in there. You can't send him to a buddy room." So I just felt like no one was helping me. But it was just like that, at that point, I was like, I can't do this anymore. This was really where I thought that education maybe just wasn't for me. And then I was like, I have to go somewhere else. I have to see if this is how it's like everywhere. And luckily, it's not, that was just a certain place. But that's been my one experience where I just couldn't...I can't give any more empathy towards this kid at this point, like this is out of my control. There's nothing I can do as a teacher...that was a really difficult year for me, and I really felt burnout.

Administrator support was a *systemic support* that Marie felt was important. In order for teachers to feel that they can make the mistakes that are needed to learn and grow, teachers need to feel that their principals understand them (Grissom et al., 2021). According to

Grissom et al., effective principals in trauma-informed schools should "draw on their emotional and social intelligence to foster a school environment that promotes trust, collaboration, engagement with data, and continuous improvement" (p. 24). DeWitt (2019) emphasized that to grow teacher relationships, administrators should utilize the collective efficacy model originally developed by Knight (2007), to support teachers in developing self-efficacy. This model involves collaboration at all stages, and incorporates authentic problem solving as a method to develop trusting relationships. Additionally, in situations where students are dysregulated and potentially exhibiting challenging behaviors in the classroom, teachers want to feel supported. McIntosh et al. (2016) studied the significance of principal support on school-wide behavior initiatives and found that overwhelmingly, principal support and buy-in to school-wide behavioral responses are a key element in teacher retention and positive school culture. When called for help, the principal should consistently respond to student behaviors with the focus on supporting the student and teacher through the situation, and shift the focus from punitive measures or from correcting any missteps or errors that may have been made by the teacher (McIntosh et al., 2016). It is no surprise that the reliable support of administrators came up several times as teachers were discussing the school-wide supports that they feel are important in their overall lived experience.

When asked to share her stories about what she has experienced in terms of *student traumatic events*, Marie was more comfortable to speak in generalities and did not share much in terms of specific events. Marie shared that she has experienced secondhand multiple stories of student trauma including neighborhood violence, death of a sibling or close family member, divorce, parent incarceration, and more. These experiences were

common throughout the study, and additional studies affirm that family separation trauma is more commonplace than others. Children look to their parents for safety, comfort, and to help them to create their understanding of the world. When one of their parents, whom they are used to being with regularly, is suddenly absent from their lives, a child may have increased levels of toxic stress due to the loss of protection and comfort that is provided by that parent. Family changes, or family separation, can be defined as an upset to the family dynamic due to the removal of one or more family members from the nuclear family unit, most often related to a parent. The reasons for these changes can be attributed to divorce, breakup, parent incarceration, parent abandonment, deployment, border separations, or other types of changes. These events are often substantially life-changing to the child, often resulting in a trauma response. The effects of parental separation on children has been researched since as early as World War II, and while the circumstances may have changed and our knowledge has grown, the consensus is that children suffer when a parent is in their lives and then suddenly gone (Bouza et al., 2018).

According to the Centers for Disease Control (2021), the current divorce rate is 2.7 divorces per every 1,000 marriages, and the majority of marriages end before the children are 17 years of age. Mahony et al. (2015) found that teachers overwhelmingly reported students behavior changing after a divorce, including externalizing behaviors such as initializing fights with other students. Havermans et al. (2017) found that not only do children of divorce have to reconcile the sudden absence of the parent who moved out, but they are likely to experience stress related to the custodial parent's financial or lifestyle changes, emotional responses, and overall relationship changes as they work to make sense of their new situation. Specifically, she shared about one student she worked with during her

first year of teaching who was struggling with the recent death of their baby brother, and how upsetting that was to the whole family during that year. She also mused as to whether student mobility was a form of trauma:

> I don't know if this is necessarily trauma, but like having to switch schools multiple times within a school year, just like where they're with us for a couple of months, then they have to leave. And I had a student who had come back once as well, so they were kind of all over the place…

I responded to Marie's musings in my journal entry:

> Marie wondered about student mobility as a form of trauma. I absolutely feel like it is. Imagine being a child and being forced to leave to go to a new school just as you're adapting to the norms at your current school. All of that, on top of other hardships that are being experienced by the kids and families. It actually reminds me of Maya Angelou's childhood, and how she refers to her displacements as "unnecessary insults." I realize that for many families, moving is unavoidable. But it's just super hard for kids. When they are attending a charter school in the district, if they are moving within the district I would hope that they could remain in the school but I found during my time at the charter school that that isn't always the case. (Reflective Journal, May 11, 2021)

Marie identified development of *relationships* with students and families as one of the main ways that she knew to aid in overall trauma integration into the educational setting. She identified that a struggle for her was also establishing trust with families:

> I feel like starting teaching, I thought my biggest challenge would be the ability to build relationships with the students. But in reality, I feel like one of the bigger challenges is building those relationships with the parents. And me being someone that's younger, I don't have kids, I don't have that experience. I think it's hard to have the parents see me as someone they can trust and respect and someone that has their students' best interest [in mind]...so I think some of the barriers I've had is just kind of learning how to build that strong trusting relationship with families, and also kind of trying to follow school norms, even if you don't agree with how that would look in a classroom. So just trying to make my classroom feel welcoming and safe, but also having to ride that line of not really feeling like the school expectations are meeting what I would do in my own classroom.

It became clear in our talk that *relationships with students* were an elemental part of Marie's philosophy. She stated, "I think if you don't have positive relationships with your students, I

just really don't think you're going to be able to teach them." However, she acknowledged that it was not always easy or possible to establish these relationships. A story that she shared helped to solidify how she came to this realization:

> There was one student that I had that just would not let me in, for whatever reason...he didn't really have too many behavior problems in third grade, but no matter what I did, and parents weren't really seeing it at home, but then towards the middle of the year, they were kind of seeing the same things that were happening. It was hard...he didn't really want to learn. He didn't feel like I was someone he could really count on no matter what I did. I mean, I tried everything that I knew how to do, but he didn't have a successful year.

Evident in her classroom observation was her ability to foster a student culture of leadership and accountability. The students began their class with a mission statement, setting them up to reflect on how the mission statement and goals had recently been met in their school and home lives. The students moved quickly through the routine, demonstrating evidence that they were used to the routine and structure. Marie explained:

> The mission statement is something we come up with together as a class. And then each student comes up with their personal mission statement as well. We recite it every day, and then we talk about how we can follow the mission statement and what we did the day before.

Marie discussed the difference in her overall experience this year to *virtual learning*, specifically in terms of her overall ability to form relationships with students. She reflected on the difficulties of developing a relationship with a new classroom full of students without ever being physically present in the same room as them:

> I think the pandemic has really thrown a wrench in how teachers teach and really made us think differently on how relationships are built, the importance of them too. When you don't have that face to face interaction, when you can't give them hugs, when you can't kneel down next to them if they're having a hard time, it really just makes it that much more challenging. What I've really learned is that it's not really about the quantity of time, it's about the quality… and the relationship building took longer than it normally would have, like, I feel like right now in May, it's like the relationships that I normally have in December.

With the exception of the use of buddy rooms and safe seats, which she felt were actually detrimental to the development of relationships because it seems like the student is getting pushed away rather than working through the issue directly, she believed the systems that are in place at Underoak are designed with student trauma in mind, and that they are effective to help students and families: “I feel like they want to help all of their students and all of their families, and they’re willing to do whatever they can to make sure that those families feel that support.” Marie felt that the implementation of these systems, by proxy, helped her to feel more supported in her teaching.

However, the identified supports seemed to be swimming against the current of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite all of the efforts to support students and teachers put into place by Marie and Underoak, Marie could not avoid experiencing burnout and exhaustion. She reported feeling more tired this year, due to having to spend more time in front of a screen and being actively engaged in the online learning platform. Additionally, she felt that she was spending more time re-teaching concepts since she couldn’t be there to see the student doing their work as closely as she typically would, and she wondered whether there would be academic differences in students in the school years to follow. *Burnout and exhaustion* and *work-life balance* each emerged as a commonly identified challenge for many participants. It is not uncommon for teachers to bring work home—not just papers to grade, but worry or stress over their students or their job performance. Robert Evans (2015) compared teachers to clergy, in that it often seems that teachers, like clergy, choose a life of complete and utter devotion with constant second-guessing and atoning for our sins. Teachers also may feel subconsciously pressured by colleagues and administrators to over-

perform, resulting in "should-ing" behavior (Clement, 2017). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) found that teachers who indicated difficulty in finding work-life balance also rated themselves as more likely to leave the profession of teaching. The researchers further found that decreased work-life balance was also correlated with increased health issues in teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Regarding the *personal protective factors* she possessed, Marie identified the use of self-care and coping strategies such as listening to podcasts, taking walks, cooking, and spending time with family and friends. Marie uncovered a secret story when she shared her experience with mental health counseling. She has been to counseling before, and shared that she wished it was something that was made accessible to teachers in terms of cost and schedule:

> Sometimes that's seen as just an extra thing to do. When you get done with work, sometimes the last thing you want to do is go somewhere else, like you just want to go home. But I think if something was offered like once a week, or maybe something that like if someone came to the school during your plan time, and if you wanted you could go and have like 15, 20 minutes...I think it would be something that a lot of teachers would really benefit from, because they think as a teacher, you want to hear that "You're doing your job, you're not alone." But you only hear that from other educators, because no one really truly understands.

Phillip's Story

This year, I started off with 18 students. So when you listen to all of those individual stories, if you are really trying to engage, and get to some of those students, it can really take a toll on you.

Phillip

Phillip entered into the field of education after spending time in various other professions. He obtained his bachelor's degree in mass communications and broadcast journalism, from a state university in a neighboring state. At the time he declared his major, up until his graduation from the program, he expressed having no plans to teach, but recalls

always having a passion for working with children. After graduating from college, he began working at a local insurance company and expressed feeling unfulfilled in that role. Soon after, he began work at a behavioral health agency as a youth care worker, where he was able to develop his ability to build relationships with children and families, to increase his mentorship skills, and to learn more about the lives of families experiencing the challenges of being reconnected after time spent in the foster care system. Phillip, a 33-year-old African-American male, feels that this experience and background has significantly shaped his skill set as a teacher in that he feels like more of a relational teacher, and he has had a closer look at some of the most difficult family situations imaginable so he has a deeper understanding and appreciation for what families may be going through outside of the school walls.

Phillip is currently pursuing a master's degree in educational leadership, and while he enjoys being a teacher, he sees himself moving forward in his career by possibly entering into school leadership or counseling. With only two years under his belt as a teacher—the first year ending in virtual learning due to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this past year entirely virtual as a result—Phillip is looking forward to the return of some normalcy and to experiencing a full year of teaching, from start to finish, and all that it entails.

Phillip reported an ACE score of three. When asked how he connects that to his teaching, he said, "I think it helps me because I can see myself in them at times. And so it helps me to be more empathetic and compassionate." Phillip acknowledged that children attending school at home has changed his understanding as he has firsthand experience with what the students are experiencing. "Being able to hear some of the parents in the

background, and some of the frustration that the kids are dealing with, where it's like, 'okay, that's not something the kid should hear, or just an adult problem that they shouldn't be worried about.'" He further reflected that the ability to experience the home environment of students allows teachers to also be able to better understand what trauma the parents are experiencing as well.

Trauma Smart has also supported Phillip in his work with students. Phillip highlighted the way that the training allowed him to step outside of himself and view how his own trauma response was innately part of his teaching, and that it is important to recognize that in the moment:

> I think it's helped me grow when it comes to assessing myself to know how important that is. I don't think I really paid attention to bringing my own trauma and experiences into a day and how I could allow that to impact the students. So I think that self-awareness, where I'm in the "backseat" of the car, in the "trunk" of the car kind of model, I don't really think I gave myself that time before this training to self-assess as much.

This self-awareness is something that Phillip continues to work towards as a goal in the work that he does with trauma-affected students.

Like Marie, Phillip was more comfortable sharing general observations about *student trauma* and talked mostly about what he was told by others in the building:

> I've been told about sexual abuse that has happened, and working with students that have experienced that...students that have experienced death as far as like a murder in their family. Also, some have experienced physical abuse as well. So, that's just what I've been told.

When prompted, Phillip shared more about the typical types of trauma disclosure he receives and that usually, he is told by fellow staff members who are working closely with the student whether they are on an IEP, receiving counseling, or working closely with the family resource workers. He also shared that sometimes parents will disclose important life

event information to him; for example, he was told of family deaths and family separations due to incarceration by parents specifically. He shared that he infrequently, if ever, learns of student trauma from the student themselves. He acknowledged that as a teacher, he likely only knows a small part of what is really going on in students' lives, which is why a trauma-informed lens is essential.

Phillip had a few experiences to share with regard to his year of *teaching virtually*. He began by explaining how hard the actual lesson planning and delivery was in the virtual setting. He described one of the biggest challenges as learning how to condense the curriculum into the allotted time frame, and how to make the curriculum come alive virtually. Additionally, Phillip discussed that he feels an overall disconnect from his students, as well as from his colleagues. He said that he sometimes felt isolated and alone, and that he felt that contributed to his level of burnout and compassion fatigue and decreased his overall satisfaction with his job during this school year. He remained optimistic about the upcoming school year, however. "I can already tell there's going to be a major adjustment, but after we get through that period, I think it'll be pretty normal-ish."

In his survey, Phillip indicated that he mostly identified *dysregulation* as a barrier with his trauma-affected students. In his interview, Phillip confirmed this, especially with students who were also diagnosed with a disability or mental illness. He stated the following:

> I had a student that I worked with last year, who was bipolar, so he would have different outbursts of anger with frustration, and we had a student with autism who literally destroyed the classroom. So finding a way to approach those students in a way where you're not holding those emotions against you. Some of those times last year especially, I would have a little bit of anxiety myself, because you deal with a student, and you think about them getting in your face the day before, but they've actually gotten over it. So trying to re-engage with them….and academically, this

> year has been difficult, and trying to figure out what students know and to interact with them, I feel like I've been limited in the support I can provide them this year.

Phillip shared that behavior looked a lot different during this school year, since the school was virtual, so most of his experiences with students' dysregulated behaviors were from his previous year of teaching, and he expressed concern for the upcoming year as students work to transition back into a regular school year.

Research supports the claim that students who are trauma-affected also experience behavioral challenges due to the changes that occur in the trauma-affected brain with regard to emotion regulation and reasoning. The neuroscience of the brain and trauma response has been significantly researched in the medical field, and this learning has made its way to the education world to help teachers gain a better understanding of the reasons behind certain behaviors in trauma-affected students. We are gaining understanding of the concept of neuroplasticity, or the brain's ability to change neural networks either positively or negatively, changing the way a person responds to an antecedent or activating event. In a person who has experienced trauma, the brain's amygdala is in overdrive, resulting in a higher likelihood that the person will respond emotionally, not rationally, to stimuli (McLaughlin, 2014; Sweeton, 2017). Alexander and Hinrichs (2019) identified the primary observable behaviors in trauma-affected students as hyperarousal, difficulty paying attention, challenges with authority or rules, opposition, violence, difficulty with coping skills or the complete lack of them, and other maladaptive behaviors. There is research to support the claim that trauma-affected youth may be more likely to experience behavioral challenges, resulting in higher rates of discipline, suspension, or expulsion. A recent quantitative study examined the relationship between self-reported adverse childhood

experiences and victim or perpetrator behaviors in school (Forster, et al., 2020). Adverse childhood experiences were defined as initiating bullying or harassment, theft, destruction of property, physical aggression, or bringing a weapon to school. The study found that "39% of victim only, 40% of perpetrator only, and 62% of perpetrator–victim reported family-based ACE" (p. 674). Multiple studies solidify the hypothesis that cumulative adversities, or multiple ACEs over time, are likely to increase the risk of violent and aggressive behaviors (Bellis et al., 2014; Duke et al., 2010; Fox et al., 2015; Saner & Ellickson, 1996; Salo et al., 2021; Stoddard et al., 2013). Salo, Appleton, and Tracy (2021) observed:

> youth who had experienced multiple adversities at one or more time points (classified in the decreasing, increasing, or stable high adversity groups) exhibited markedly elevated risk for both physical fighting and weapon carrying compared to those with stable low levels of adversity throughout childhood. (p. 18)

An additional study by Burley (2010) found that the suspension rate of court-involved youth (foster care, abuse/neglect investigation, etc.) was significantly higher than those of their peers who were not involved in the system.

Sometimes, teachers respond to dysregulation in ways that further trigger trauma-affected students and initiate a cycle of behavioral challenges that seem impossible to overcome. Fescer (2015) stated that in order to support students who are dysregulated due to trauma, we must first seek to help the student regulate, which often involves sensory support and co-regulation. Then, teachers can work to relate to the student who is in crisis, and it is only after that relationship is re-established that the teacher can help the student to reason and take responsibility for the event that occurred (Fescer, 2015). Unfortunately, sometimes teacher adrenaline takes over, and the steps of regulation, relationship, and reasoning occur in reverse order (Fescer, 2015). Rishel, Tabone, Hartnett, and Szafran (2019) discussed the

increased likelihood of students who were identified as trauma-affected to respond negatively to more traditional classroom management interventions such as redirecting students in a loud or stern voice, or using time-out as a punishment. These negative responses most frequently led to either escalated behaviors, or the deterioration of the student-teacher relationship (Rishel et al., 2019). The loss of control associated with these types of teacher interventions is a common trigger for trauma-affected students; students may subconsciously seek ways to re-establish control in situations where they feel helpless (Fescer, 2015). Teachers may view these behaviors as manipulative or aggressive, but in a trauma-informed school, teachers have the understanding that these behaviors are a result of neuroplasticity and negative coping skills.

In addition to behavior challenges, *virtual teaching* weighed heavily on Phillip, and he clarified that with only two years of teaching experience, his first year ended in a lockdown, and his second year was completely virtual. The realization that he had yet to experience a 'normal' school year, as well as the timing of the study, were reasons why Phillip reported feeling levels of exhaustion with the overall workload this school year. He elaborated:

> On a normal day, I feel drained. Still, like yesterday I was teaching and talking to students, which is why my voice is kind of hoarse. So on a normal day, it definitely feels draining and more so when I was actually in the building last year. And then kind of like I mentioned, just dealing with some of those different behaviors, sometimes it was really hard to even come back, like the next day right after experiencing something like that. I feel like we probably should have more of a built in space, like we text other coworkers, but have more of a built in space to debrief from some of that stuff. I feel like this year, it's almost like the work never stops. So even though I'm logged off and the kids are logged off, it's grading work, preparing reports, that kind of stuff.

He also shared the challenges of decreased student connection and how that affects his overall mental wellness and leaves him second-guessing his ability to develop *relationships*:

> This year my level of burnout from workload is probably about 85%...just ready to be done. Compassion fatigue, from this year being virtual, I would say about 65% to 70%, just because the virtual space, I think, has separated a lot of emotional or relational connection I would like to have, but there are different cases where I'm seeing students struggle, and I'm hearing about what's going on in their lives from their parents. Like, I actually had a student this year who had a family member murdered, and then she relocated to [another state] for a little bit, and then came back. And so hearing about that was tough, and then experiencing her be a great student before that, and just seeing her come and drop off academically, has hurt a little bit and just not, I think the main thing that has bothered me is not really feeling like I know how to get her re-engaged.

Despite these challenges, Phillip's classroom culture was also observed as being overall very positive. Students who were present seemed happy to be in class and were generally in positive spirits. Phillip incorporated humor and joy to make learning fun and enjoyable. For example, together with the students, Phillip played a game entitled 20 questions which was such an interesting way to get students engaged. In my journal entry after observing Phillip's class, I wrote, "That 20 Questions game had me on the edge of my seat!" During the game, Philip had written the name of an object on a piece of paper. The game was a competition between students and teacher. Students asked questions, and Phillip answered them. If the students guessed the object before 20 questions, the students won. If they did not, then Phillip won. Phillip explained the purpose of this game in our follow-up interview as a way to build community and relationships among students: "I started that because I wanted to give them a chance to synergize and build off of each other's' energy. They're trying to beat me. They like the challenge." Moreover, during my observation of Phillip's classroom, he provided choices for almost every activity. Students were allowed to opt-out of sharing their

feelings or any personal information during the morning check-in, allowing for choice in disclosure.

Phillip also shared his experience with fostering positive *relationships with parents and students*, and how he felt that made the overall teaching and learning experience better.

> I definitely [start] with trying to build a relationship first, letting them know that I care about them as a person. So sometimes I'll make that extra effort if I know, like, I've had students this year where I knew they were playing football. So even though it was pandemic times, still making an effort to go to their games to support them in that way, build that relationship outside of school when I can, and relying on the resources that my school provides. [One student] reached out to me on the PlayStation app, like messaging, and so me and him actually developed a stronger relationship because of that, and we would talk about different video games that he would try to get me to download and play...but I was also able to talk to him about music, connect with other things and just find other ways to connect outside of the classroom...and so even though this year he wasn't in my class, he still wanted to keep in touch with me, I've been able to give input on how he is doing, which has helped him to transition back into his regular classroom setting.

Phillip also has had success in developing *relationships with parents* and talked about a particularly positive relationship that occurred because he found a connection with the parents:

> I ended up having a student last year where I actually went to high school with both their parents. So that relationships helped me a lot because when they didn't have trust for other educators in the school, I was able to come speak to them and let them know that, we have your student's best interest in mind and then just having that relationship helped me to even speak to some of the difficulties the students were having.

He also shared what he did to establish parent relationships with those whom he had never met before, which was primarily to seek their input and join with them in decision making and problem solving. "You know your students better than me, so help me to partner with you and get them more motivated and see what's going on."

Phillip talked about some of his *personal protective factors* as well. He meets every other week with a therapist, and he found that to be extremely helpful. He also expressed that his faith and prayer helped to support him in difficult times. His relationships with coworkers provided him with comfort and support as well, even though being separated by the pandemic made this more difficult.

Christine's Story

You try to not get emotional in this, but we're human at the end of the day, so it's hard.

Christine

Growing up in a family of educators, Christine felt that being a teacher was in her genes; her mother and brother are both teachers, as well as her sister-in-law. Christine, a 31-year-old white female, chose to pursue her education at the local university's Institute for Urban Education. The program specifically prepares pre-service educators for the realities of working in urban education, to become agents of change and reform, and to provide rigorous learning opportunities to all students. During this experience, a passion for bringing quality education to traditionally underserved populations was ignited, and her desire to bring reform to urban education drives her practice as a teacher to this day. She pursued a position at Underoak as her first teaching job in urban education and has taught there for all nine years of her teaching career.

At Underoak, Christine has experienced several different types of positions. She began as a third grade teacher and has worked as a second grade teacher and a reading interventionist. During that year, the school identified a significant need for a self-contained special education program for students with lower levels of functioning and higher levels of individualized need. Christine was tasked with leading this program mid-school year and has

been in that role for the past four years. At the time of this transition, Christine did not have certification or education in special education—she had to become certified as she worked and has been exploring graduate programs to further her knowledge. Despite the challenges in taking on a role that was unexpected, Christine expressed that her ability to research and learn her roles and responsibilities as a special education teacher has allowed her to navigate the process, and that she has had great leadership that has supported her as well.

In her interview, Christine shared that she believes that she has one and a half ACE. Her explanation for this is that while her parents did get divorced when she was younger, she did not technically lose either of them, so she didn't feel like that was something that she fully claimed as an adverse childhood event. She further detailed her traumatic background:

> My mom had issues with mental illness and depression. It worsened after her father passed, and I was about 10 years old. And she has anxiety and I see it in me and my brother that we have those same, like depression and anxiety issues that we kind of deal with. So that was my only other one that I marked, which makes me feel pretty privileged.

Christine went on to share that her mother passed away in July, which led to emotional responses sometimes with students sharing about Mother's Day or asking her questions about her mother. She stated that she has healed from her trauma and believed that having the awareness of mental health issues allowed her to help identify and support students who may have been struggling with mental illness themselves, or experiencing a family member who is struggling.

Christine expressed frustration at the fact that she was not able to experience any of the professional developments from *Trauma Smart* this year. As a special education teacher, she was expected to see students in person on Fridays, which prevented her from attending the training.

> I think it would definitely be beneficial. I mean, if the school feels the need to pay as much money as they are for it, then I assume it's very beneficial. But I couldn't tell you since I've not been able to attend. But I think it would be helpful to understand the things they're talking about with trauma. I feel like a lot of other teachers come out with some really good information. So I try to pull some of that from them. But I think being in the training would have been really helpful.

When prompted to reflect on whether she thinks Trauma Smart is just an unwatered seed and that as an initiative, it will fall by the wayside, Christine said that she feels that with the pandemic, there will be a need to refresh teachers' understanding of trauma, as it is a universal human experience and will likely be very different next year. I identified with this sentiment greatly, as evidenced by my journal entry from May 7:

> Trauma-informed Trainings feel so performative. I wish there was a way to have fully embedded training that was maximum benefit, minimal cost. I feel like people listen in those trainings, connect the dots to their own experiences, and then return to their classrooms for business as usual. Is trauma-informed care incorporated into teacher evaluation? I know there are indicators about relationships, but what else is there? Also, there are teachers that have misconceptions about trauma (these kids are just making excuses, they should be resilient, etc.) How effective are these professional development initiatives at addressing those misconceptions? Generally, I feel like trauma professional development trainings just scratch the surface of the real work that needs to be done...but it's better than nothing. Is it? (Reflective Journal, May 7, 2021)

Christine shared that she has worked with students who were experiencing houselessness, food insufficiency, and community violence. She explained that her knowledge and understanding of *student experiences* typically came from parents, most often from the teachers having to reach out when they noticed something unusual or concerning. Sometimes Christine's students disclosed things to her, but Christine attributed that to the fact that many of her students are of lower cognitive functioning, are still developing their social skills, and may not be as cautious with talking about what is going on at home.

Christine shared one story about a student that was weighing heavily on her at the time of the interview:

> I currently have a student who's going through a custody battle, and it's caused a lot of trauma for her. She was sexually abused when she was six. She's now nine years old, but she's been in and out of care with her godmother, and her godmother has her right now, but the custody battle right now is pretty stressful with going back and forth between mom and godmother, and the visits, and just being confused about what's going on in her life.

During the follow-up interview, Christine shared an update regarding this child. She was given the opportunity to sit in the virtual court appointment, because the godmother came to the school to meet with Christine about something else and asked if she could use the school resources to access the virtual court (Christine interpreted this as her way of seeking emotional support during the court appointment: "I could tell she just kind of wanted someone else with her...she asked without asking.")

> I got to sit in court last week, and that was pretty disappointing. And we think that it's going to move forward, and it just hits another standstill, "we're going to try this next" when you're really just thinking, "please just put this kid in the custody of the person who's doing all of this stuff for them." And so that's been kind of weighing on me a little bit this week, of just wishing that we would just progress and move forward, instead of us just backpedaling and backpedaling. So, we're a little worried because if she goes back into the custody of her mother, then she's going to leave our school and we've put all these supports in place for this child to be successful here as the first consistent school she's had, and then she's going to be moved, if anything goes the wrong way. So, it's been a little much.

As a special education teacher, Christine saw students three times per week during the school year in which this study was conducted. This was three times more than her colleagues in regular education classrooms, and she acknowledged that this was a benefit to her in terms of *relationships* and closeness to students. However, she did share that *virtual learning* overall was a barrier to working with students who have more moderate to severe disabilities; as the self-contained special education teacher in the building, Christine's

students were diagnosed with more severe disabilities such as autism and intellectual disabilities, which made it more challenging to deliver instruction on days where students were not attending in person. She shared that not seeing the parents daily, thus hindering relationship building with parents, was also an added effect of virtual learning:

> Normally we don't have transportation, so our parents have to come in and pick up their children physically from the building. Right now, we're not allowing parents in the building. So I'm not seeing their parents every day, meaning we're just having texting or phone conversations. So it definitely makes it harder because I'm used to having parents face to face every single day. And I can tell them exactly what their kid did. It's a lot harder to make 30 phone calls every day to be like, "your kid did great on this or your kid's working on this." So it's definitely made it harder being that we normally see our parents constantly.

As the conversation shifted to how she viewed trauma within the classroom, Christine shared that one of her most commonly observed *student outcomes* is withdrawal or shutting down.

> For my two this year that I know have a lot of trauma, shutting down is their coping mechanism where, "I'm just not going to do the things you're asking me to do" or "I'm just going to withdraw and take myself away from the group and go be by myself." My one student does have some aggressive issues, where he will throw things or like, push furniture over. But I have another child, he's completely different. He just shuts down, withdraws, doesn't want to talk, cries. And that's what we see.

When asked how she helps students through those withdrawals, Christine identified that most of the time, the students just need a little bit of time. She shared her belief that withdrawal is sometimes more challenging than outward dysregulation, because it is easier to notice behavior disruptions. She also shared that it is essential for the teacher to be able to pick up on behavior changes quickly before it escalates, because often the students do not know what is wrong. "They don't know what it is. They're just having feelings and they can't even tell you why."

Christine acknowledged that she feels the pull between *work and home*, and that she did not feel that her work-life balance was necessarily healthy. In her words:

> Usually I feel like I have more work to do once I get home, like, I know that my day doesn't end when I leave this building and that I will have things to do at home. And, so that is usually a little bit stressful.

She revealed that she usually spends about two hours a day working on schoolwork outside of school hours. While she does experience challenges with workload burnout and difficulty with work-life balance, she did not feel that she was experiencing compassion fatigue:

> I've been doing this for 10 years, you kind of learn not to let everything be so personal to you, and to kind of let that go when you go home. Workload-wise, yes, this year I feel very burned out. But I really truly think that's just because everything is so different. It's also hard because you're asking me in May (laughs).

In my journal, I wondered if Christine and some of the other co-researchers' reluctance to admit their experiences with compassion fatigue was to prevent feeling like they were unable to handle the stress of the job:

> Cover stories? Some participants are seeming to have a bit of a guard up when I ask about compassion fatigue. I definitely understand that there is a difference this year, and that compassion fatigue has taken a backseat to burnout. I just wonder if there is some hesitation because they don't want to seem like the work is too hard or that they can't handle it. We <u>need to normalize teacher struggle</u> so that teachers always feel okay sharing their limitations. Actually, compassion fatigue isn't a limitation. It means you care! (Reflective Journal, May 16th, 2021)

Christine's ability to develop and grow *relationships with students and families* was unique in that as a special education teacher, she worked with students for multiple years so she was able to get to know them on a much closer level. She had also been a coach for the district for many years and believed that that role had played a significant part in her ability to get to know students outside of the classroom:

> I think those relationships have been really beneficial because then when they are doing things in class, I can be like, 'Hey, we have this relationship. And now we're

> going to work on this classroom relationship.' And they take you more seriously. So I really think relationships are super important for helping kids grow the families to trust you.

Her ability to form *relationships with students* as well as to foster those relationships within her students was evident in her observation. In my reflective observation notes, I wrote:

> As a student appears to struggle with a task, another student puts his arm around him and then embraces him…Christine's body language is open, welcoming, and her attention is attuned to her students.

In addition to developing relationships with students and families, Christine also talked at length about the value of the *support staff* at Underoak. This was coded as *system support* under the overall theme of strategies and supports. Christine described the level of such support that was in place at Underoak, including access to three school counselors and partnering with an outside mental health agency for services for students. She also identified that the family resource specialist (social worker), helped families connect with basic needs and services to provide foundational support when needed. Christine stated that the support in the building was easily accessed, and that counselors never took more than 24 hours to address an issue.

School counselors are uniquely trained to aid in supporting students with mental health issues in a school setting and should be available to teachers as a support staff for them when they are faced with challenges they cannot address on their own. It is recommended by the state in which the study was conducted that every school serving students grades K-12 have a school counselor available to students, with a maximum recommended ratio of 1:250 (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Additionally, schools may employ a school social worker, who, along with the counselor, supports

students with mental health needs but is also able to connect families and children to various community resources as appropriate. The school social worker is another essential part of the school support team. Additional support staff may include behavior interventionists, therapists, and consultants. Teachers should understand the roles that each of these support staff play and should know how to access these supports when needed. This type of support can help teachers feel less isolated, and that they have a more collaborative approach to assisting their students in need.

Christine also had some *personal protective factors* that helped her when things got tough. She believed that her support at school primarily came from her team, and from the comfort and encouragement she felt when she was able to bounce ideas off of them, or just vent. She utilized coping skills such as exercise and established boundaries with how much work she did at home. Overall, Christine seemed confident that her ability to effectively handle the stress of teaching was adequate, and that her experience was a primary factor in that.

Addy's Story

It is a real problem in schools, I know that. I know that teachers I work with, and friends that I know from my education program, I do know that it is a real problem for a lot of teachers.

Addy

Like several of her colleagues, Addy, a 34-year-old white female, reported coming from a family of teachers. "My mom's a teacher, my younger sister is a teacher, and I always worked with kids." She shared that she always knew she wanted to work with kids and participating in cadet teaching in high school solidified that interest for her. She attended undergraduate school in the state after researching educational programs near her

hometown. Addy completed her student teaching at a Title-1 school and decided thereafter to move to a bigger city, which brought her to the city in which Underoak is located. Instead of obtaining a position immediately, Addy decided to go a different route and joined Teach for America, which is a program through Americorps that prepares individuals for teaching in urban schools. “I was kind of nontraditional—most Teach for America people don’t have an education background. And I did, but it was just kind of my foot in the door to try something new.” Addy completed her master’s degree through the Teach for America program and has been working at Underoak for nine years. She expressed that her experience with Teach for America was an integral part of her overall development as a teacher:

> With my education program, I felt like I had more content knowledge. I felt like I learned about theories of education and philosophies of education and how to implement readers workshop, or how to implement this in math, or this in science, notebooks, and all of that kind of thing. Whereas Teach for America’s focus, I felt was more about like learning how to be a part of your community, building relationships with families and students, how to manage a classroom effectively, how to use data to drive your instruction...I felt it was just, I’m glad I had both because I felt like that made me a better teacher, to have two different kind of perspectives of what’s important in education.

Addy began her career as a first-grade teacher and has also taught second and third grade. At the time of the interview, Addy was working as a reading interventionist for grades two through five, which involves pulling small groups of students from class to deliver specialized instruction focused on literacy skills. She is a new mom, with the birth of her daughter this past spring, and is married to a fellow educator as well, so she is fully immersed in the world of education and surrounded by family and friends who know her experiences.

Addy reported a score of zero on the ACE survey. She admitted to sometimes worrying that this makes it harder for her to know where her students are coming from, but she felt that she has learned to empathize as best as she can and to acknowledge that she may have a different background than her students:

> Yeah, so I try to be very relatable to my kids. But that is not one way, obviously, that I can be relatable to them because I have not gone through those things. But I feel like I'm a pretty empathetic person...and so I think just being empathetic and trying to see things from other perspectives, because I mean, I will never fully understand some of the things that my students have gone through, or anyone who's gone through trauma, but being able to take a step back and at least try to consider things from their perspective, and how that would affect them—I think that's really important too, definitely.

Addy is confident that *Trauma Smart* has helped her to view her students' experiences with empathy, in addition to creating a framework for Underoak to become trauma-informed. Addy spoke specifically to Trauma Smart as a tool to connect students to others in the building who may be better equipped to assist. "On a surface level, I know how to empathize. I know how to be consistent for kids." But she acknowledged that sometimes, it is too much and that Trauma Smart helped her to identify when it is necessary to pull in other supports.

When asked about the *traumatic experiences* her students have faced, Addy utilized the ACE Survey (Felitti et al., 1998) to highlight the different things she's had experience with:

> I've definitely had students that have had food scarcity, or like dirty clothes, or you can tell that they don't have great hygiene at home. Definitely had kids that have come from divorced parents, or a single-parent home. And even had one student in particular that had a death of a parent actually, while she was at our school. I assume that I have had kids that have had mentally ill or depressed parents, just, I mean, I don't know if they were technically, like, diagnosed with that, but just based on what I knew about them and what their child revealed, I'm pretty sure I have had students fall into that category. I've had kids that have parents or caretakers that have alcohol

> abuse issues, or drug abuse issues, and definitely had students who have at least one parent or close family member who's been incarcerated.

Addy also discussed the challenge of trauma disclosure and that teachers are not always made privy to the experiences their students are going through:

> Every once in a while, when a family really gained trust of me, they might share something like that. But it's not usually until well into the year. I just feel like the culture of a lot of our students is "we don't really put our personal business out there," so often, I don't hear it from the families. Sometimes the kids say something like, "I'm not supposed to tell you, but…," so a lot of times kids just have a hard time—if it's on their mind, it comes out of their mouth.

Addie identified *relationships with students and families* as a dominant strategy that was utilized in working with trauma-affected students. She shared that working in partnership with families was a big focus for her as a teacher. She elaborated that as a practice, she would first reach out with positive communication and ensure that parents understand that she wants to partner with them. She explained that she attended birthday parties, dance recitals, sporting events, and other outside community events and when parents saw her there, that was almost always a significant growing moment in the relationship.

Like her colleagues, Addy also addressed the difference in developing relationships and learning about students' home lives in the *virtual setting*. Addy did not relay either of these situations to her own experiences, because she spent the majority of the school year working with small groups, but she shared what she knew based on her coworkers' experiences:

> For some of our students, they're on their computer so we can see their house...I know there was a case in our school where someone saw an older sibling hitting a younger sibling. So then we could address that because we saw violence firsthand through the computer. Or we've heard things in the background or seen things in the background, so we kind of get a glimpse into their home lives. Whereas other

> students may not be attending their virtual sessions, or they're always having their camera off or their microphone muted. So, the teacher doesn't feel like they're that connected to the student because they don't really know what's going on. There's a disconnect there. They don't see the student, they don't get much from the student. The student might turn in all their assignments, but don't really participate as much in the live sessions. So I feel it is just a case by case basis. Some ways, we've seen the trauma firsthand. And in other cases, it might be easier to hide behind a camera that's turned off.

Regardless of whether the student is hiding or is sharing their experience in plain view, Addy acknowledged that this added layer of teaching was challenging all around and was even more difficult with her added life change of becoming a new mom.

> It felt like being a first year teacher again, because I was learning how to do things way differently. There were a lot of challenges that I've never had before...so trying to balance being a new mom and all of the new stuff that was coming with virtual teaching was pretty hard.

Addy went on to discuss some *academic outcomes* for trauma-affected students that she has noticed during her career. On her survey, she indicated this as a concern that she noticed, and I asked her to elaborate on the specific academic concerns she noticed. One that she mentioned as being significant was attendance. She identified that sometimes students are not at school because of things that are occurring outside of school, and then they don't want to come back to school because they've missed so much, so it initiates a cycle resulting in significantly low attendance, which has academic implications. She also talked about her concern for students who "ride the middle," who have semi-adaptive coping skills so on the surface they seem fine, but that are actually struggling inwardly with really hard things. She shared that it's challenging to build relationships with those students, because they are typically somewhat withdrawn and because time limits her ability to form these personal connections.

Research supports the claim that a trauma-affected brain functions differently in terms of executive functioning, memory, processing, decision-making, and concentration (Burke et al., 2011; Craig, 2016; Sly, 2016; Terrasi & Galarce, 2017). This can create barriers to learning for students in terms of cognition, comprehension, and overall attention to task (Craig, 2016; Sly, 2016; Terrasi & Galarce, 2017). Several studies have explored this in more depth: Duplechain et al. (2008) found that students who were exposed to violence demonstrated significantly lower reading scores than students who were not trauma-affected. Lee, Anderson, and Klimes-Dougan (2016) explored the connection between trauma response, psychological distress, and shame, and asserted that in addition to the direct relationship between traumatic experiences and lower academic achievement, students' perceptions of their own academic ability and achievement was much lower than those of their peers who were not trauma-affected. Oosterhoff, Kaplow, and Layne (2018) found that students who were experiencing traumatic grief due to recent bereavement were more like to experience "lower academic achievement, lower self-reported ability to concentrate and learn, lower beliefs that teachers treat youth fairly, lower school belongingness, and lower school liking compared to youth without histories of sudden loss" (p. 377). While these deficits may present differently for students or may not occur all at once, understanding the learning changes in a student who is trauma-affected is a critical element to being overall trauma-informed. Without adequate supports in place, students can experience adverse effects of these barriers, including low attendance, low test scores, being incorrectly identified for special education, or being retained (Frieze, 2015). Supporting students who are having learning difficulties can create added pressure on teachers, who are tasked with determining interventions to aid in the learning of all students. Roseby and Gasgcione

(2021) asserted that essentially, teachers must shift their educator "identity" in order to provide comprehensive academic support to students. In other words, the lens through which teachers view students who are struggling must be a trauma-informed lens, and that can be challenging for teachers who are not trained to educate the whole child or are under pressure from administrators to raise reading levels, test scores, and other achievement metrics without adequate trauma intervention (Morgan et al., 2015; Roseby & Gascoigne, 2021).

Addy reflected on her entire teaching career as she evaluated her own level of *burnout and compassion fatigue*. She highlighted the fact that it can change from year to year, based on experience and what is going on during that particular year. Addy believed that she had come full circle with her ability to maintain balance, but she admitted it had not always been easy.

> It's definitely changed throughout my career...so the first couple of years of teaching, I was also getting my graduate degrees, so I was exhausted, burnt out, very emotional, it was just hard, very challenging. Then I kind of hit my stride for a while and I was still single and I had time to devote to things. I did pretty well with finding a work-life balance. I don't check my email or check my computer or do work after...8:30 at night, because then I can't really turn it off. And I don't do any work on Sundays. So after I set some boundaries for myself, I found a good balance again. And then I feel like with virtual teaching, it's been really difficult...and I would say this spring, I kind of found the balance, because I feel a little more competent about virtual teaching. So it's kind of had some ups and downs, I would say.

Addy relied on the support of her colleagues but admitted that this year it was much different without physical proximity to her colleagues. However, there were plenty of positives to this, primarily the ability to have dedicated team meetings without interruption and having more time to focus on team development. She felt strongly that the school-wide systems would be much stronger the following year because of the work they were able to do this year. She loved working on a team that was made up of educators she liked and

respected and felt that was a significant element to her overall attrition. “I feel like everyone is here for the right reasons, we all have common goals, and we all inspire each other.”

Addy’s family was a significant support for her as well. She talked about being surrounded by teachers, as her husband, mom, and sister are all teachers. She said that her overall experience seemed to be much easier with such a large support circle who really understood what she was talking about. As a *coping skill,* Addy identified that talking things through was a really important way for her to process emotions, and then she found it necessary to engage in a distraction such as taking a walk or playing with her daughter.

Stacy’s Story

You’re always wondering...what’s behind door number two, who else is dealing with something when they walk out of the school building, but they can’t share it with someone? Who else might just say something? For me, it just makes me want to be available for the next kid who wants to take a deep breath and own their mess.

Stacy

Stacy is a 44-year-old African-American woman who has had a variety of educational experiences and background. Stacy’s compass did not always point her towards teaching, but she always knew she would end up working with kids in some fashion. Her mother always worked in schools in some capacity, and some of Stacy’s earliest memories are of her going to work with her mom and feeling admiration for the work that she did. Stacy’s brother is a principal, so conversations at home often revolve around the world of school.

During college, Stacy worked for the before- and after-school program at the nearby school district. This was when she really honed in on her skills and talents in working with kids. She enjoyed it so much that she became a substitute teacher. This led to a long-term subbing position, which led to more long-term subbing positions, which eventually led to

being requested frequently enough to essentially work full time as a substitute. It was at this point that Stacy decided to pursue certification, because she wanted to be compensated fairly for the work that she was doing. To obtain certification, Stacy participated in a teacher residency program that allowed her to work in a classroom while preparing for the educator certification examination in the state. It took a long time getting to the point where Stacy is a classroom "teacher of record," but she shared that her experience as a sub and spending time in all different types of classrooms makes her a significantly more well-rounded teacher:

> I've done all grades...I feel like I've had PE classes...I've had fifth grade for the past three years...When I came into [residency program] they put me with third grade. Before that I did four years at [high school] with College Algebra...I had a kindergarten class at one time. Would I go back? No, I wouldn't. But it was, it was definitely something to add to the experience.

Stacy's ACE score was undetermined; when I asked her, she couldn't remember the exact number and said "one or two?" She reported feeling pretty lucky in that she hasn't experienced much as far as traumatic experiences. She shared some of her life experiences and how she sometimes subconsciously sought support from her students.

> Dealing with relationship issues—I know I go to work and I can tell that I have my own outside issues of ending relationships, and those can weigh heavy on the heart, and you try not to take it to work, which you need to take it to work with you and the kids can be supportive for you, and then you start talking about it, and then they're talking about their situation.

Stacy also shared that her dad was going through a cancer battle, which she hadn't disclosed to her students yet but felt that it helped her to connect with students who had sick family members as well. She pondered whether on some level, the students knew in their own way, because of the way they would ask her questions and share with her about her own grandparents. She found this experience to be challenging and painful, but she enjoyed the connections that it fostered with her students.

Stacy agreed that Trauma Smart is a good general foundation to work from and that it provided her with a set of tools to utilize when presented with a challenging situation. She appreciated the language that is utilized to help students communicate their emotional dysregulation, and that it was nice to have a common language that everyone in the school understood. “I’m going to say, I feel like nobody’s ever prepared for anything with somebody else’s kid.” She went on to explain that she appreciated the choices that Trauma Smart provided her when working with her students.

> When kids just randomly do something that catches you off guard, I don’t feel like I have a rolodex of A, B, C, D, to do. For me, it’s just like, we have choices. What’s best for you? Or what’s best for the situation? Where do I go with this?

However, she also shared that she feels that her understanding of how to respond to students in these situations came naturally and was rooted in relationships. “Those things are just things you either know or you don’t know.”

Stacy’s love for her students was apparent during our interviews, and while she shared her stories of *student trauma*, this was clear in her passion and emotion as she talked about the difficulties her students experienced. She recalled hearing about student experiences with traumatic grief, houselessness, and excessive mobility resulting in transitioning between schools frequently. She also talked a lot about family dynamics, and how sometimes family changes would result in traumatic experiences for children:

> [I’ve had] kids whose parents die, who will no longer have a mother or father or then they now have to kind of get tossed around through the family. So that whole...unwanted. We have had big issues where the grandparents aren’t able to take care of, or maybe the grandparents don’t even want them. And then you hear, or they get to hear, that the aunts don’t want them, or the other side of the family doesn’t want them. Those kids that just don’t know where they’re going to be from one week to the next, or whose house they’re going to be at. Those conversations are really hard.

One story that stuck out to Stacy as particularly heartbreaking was that of a young girl who was experiencing physical abuse in the home and having to work through the trauma of not only the abuse but the psychological trauma of not wanting to upset the family dynamic. Stacy elaborated:

> I had a student whose stepfather was abusing her and putting cigarette butts out on her arm. And she was trying to protect him because she didn't want him to go to jail, because he would end up leaving her mother. So really, she was protecting her mother. She didn't want her mother to be alone. So she was dealing with the abuse of the stepfather because she didn't want her mother to be alone. You know what I mean? Like, she is thinking about making her mother happy...that was really hard.

Stacy shared more about how she feels that community violence and the use of discipline that may involve levels of physical abuse might play a role in the level of trauma that students may face. She acknowledged that her racial identity as a Black woman and her experience being raised in the same community helps her to understand and identify with the trauma her students may be facing:

> I don't want to say this becomes a norm, but I guess to say in our community dealing with like, our youth, minorities, Blacks, and you think about the home life they deal with, like a lot of verbal abuse and those kids that have to deal with that. I think some of them bring that into the classroom. Now that to me is trauma, because if your mom was smacking you or always cussing you out, or whatever…

In my journal, I responded to this with curiosity and acknowledgement of my white privilege:

> Stacy said that she connected her students' racial identity as well as their neighborhood dynamics to the levels of verbal abuse that students are subjected to. This is absolutely not a judgment I am qualified to make as a white, suburban woman who experienced a very different upbringing, but did that seem like a generalization? Is it a fair assumption that even if this type of verbal trauma isn't occurring within the home, that it may be occurring within the extended family or community? I absolutely defer to Stacy as an expert here as this is her lived experience and not mine, but I am interested in learning more about this as I seek to understand the overall experience. (Reflective Journal, May 10, 2021)

In her survey, Stacy indicated that she believed traumatic experience may cause her students to display *defiance or disrespect*, as well as behavior outbursts; she talked about it being just another part of the job. In her interview, she elaborated on this and provided some additional examples of the way trauma shows up in her classroom. Stacy believed that students need to learn early on that their life experiences are part of them, but do not define them. Like her colleagues, most of the behaviors that she observed as a teacher throughout her career included withdrawal and behavior outbursts. She emphasized that by creating a culture of acceptance and love, students felt comfortable sharing their traumas with her so she did not feel that she has to guess whether or not something is going on: "[I ask them] so what do you really need? I feel like they appreciate that." In my journal, I reflected on Stacy's comments:

> Based on our conversation, Stacy really seems to have established a culture where she does not see a lot of the negative implications of trauma. Could this be that her ability to develop relationships has provided students with a way to integrate their trauma, rather than ignore it? Has she found… "THE CURE"? Obviously there is not a cure, but she really seems to have a dynamic in her classroom where her students are supported through their crises. She seems to accept and love her students without limit, which is such a key element to working with trauma-affected kids, and super hard to teach. I am enjoying talking with her. (Reflective Journal, May 12, 2021)

Stacy did not share much in terms of her own feelings and outcomes in working with trauma-affected students. However, she did express visible *emotion* when telling her students' stories. As she told the story of the young girl whose stepfather was abusing her, she paused to collect herself. "Pardon me when like, my emotions go left because when you start thinking about these kids, you can start to get emotional because, like, I can feel my eyes blinking and like, 'Oh God, this just takes me back,'" she said at one point in our first conversation.

Teachers, as individuals, are typically in tune with the emotions of others around them. Educators are likely to be empathetic by nature, and are often moved emotionally by the stories and struggles of others. However, as a general norm in teaching culture, teachers suffer these emotions privately (Seton, 2019). Historically, teachers have been encouraged to maintain composure and avoid overt displays of emotion (Seton, 2019). In an effort to seem calm and collected, they somehow hold it together until the busses pull out of the circle drive, and then the tears just fall. Much of the emotional response of teachers is grounded in past experiences and perceptions; for example, a teacher may attach feelings to a student who reminds them of themselves as a youth (de Ruiter et al., 2020). They may also have heightened emotional responses based on biases or preconceptions of certain children in their care, like a student with whom they have mostly had negative interactions (de Ruiter et al., 2020). This conflict between the extremely emotionally taxing work of teachers, and the need to minimize emotional responses in front of students, creates an added layer of stress to an already challenging profession.

Stacy also believed that the challenges and difficulties in the work only make it more clear to her that she is in the right profession. She shared that the hard days just make her want to come back the next day, and try something new, or work harder to be a support for that student. If anything, Stacy felt like the stress comes from the amount of work that she has to do—grading, lesson planning, and other tasks that are important but do not always feel like they are directly related to teaching. “The to-do lists, they just get longer and longer every year. Like, the micromanaging...if every teacher had a para, we could be amazing people.”

Regarding *student relationships*, Stacy acknowledged this as being a strength of hers, so much so that her administrators asked her to present a professional development to her staff to share what strategies she used to develop such positive relationships. About relationships, Stacy had this to say:

> Not all kids are the same, so I can't say that my relationship is the same with all students. There are some that open up quicker, some that trust easier. So for me, it's about trust, letting them know that they can trust me. I don't take their conversation anywhere that they don't want it to go....I always try to make [it seem] like the kids are part of the journey. Like, I'm the passenger, and I want you to know that you're supported, but we've got to go somewhere with this.

Stacy also identified that knowing how to access school supports, and when to do so, was imperative in supporting students who are trauma-affected. She emphasized the need to include students in this whenever possible, to help empower them and provide them with a sense of control in a difficult situation. "When they shared things, I'm like, 'Now you know I can't sit on this. I can hold it for a minute. But if I don't say something for your safety, I could lose my job. So let's brainstorm some things here.'" Overall, Stacy seemed to utilize student relationships and system support as her primary strategy to improve outcomes for both herself and her students.

Haley's Story

Maybe I'm doing more than what I really think I'm doing.

Haley

Like several of her colleagues, Haley brings a unique background and perspective to her work as a kindergarten teacher. Haley is an African-American woman in her 30s. Her undergraduate major was in Human Development and Family Studies, and her original plans were to work in the court system as a child advocacy representative. She began to pursue her graduate degree while working in some court advocacy positions, and she discovered that

she could make an impact working directly with parents and families in the school system. At that point, she secured work as a family and school liaison at a different district. After a few years in that position, she enjoyed working in the school setting so much that she wanted to be in the classroom full-time. She then obtained her teaching certification via the state's alternative certification program and has been in the classroom for four years.

Haley feels strongly that her alternative background makes her more effective in the classroom, specifically at recognizing student and family hardships and addressing those issues with families and support staff. She stated,

> my background which led me to education is definitely something that I use, even rules in my classroom are something that probably make more sense to my students, just because I'm a little more aware of that side of things.

She is a leader in the building, as the instructional team lead for the kindergarten team and an example to the other teachers in the way she implements community and relationships in her classroom.

Haley's total ACE score was undefined. However, she reported that it was "higher than 4." As a Black educator, Haley iterated that she is a representation of the community that she serves, and many of her experiences are similar to those that her students have.

> For me, it lets me be a little more empathetic with my students to being like, that was definitely something I remember experiencing, or that I had something that happened within my family. And I remember how I felt. And I remember how I would have someone talk to me about it, or not talk to me about it, but to be just, you know, a safe space. And I feel like that has helped me with that.

Haley shared that, while feeling strongly that her experiences allow her to understand and relate to her students, it was sometimes difficult when other adults in the building spoke insensitively about situations that pertained to some students but also pertained to her. She shared an example of how a colleague was blaming a student's behavior on the fact that the

child didn't have a father or a male role model: "It was triggering for me because I was like, 'I don't live with my kids' father'."

> I mean, we need to be more understanding of the things that are happening with our students and once again, I have the experience. Once again, these same people don't have the experience, and I'm understanding of that. But also, it's your job to be knowledgeable and also to be empathetic to things that are happening within your students' life. So even just like, adults aren't as understanding and aware how the things that they say or our students' experiences could affect them or could affect someone else in the room.

Haley expressed mixed feelings about Trauma Smart. "I think the program was good, but I feel like it's the kind of thing that we've already talked about." She reflected on the need for Trauma Smart to go deeper and to provide more meaningful examples to use with students:

> Like our last training was grief and loss. But then you have people talking about, can you have someone make an example...they said something like, compare it to the loss of a pet. And I had to say, absolutely not, not ever. Losing someone or watching someone die is not comparable to losing your dog. So I kind of just wish it was more like, this is why we don't compare the loss of life to the loss of a pet. And if you don't have the experience to be relatable, this is what you can say, this is where you can use this, and this is how you can have these courageous conversations with your students.

Haley reiterated that she wished for Trauma Smart to go deeper, and that she hopes that future sessions will do just that.

Haley also spoke about relationships and how, as a kindergarten teacher, she is often the first impression that students and families are getting about school. This made her feel a little bit of additional pressure to make sure that she developed positive relationships with students and families. She elaborated:

> I want my students to know that not only is this somewhere I'm going to teach you as much as I can, but also this is your safe space. This is a space that wherever, for eight hours a day, I can be the person that you need, I can be a person of comfort...if they know that, "Okay, I'm at this school, and this teacher is something that even if I leave her classroom, that if I ever need her, she'll be there," then I've done my job.

She shared that her primary strategy for relationship building with kindergartners was asking them a lot of questions, finding out their interests, and connecting their interests to things at school. "'Oh, you love to build? We have big blocks, we have Legos! Oh, you love art? Let me show you all of the art supplies that I have! That's my thing too!'" This was evident in her classroom observation as well. In my reflection column on her observation protocol, I wrote, "The energy is contagious, and the engagement of her kindergartners in this virtual setting is impressive."

She further explained:

> It's about taking the time, it's about making the effort, it's about learning about the little bitty things. It's not easy...you know what I mean, you have some who are a little off guard, they've been home their whole entire five little years of life. And like, you're just this new person. But I mean, if you take the time and the effort, like that should naturally start to form.

During our interviews, Haley shared about some of her experiences with kindergartners, and how it is especially challenging to learn of fresh trauma in very young children. Haley spoke about *the types of trauma* she has experienced via her students, and her experiences echoed those of her colleagues:

> I mean, even today, I had a student express that she's extremely happy because her father is coming home from jail on Friday. Another student asked her why he was in jail, and she stated that it was because he was biting her mother. Other things...I mean, domestic violence, just like in the community where I work and the city all my own kids were birthed in, the city of [redacted]. So I mean, every day, things are happening within their neighborhoods.

Parental incarceration is a far-reaching issue in that all teachers are likely to work with a child who has an incarcerated parent during the span of their career. Over 2.7 million children currently have a parent or close family member in jail (National Institute of Corrections, 2021). There are myriad studies that explore the dynamic of families who have

an incarcerated parent, and many of those studies identify the outcomes of this family dynamic on children. Arditti and Savla (2015) found that students from single-parent households due to parental incarceration were more likely to exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, often elevated after mediatory events such as visitation or receiving letters from the incarcerated parent. Turney and Goodsell (2018) found that coping with the stigma of parental incarceration may also create a trauma response in children. Sapharas et al. (2016) conducted a study of the effects of divorce on the completion of high school and found that "odds of completion were 41% lower for males who experienced parental loss caused by divorce, compared to males from intact families" (p. 868). Hines et al. (2020) further asserted that changes to the family as a result of parent incarceration can also lead to increased financial burden, fear for safety, and resentment of the parent who is incarcerated by all family members, which can trickle down to the children in the family.

In addition to family separation as a traumatic event she has experienced secondhand, *traumatic grief* emerged as commonplace in Haley's experience as well. Haley told the recent story of one of her kindergartners who was experiencing significant traumatic grief due to the loss of her mother because of violence:

> There was a student I had in my classroom last year, her mother was shot. And she ended up having to live with her father. So they were trying to work with the father and the grandparents, to help her educationally, kind of just dealing with the loss of her mother. She was a young kindergartener. I don't know if you know, but basically, it's like, she was pretty much, if you're born within the first half of the year, and then you come to kindergarten, you're older. But if you're in the other part, you're younger. So she was really young. She had lost her mom over the summer. So just when we first started coming that year, like, we're trying to build rapport with her and her family. And I mean, she was very knowledgeable of the situation. So I'm assuming that's something they had talked with her about, I don't know, she was, I can't remember if she was in therapy or anything like that. But she was very open about it. But just gathering information about how her mother had lost her life was

> just, really...I mean, for me, I haven't dealt with a lot of loss in my life. So sharing this with a five-year-old, I thought it was really...it really affected me.

Traumatic grief and family changes often go hand in hand, as often the loss of someone causes a change in the overall structure and dynamic of a family unit. Traumatic grief, or complicated grief, is defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) as being grief that transcends the traditional grieving process and leaves the bereaved searching for a continued connection to the person (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Often, traumatic grief occurs when the death happens in a way that is violent or sudden (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Cohen & Mannarino, 2004; Kress, 2010). Salloum et al. (2019) found a strong correlation between children experiencing complicated grief and symptoms of depression and also connected feelings of hopelessness to experiences with complicated grief. Dutil (2019) advocated for the use of school-wide interventions, as grief is complex and widespread, and failing to address grief has negative outcomes for students and the culture of a school as a whole.

During our conversation, Haley shared concerns about how ready her kindergarteners would be for the following year, their first grade year. She expressed frustration, because the original plan was for kindergarten to return in person, but that did not pan out, and she had her class of kindergarteners virtually for the entire school year.

> Outside of the academic slump...everyone is going to have a little dive, but...a lot of my kids aren't going to have those social skills when they go to first grade, because they really didn't have the experience of being able to be there.

Haley went on to identify several potential *social behaviors* she predicted would come up during the next school year including sharing, problem solving, foundational skills like introducing themselves and inviting others to play, and other baseline social behaviors that

are elemental to the overall school experience. She expressed being hopeful that the upcoming school year would feel more normal and that all teachers would understand the need to remediate some of these baseline skills in the younger students.

Sometimes, teachers feel conflicted between knowing the best way to respond to dysregulation and what they are being expected to do by the other students, parents, staff, and administration. When the real answer is time and healing, but the learning or safety of other students is being threatened, it is difficult to make the decision whether to do right by one student, or by many. Haley shared a story of a student she worked with during a previous school year that exhibited significant *behavioral challenges* as a result of some traumatic experiences and how she felt some conflict in how to manage these behaviors in her classroom:

> I had a student who was high, really high behavior. I feel like you just think that he is dealing with everything. And you're working with your administration, you're working with your behavioral interventionist, and they're coming in and they're trying to help you. And it feels like nothing is working. It's just like, you know, you've tried everything for this kid. You're like, I don't have anything left for this student, you feel that, or whatever. And I hated that, because I was just like, I think he's got things going on, and things you can't control…" but I feel like well, I'm human. I can be drained by this. So once again, it was the idea that, like, "Okay you're hurting me, you're hurting other students in the classroom, you're tearing up the room." But I'm like, "I don't want to lose you out of my classroom."

Ultimately, the student had to leave the classroom to get assistance from the behavior interventionist and administration team. Haley did her best to work with the student through their pain and emotion so that the relationship remained intact, but she admitted that sometimes she feels defeated and that there might be no way for her to really help. As a teacher who prioritizes *relationships with the families* of her students, Haley shared that one of the biggest challenges for her is hearing all of the stories and difficulties of not just her

students, but their families. She didn't pinpoint one thing, but shared that "you have like 30 mini families, you know what I mean?" She went on to explain that "on top of even dealing with anything I could have going on in my life, it's like, I'm also absorbing things that are going on within the families." Haley also acknowledged that her level of compassion fatigue and burnout has changed as she has grown in her experience, as well as her ability to balance work and life:

> I feel like I've definitely learned that my self-care and my mental health, just physically, emotionally, really has to be a priority working in education. Because I mean, the things that happen at work trickle into home and same back...it's about finding that balance and finding those moments where you're just really like, "Okay, I need to decompress. What do I need at this particular time, so that I can be 100% in all the aspects of my life?'

As far as her coping strategies and *personal protective factors*, like many of her colleagues, Haley identified her support system as a major factor in her overall wellbeing. She shared that her family is really close, and she turned to them a lot during the most difficult days. She stated that her administration was incredibly supportive, and she had autonomy in her work. She said that her colleagues were an additional source of support for her and that talking to someone who understands her situation made a big difference. Haley felt that her experience in education was a protective factor as well and that her stamina had grown both emotionally and physically.

Haley also attends therapy once per month to help her with establishing boundaries and increasing communication. She shared more about her focus in therapy:

> I have learned that...sometimes talking to someone else about this, maybe who doesn't know anything about it, is a big help...Something I tend to work on is that I will overload myself and we tend to talk about how I can communicate things I need and want to work from other people.

Answering the Research Questions

This study was focused on two central questions, each with sub-questions to further drill down the topic. These questions were essentially the root of the study, providing me with focus and intention as I progressed through the entire research process (Maxwell, 2009). The first central question, "What stories do teachers tell of their lived experience in the classroom, who work with students who they believe may have experienced traumatic events?," aimed to understand the day-to-day events in the classroom when working with students who are trauma-affected. The sub-questions for this central question included the following:

- What is the experience of the teacher in terms of behavior or discipline issues with children who may have experienced traumatic events?
- What is the experience of the teacher in terms of relational issues with children who may have experienced traumatic events?
- What is the experience of the teacher in terms of curriculum and instruction with children who may have experienced traumatic events?

The second central question sought to identify the reach of trauma outside of the classroom: "What stories do teachers tell of their lived experiences outside of the classroom, or on a personal level as result of working with students who they believe may have experienced traumatic events?" The sub-questions for this central question were as follows:

- What personal experiences do they reveal about their lives outside the classroom as a result of working with students who might have experienced traumatic events?

- How do teachers manage secondary traumatic stress that may be present as a result of working with students who have experienced traumatic events?

In this section, I attempt to answer the central questions by incorporating the sub-questions into my overall answer. I begin by including tables to depict the various themes and interpretive codes in each data source. Table 5 shoes the overview of themes and codes for each data source. Table 6 shows the themes and codes for the interviews. Table 7 shows the themes and codes for the documents, and Table 8 shows the themes and codes for the interviews.

Table 5

Overview of Themes and Codes for All Data Sources

Theme	Interpretive Codes	Interview	Documents	Observations
Experiences and Factors Related to Trauma	Teacher Trauma	X		
	Teacher Knowledge and Dispositions	X		
	Student Trauma	X		
Students and Trauma	Academic Outcomes	X		
	Behavioral Outcomes	X		
	Social-Emotional Outcomes	X		
Teachers and Trauma	Emotional Response	X		
	Work Life Balance	X		
	Burnout/Exhaustion	X		
Strategies and Supports	Relationships	X	X	X
	Student Empowerment and Choice			X
	Routine and Structure			X
	Classroom Culture			X
	Preventing Dysregulation		X	
	Responding to Dysregulation		X	
	Teacher Protective Factors	X		
	System Support	X		

Table 6

Interview Themes and Codes

	Alice	Arielle	Marie	Phillip	Christine	Addy	Stacy	Haley
Experiences and Factors Related to Trauma								
Teacher Trauma	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Knowledge & Dispositions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Trauma	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Students and Trauma								
Academic Outcomes		X				X		
Behavioral Outcomes	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Social-Emotional Outcomes			X					X
Teachers and Trauma								
Emotional Response	X	X	X				X	X
Work/Life Balance	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Burnout/Exhaustion	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Strategies and Supports								
Relationships	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Protective Factors	X		X	X	X	X		X
System Support	X	X	X		X	X		X

Table 7

Documents Themes and Codes

Newsletter	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall Theme: Strategies and Supports						
Preventing Dysregulation	X	X	X		X	X
Responding to Dysregulation			X	X		

Table 8

Observation Themes and Codes

	Alice	Arielle	Marie	Phillip	Christine	Addy	Stacy	Haley
Empowerment and Choice	X	X	X	X	X			X
Routine and Structure	X		X	X				X
Classroom Culture		X	X	X	X			X

Question 1: What stories do teachers tell of their lived experience in the classroom who work with students who they believe may have experienced traumatic events?

What's In the Backpack: Experiences and Factors Related to Trauma

As co-researchers shared their ACE score and reflected on how they felt it connected to their work in the classroom, it became clear that most co-researchers did not view having

a higher ACE score as a detriment; rather, they felt that it enhanced their ability to empathize and understand their students. Christine acknowledged that she sometimes would feel emotions when her own trauma was reflected in the trauma of her students, but overall she felt that it brought her closer to them. Arielle echoed this and further reflected that sharing these traumas made her students view her differently, in a positive way. In addition to their own traumatic backgrounds, co-researchers all had unique knowledge, dispositions, and perceptions that influenced their overall experience within the classroom. The majority of co-researchers were happy to participate in trauma-informed training if it was implemented with fidelity and designed with their demographic of students in mind.

The Second Backpack is Heavy: Students and Trauma

Most of the participants had stories to share in terms of student behavior challenges. Some shared specific incidents where students were so dysregulated that they engaged in violent and aggressive behavior, and this caused the teachers to experience a range of feelings such as fear and overwhelm.

All of the co-researchers shared the significance of building relationships with students. However, some co-researchers reported having a more difficult time with this than others. Some teachers had smaller groups of students, and this made it easier to form relationships. Others struggled with making connections to students behind a screen. Marie talked about the challenges in developing relationships with students who move frequently. Overall, teachers reported that they were aware of the need to form trusting relationships with students and that with students who they perceived as trauma-affected, they felt that forming a trusting relationship was a supportive factor in helping the student achieve.

The co-researchers that I observed demonstrated a promising ability to develop relationships by providing students with opportunities for choice and empowerment, for providing them with leadership roles and responsibilities, and for keeping them engaged. Teachers incorporated humor and levity, while balancing this with high expectations. It was clear that there were positive relationships being built and maintained in each classroom I had the privilege to observe. Additionally, the observations led me to the realization that Underoak uses a school-wide leadership program that helps students with skills that promote healthy relationship building, so this was identified as a positive structure in place within the school.

While not directly related to the research question, most participants also addressed relationships with parents as well. Some participants, including Marie, Addy, and Alice, identified barriers to communication and relationship building with parents due to differing sociocultural and racial backgrounds. Others, like Christine, felt that open lines of communication were the best way to establish parent relationships, but that it was difficult due to working hours and other complications. Some co-researchers were confident in their ability to partner with parents; Phillip even had a personal connection to one of his families. Overall, participants agreed that parental relationships also supported trauma-affected students.

Less frequently addressed was academic outcomes for students whom teachers perceived to be trauma-affected. Most of the academic struggles that were addressed in the interviews seemed to be also behavioral. Arielle discussed the lack of focus in many of her students, and Addy acknowledged that attendance and school refusal contributed to some of the academic struggles of the students. It was difficult for some of the participants to

delineate whether the academic struggles they saw this school year were related to the pandemic and virtual learning, rooted in the traumatic experiences of the students, or a combination of both.

Question 2: What stories do teachers tell of their lived experiences outside of the classroom, or on a personal level as a result of working with students who they believe may have experienced traumatic events?

Carrying their Second Backpack: Teachers and Trauma

Teachers shared varying personal experiences, but the common thread was that they felt significant work-life balance difficulties and burnout. Compassion fatigue emerged as a secondary feeling and experience in the co-researchers, which was commonly attributed to the difference between virtual learning and in-person learning. Teachers revealed several secret stories, and it was evident that compassion fatigue was a phenomenon that was previously experienced but simply less prevalent this year.

Lightening the Load: Strategies and Supports

In examining ways that teachers addressed their compassion fatigue and burnout, the co-researchers had very similar ideas as to what would benefit them the most. As discussed in the first research question, relationship building was an essential support that was frequently mentioned. Not only were relationships with students noted as significant, but also relationships with parents, other teachers, and administrators. Most of the participants felt supported by their current administration, but it was made clear that a lack of administrative support had harmful effects. Stories were also shared about the utilization of trained support staff including the counselor and social workers at the school.

The implementation of systemic support also emerged as a support for teachers, such as implementation of co-teaching, which was generally well received by teachers. Some participants shared previous negative co-teaching experiences, but overall they felt that having a person to bounce ideas off of, to be present when something comes up and to share expertise with, was a benefit to students and teachers as well.

Finally, teachers shared stories of their protective factors, which included support systems at both home and school, as well as access to mental health counseling. Teacher protective factors came up in the interviews as both a factor in the overall experience of the co-researchers, and also in the way they access support when feeling symptoms of burnout or compassion fatigue. Some of the co-researchers freely shared that they attend therapy, and that they find it beneficial. Others shared that they would like to attend therapy, but found there to be too many barriers including time, cost, and stigma. Teachers also discussed the role that their families and support systems play in ameliorating their symptoms of compassion fatigue and burnout.

Discrepant Findings

The research questions provided a road map for the study, but there were certainly some unexpected turns and exits from the expected course. As previously discussed, the timing of the study during the COVID-19 pandemic led many of the study elements to change, but in hindsight, I am thankful for the opportunity to study the lives of teachers during such a unique and historic time in the profession. Given that there were some differences in the overall context of the study, there were some discrepant findings that emerged as additional findings that did not necessarily answer the research question, but are important considerations nonetheless.

Less Compassion Fatigue, More Burnout. Entering into this study, I was prepared to explore the concept of compassion fatigue as the teachers experienced the trauma of their students. In fact, the conversations focused less on compassion fatigue and more on burnout. As highlighted in Chapter 2, burnout and exhaustion are different from compassion fatigue in that burnout is related more specifically to the amount of work, the difficulty of the work, or the lack of alignment with one's work and their values (Maslach et al., 2001). When working with students who are at an increased level of need due to trauma, teachers may find themselves becoming more exhausted and detached from the work. Klusman et al. (2016) iterated that increased level of emotional and/or physical exhaustion in teachers can lead to decreased output and generally less desired teacher behaviors. Additionally, the authors found that increased teacher exhaustion can also negatively impact student achievement based on a review of achievement data in comparison to participants' self-rating on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Klusman et al., 2016; Maslach et al., 2001). Arens and Morin (2016) further studied this link and also found that the students of teachers who reported higher levels of exhaustion scored lower on standardized achievement tests. Meredith et al. (2020) further asserted that this can lead to "burnout contagion." because negative feelings and energies can transfer to other teachers, resulting in a ripple effect of negativity and possibly a wave of lower achievement, decreased student-teacher relationships, and challenges with teacher retention.

Unfortunately, the blurred line between school and home was made even blurrier during the COVID-19 pandemic as many teachers, those in this study included, found themselves working from home. The need to seem accessible and accommodating left many schoolteachers and administrators to work well past their contracted time and go far above

and beyond their job descriptions (Laskowski, 2020). The co-researchers in the study reported higher levels of burnout this school year than in previous school years and lower levels of compassion fatigue. This was generally explained by the change in the educational delivery system from in-person to virtual. Teachers felt less of a work-life balance, leading to exhaustion and burnout; conversely, most felt less connected to their students, resulting in fewer overall experiences with secondary trauma of compassion fatigue.

The Significance of COVID-19 and Virtual Learning. Virtual learning did not begin on my radar as a question or topic of conversation. However, it was evident that the teachers were seeking to be heard. The context of virtual teaching and learning was a common thread throughout the study, in both the students' and teachers' experiences, as a form of trauma and as a barrier. The year was challenging for the co-researchers, and I could identify with their struggle. I encouraged them to draw upon previous experiences, but it seemed to continue to return to the current year, so much so that the interpretive code of virtual learning was discussed by each co-researcher multiple times.

Trauma Professional Development. While understanding the ways that a teacher's trauma background plays a role in their daily experiences in the classroom, *trauma professional development* also emerged as an interpretive theme and an essential component to the overall theme of experiences and factors contributing to the stories of the co-researchers. The frequency with which the Trauma Smart program was mentioned was notable, though this particular experience of teachers did not specifically answer either of the overarching research questions. It was important to gain understanding regarding the co-researchers' experiences with learning about trauma-informed practices, as I assumed that their experiences would be impacted by the amount of existing knowledge they have

pertaining to working with trauma-affected students. The relationship between trauma-informed practices and professional development has been well documented. Han and Weis (2005) asserted that providing teachers with structured opportunities to develop their understanding of trauma increases the motivation and enthusiasm of teachers to implement trauma-informed practices. Brown et al. (2020) discussed the need for students at the university level to participate in trauma-informed training during their practicum experiences in order to increase their confidence and efficacy in working with students who are trauma-affected. Kim et al. (2021) found that teachers who were engaged in trauma professional development that they perceived to be effective, reported lower instances of exhaustion, burnout, and stress; moreover, the teachers reported overall higher levels of self-efficacy when asked to assess their abilities and skills pertaining to trauma-informed care. Brown et al. (2020) emphasized that teacher preparation for implementation of trauma-informed practices should include foundational knowledge, practical applications, and experiential elements to crystallize learning. Additional training should be provided using ITM (in-the-moment) methods, in which teachers work with trainers when specific instances occur within the classroom or building, to learn from experiences (McIntyre et al., 2019). Additionally, trauma professional development should engage stakeholders in order to ensure that programs are relevant to the specific needs of the students and community (Blitz & Mulcahy, 2017; Loomis, 2018; Nastasi et al., 2000; Oropallo et al., 2021). Finally, Kisa and Correnti (2016) discussed the need for implementation fidelity in all professional development initiatives in order for any positive change to occur; this is true for trauma-informed training as well as all other types of professional development.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the study. I shared the themes that emerged from the data, as well as the interpretive codes that further elucidated each theme. The findings were blended with stories from the co-researchers, as well as additional research, to provide a comprehensive view of the overall co-researchers' lived experience pertaining to each of the themes. In the next and final chapter, I discuss the implications of the findings and the need for additional research and provide my recommendations for school leadership. Finally, I reflect on my final thoughts as I conclude the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study was based on my previous experiences as a teacher and counselor and sought to explore the way that teachers experienced working with trauma-affected students; in other words, what it was like to shoulder some of their burden, or to carry their second backpack. Due to my own history with this topic, as well as my desire to uncover the secret, sacred, and cover stories of my participants, I conducted a heuristic narrative study to learn more about the lived experiences of teachers working with trauma-affected students. The study consisted of two interviews, an observation, journals, and a document review, which aided me in answering the research questions. The intended audience for this study includes teachers, administrators at the building and district level, counselors and social workers, and community mental health partners.

In Chapter 1, a general overview of the study was provided which outlined the main parts of the study. A rationale for qualitative inquiry was provided, as was information and insight as to the selection of heuristic and narrative inquiry. Chapter 2 provided a literature review of the strands of trauma theory, compassion fatigue, whole child education, and servant leadership. The literature review established a theoretical framework, a solid foundation on which to build new knowledge gained from the study. Chapter 3 provided detailed information regarding the participants and site, as well as the data collection and analysis process, rooted in the theoretical tradition of heuristic narrative inquiry. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study in the form of thematic interpretation and participant stories which were embedded within the explanation of themes. In this chapter, I discuss the

implications of the findings, provide recommendations for leadership including a new model for support, and examine my final thoughts after completion of the study.

Implications of Findings

The findings of the study have significant implications to the field of education and to increase the overall understanding of the teacher experience. In the following sections, I examine the implications for each of the overarching themes identified in the study.

Experiences and Factors—What's In the Backpack?

During the interviews, it became clear that the previous life events and factors of both students and teachers played a compelling role in the way that teachers experienced work and life inside and outside of the classroom. Teacher experiences that were most frequently discussed in the interviews included teacher trauma background, teacher trauma professional development experiences, and experiences with virtual learning.

Teacher trauma was found to be less of a burden and more of a means of connecting with students. Of the teachers who reported higher ACE scores, Phillip, Stacy, and Haley all acknowledged that it helped them to feel more empathy when students were struggling. Alice, who had minimal ACE scores, felt that it almost prevented her from fully understanding her kids. The implication of this finding is that teachers should be coached to identify their traumatic experiences that may make them more likely to connect and empathize with their students and to work to establish a culture of acceptance and normalization of trauma instead of shame and burden.

Teachers also spoke about a school-wide professional development initiative called Trauma Smart. Generally, they felt that this was a beneficial program, and each co-researcher reported a unique learning that they gleaned from the training. Stacy and Phillip

appreciated the language that the training provided, and Haley wished that it went a little deeper. Christine expressed concern that it may not last in future years, but that it would be a major need. The general feeling seemed to be that professional development was helpful, but that in order for it to really be effective, there was a need for ongoing embedded trauma professional development.

Finally, it was no surprise that even though it was not originally part of my interview questions, the experience of virtual learning came up frequently as part of the teacher experience that contributed to their burnout and compassion fatigue. Teachers reported that it was difficult to find a work-life balance with virtual learning. Several of the co-researchers discussed the challenges with developing student relationships and difficulties getting them engaged. Marie expressed that it made her feel like a first year teacher again and that relearning teaching strategies was a challenge she was not expecting. It is important to understand that this transition will likely present additional challenges for teachers in the upcoming school years, as having to change back to in-person learning might require an adjustment period as well.

Student experiences and factors were also part of this overall theme. Teachers shared various types of student traumatic experience stories and how those made them feel. Overall, students experienced traumas that were categorized into family changes, food insecurity, and traumatic grief; however, some stories of abuse and violence were also shared. Co-researchers identified that most disclosures of student trauma were from the parents or another adult, but more often, traumatic experiences were assumed or perceived because parents were hesitant to discuss personal issues with school staff.

Student Outcomes—This Second Backpack is Heavy!

This theme uncovered the ways that traumatic experiences were made visible in the classroom. Co-researchers shared stories about behavior challenges like disruption or withdrawal. Two of the co-researchers shared stories of behaviors that were so significant that it caused them to withdraw themselves, and they noticed a reduction in empathy towards the student. Less frequently, teachers discussed the implications on student achievement as a student outcome, but this did not seem to be the focus of the co-researchers.

Teacher Outcomes—Carrying their Second Backpack

This theme provided what I consider to be the heart of the study. The overall theme of what the teachers experienced as a result of working with students who are trauma-affected included their experiences with heightened emotional responses, burnout, compassion fatigue, and work-life balance. Each co-researcher shared that they felt like they were experiencing burnout, or an overwhelm at the workload. Christine shared that she works for two hours outside of the school day, and Phillip shared that he felt like the work was never actually done, and that he was never really caught up. This was generally attributed to the challenges of virtual learning. This also led to increased challenges with work-life balance, due to the fact that there was no physical separation between work and home for the teachers. Arielle shared that she has lost sleep recently over a student who was going through trauma, and Addy acknowledged that she worries about her students all the time. Educators should be coached on developing healthy boundaries with work, to mitigate the effects of burnout.

Two of the co-researchers shared that they experienced heightened emotions as a result of student traumatic experiences, usually tears as a release of emotions such as sadness, anger, and frustration. They told stories of previous schools where they felt unsupported by their administration and went from overwhelming emotion to essentially withdrawing and feeling numb. Two other researchers, Alice and Marie, shared that there had been times that the work was so hard that they did not think they would stay in education. This has implications for teacher retention, and it is important that school leaders take this into consideration so that they can help to increase retention, especially in schools where instances of trauma may be higher.

Strategies and Supports—Lightening the Load

Finally, co-researchers shared the things that they believed to support their work with students who are trauma-affected. One of the most frequently mentioned strategies to help with student trauma and its reach is to develop trusting relationships with students and parents. Alice and Marie expressed that they had experienced some barriers to developing parent trust, and they attributed this to sociocultural and racial differences between them and the parents. Phillip shared that he finds parent relationships easy to establish, and others identified that communication barriers prevented these relationships from flourishing.

Relationships with students were equally as important as a strategy. This was made evident in the interviews as well as the observations. During the interviews, all co-researchers shared stories of times when they were able to build a relationship with a student, or when they felt that an existing relationship made a difference for a student. Relationships should be made a priority, but teachers should also be given education as to how to develop and grow these relationships. In the observations, it was clear that teachers

had been trained to provide students with opportunities for choice, empowerment, leadership, and autonomy. It was evident that the co-researchers had worked to establish a positive and trauma-informed classroom, even through the virtual platform.

The interpretive code of administrator support was significant as well. Teachers reported generally feeling supported by their present administrator, with the exception of Alice, who felt that sometimes they did not provide her with the help that she needed. However, in stories from previous years or schools, many other co-researchers shared situations where they felt unsupported and this changed the way they experienced working with students who were trauma-affected. Ultimately, teachers want to feel supported, with a level of autonomy that balances that support. Additional recommendations for leaders are shared in a following section.

Another support that emerged as prominent was the access of support staff, and knowing what support staff do and how to access them. Teachers in general should know who to reach out to and what assistance they can provide. Not every school has a counselor, and those that do are not always fully utilizing them. Two of the co-researchers shared stories in which their counselor was a significant support to them when working through a student crisis. Having access to support staff makes a difference in the overall mental wellness and attrition of teachers.

The interviews also brought to the surface the systemic support of use of a co-teaching model. Most teachers had positive feelings about co-teaching, although Alice and Addy did not. The general thinking of the co-researchers was that it was helpful to have another teacher to help with academic and behavioral needs of the students. As Alice said, "It's like having a built-in wingman."

Finally, identifying protective factors including support systems, mental health access, and other factors emerged as an important support for teachers. Most teachers identified a healthy support system, both inside and outside of the school building. Christine shared that her team was her best support, and Marie talked about going to her family to talk because they were teachers too, so they understood her stories. Access to mental health supports was another area of conversation. Three of the co-researchers shared their experiences with mental health counseling, and all found it to be beneficial. Those who were not seeking mental health counseling identified barriers such as cost and time, as well as stigma. This is an important consideration for school leaders, as well as community mental health workers, in that it could be helpful to provide counseling to teachers within the school day and at free or reduced cost for them.

Recommendations for Leadership

Through the lens of my co-researchers' stories, I created the BREATHE model for leaders in order to provide my recommendations as to how they can help lighten the load for teachers. The BREATHE model is an acronym, and each letter stands for an actionable way that leaders can engage their teachers and ensure that they are feeling supported as they carry their students' second backpacks. B stands for *be present*, R stands for *recognize*, E stands for *empathize*, A stands for *ask*, T stands for *teach*, H stands for *help*, and E stands for *engage*. A table with the BREATHE model acronym, as well as more examples of each action item, are provided below.

Be Present

Administrators should seek to be present—physically, by being in the hallways, in classrooms, and in common locations, and be accessible whenever possible. Administrators

should also be emotionally present for teachers, by listening, seeking to understand, and using each conflict as an opportunity to problem solve. Administrators need to examine their approachability and take time to reflect on their relationships with teachers.

Recognize

To effectively respond to teacher stress, burnout, and trauma, it is important for administrators to be able to recognize the symptoms that may occur in teachers. Some symptoms include desensitization, increased emotional response, withdrawal, irritability, and turnover (Maslach et al., 2001). If administrators can identify when teachers are beginning to experience overwhelm, they may be able to intervene more quickly to provide support and interventions, increasing teacher mental wellness and attrition and ultimately promoting student success.

Empathize

Administrators were most likely teachers once too, and have experienced their share of challenges related to teaching. It is recommended that administrators be intentional in their efforts to empathize with teachers who are struggling. One example that emerged in the interviews is that teachers often feel guilt when taking days off for mental health. Administrators should seek to normalize time off, despite it being challenging logistically. Teachers deserve the autonomy of making decisions as to when they need to take a step away from teaching, and should be able to do so without judgment or punitive actions.

Ask

Many times at work, I have been on the verge of a breakdown and have swallowed down my emotions in order to put on a brave face and continue the work. In those moments, if someone were to ask me if I was okay, I know I would not have to be brave anymore, and

would be relieved to have someone to share my emotions with. It is not unusual for an administrator to get caught up in the many tasks of a day, but an administrator who is supporting teachers who may be experiencing compassion fatigue or burnout needs to be intentional about asking teachers how they are doing and really caring about the answer. Some other questions that administrators could ask include *What is something I can take off your plate? What would make your day easier or better? What's something you've been wanting to ask me? Have I told you lately that you're doing a great job?* The impact of just asking is enough to make someone feel supported.

Teach

Administrators are not expected to be mental health professionals, but they are responsible for making sure that teachers get information they need in order to do their job well. Professional development curricula should include embedded trauma support with two focuses: 1) supporting students who are trauma-affected and applying strategies for teaching and learning, and 2) supporting teachers who are affected, providing psychoeducation about compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary trauma as well as strategies for support. Teachers should be encouraged to explore their own traumas and recalibrate their view of trauma from barrier to asset.

Help

When an administrator is aware that teachers are struggling, they must turn their attention to the task of providing support. If a trusting relationship has been established, teachers will be comfortable asking for specific help when they need it. If possible, in-house mental health interventions should be provided, including mental health counseling support onsite and free of charge.

Engage

Another way that administrators can support teachers who are experiencing compassion fatigue and burnout is to engage in the support of stakeholders and community. Principals can work with parent groups and PTOs to come up with ways to show appreciation. Local businesses can provide meals or services in an effort to boost morale. Community mental health organizations or agencies can provide support or interventions as appropriate. Not only will this benefit teachers, but it will increase connections among stakeholders, which is an indicator of student success and achievement as well.

Table 9

BREATHE: A Model for Administrative Support of Teachers Experiencing Burnout or Compassion Fatigue

Letter	Meaning
B	Be present
R	Recognize
E	Empathize
A	Ask
T	Teach
H	Help
E	Engage

Recommendations for Future Research

This study adds to the growing body of research that addresses the phenomenon of compassion fatigue and burnout in teachers who work with trauma-affected students. Like many other studies, this study not only answered the research questions, but illuminated several areas of additional research needed in order to understand additional questions that were uncovered through the stories of the co-researchers. Based on the findings, I recommend further research of the following:

- Researching the connection between teacher trauma and their ability to connect and relate to their students would be a valuable way to support the experiences and perceptions of the co-researchers in this study. In future studies, participants should be asked to elaborate on their own traumatic experiences more than they were in this study, in order to make more specific connections.
- This study would be interesting to replicate next school year (2021–2022), when virtual learning platforms are no longer being used and teachers are trying to transition their students back to the physical classroom. The co-researchers all seemed to feel that their overall teaching experience during the school year in which this study was conducted was unlike any other year they had experienced. Therefore, this study may be anomalistic in that the teachers may have very different responses to the interview questions in future years.
- When researching the model of co-teaching, I struggled to find research that supported the claims that it was beneficial to students who were not in special education and who were trauma-affected. A quantitative or mixed-methods study

on the effect of co-teaching on student achievement would be helpful to grow the understanding of the benefit of this support.

- A study on the connection between parent trust in teachers and the racial and sociocultural background of their teachers would benefit this body of research as well.
- Conducting a study with students over 18 who have experienced traumatic events and asking them to tell their stories about their experiences as to how their trauma changed or did not change their school experience, would contribute to the body of research by providing a voice to the student experience.
- As students return to in-person learning, a study salient to understanding the overall pandemic learning experience would be to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents, specifically with regard to the intimacy of teachers being able to witness what the students' home environments are like.
- Additional studies highlighting research-based interventions that building level administrators can implement in order to help teachers who work with trauma-affected students, would allow leaders to increase their knowledge of how to appropriately assist their teachers.

Final Reflections

In my six years of working as a school counselor, I felt strongly that I understood what trauma looks like in students. I considered myself adept at recognizing and responding to traumatic dysregulation, understood and explained the concepts of neuroplasticity and the brain science behind trauma response, and stayed up to date on research as best as I could in order to provide the best possible support to both students and teachers in my role as

counselor. I entered into this study both excited to be able to share the stories of my unknown colleagues, and to enhance my existing knowledge of the basics of trauma-informed care and compassion fatigue. I was not expecting the revelations that I would have during this research. The use of journaling felt like the participants were holding up a mirror, requiring me to reflect on my own experiences as well. If learning from the participants was the heart of this study, learning about myself was the soul.

One of the most significant takeaways for me, after being immersed in this research, is that it is an essential practice to normalize trauma as a part of the human experience. As an American culture, it seems that the perception is that trauma means that something went wrong and must be corrected or changed. In reality, trauma is something that could happen to any person at any time and becomes a part of that person forever, no matter how much they heal or grow. Certainly, some individuals or groups are more likely to experience trauma due to factors such as systemic racism, economic disparities, and proximity to crime and violence. However, it must become canon that trauma is a universal phenomenon that could change the course of a person's life at any moment. Societally, we must ameliorate the shame response that typically comes with trauma so that we can acknowledge our shared experiences in order to help each other heal. Before entering into this study, I felt sure that teachers' own backpacks were already heavy enough, and that adding to them by taking on student trauma would cause them to buckle under the pressure. Instead, teachers just seemed to feel that it made their connection to their students stronger: "Hey, I have an invisible backpack too!"

Another significant takeaway after conducting this study is that we need to prioritize teacher mental health. It is imperative that schools utilize resources to do so. Of course, we

want to focus on students—we want to ensure that students are getting what they need. However, it is important to make sure that the teachers are getting what they need as well. School leadership must begin to look for ways to incorporate teacher mental wellness into their buildings, and not just by giving teachers jeans day coupons or bringing donuts, but by structurally providing teachers with the things they need to support their students, including human and financial resources, as well as mental health interventions.

Many years ago, the weight of David's backpack was unfortunately too heavy for me to carry. Both of us trudged through that school year, heads barely above water, and I never heard from him again after the year was over. I wonder what he is doing these days, what his successes and challenges have been, and what he remembers of his time in my class. I owe David a debt of gratitude, as he ignited a passion in me that has propelled me through my career and motivated me to grow myself as an educator to better serve my students. I don't know if he will ever know the impact he had on me, but if I ever get a chance, I would love to thank him for opening my eyes to his reality and the reality of so many children. David's legacy lives on through this study, through the review of literature, the stories of the co-researchers, and the study findings. He also lives on in my heart as I continue on my path towards understanding trauma-affected students and outcomes for teachers.

APPENDIX A

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your educational background?
2. Based on what you already know about your students, what do you know about the types of trauma that your students have experienced?
3. What anecdotal stories have you been told that are significant in terms of trauma your students have faced?
4. During your teaching experience, what other barriers may have been present that you feel may have prevented students from learning?
5. What are some of the biggest challenges that you have faced as a teacher throughout your career?
6. In your opinion, what is the significance of establishing relationships with students?
7. What stories do you have about relationship building with students in your experience as a teacher?
8. Describe your level of burnout (a feeling of job overwhelm or exhaustion) or compassion fatigue (feeling an exhaustion from empathizing with those you serve), if any.
9. What factors do you feel may contribute to your burnout or compassion fatigue, if any?
10. What strategies, if any, do you utilize to manage your symptoms of stress, burnout, or compassion fatigue?

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What can you share with me about your experience with co-teaching and other programming that you think may be helpful, or not helpful, to the work that you do with students?
2. What can you share with me about your experience with Trauma Smart, or can you elaborate on your previous comments pertaining to it?
3. How would you describe your mental wellness pertaining to work (burnout or compassion fatigue) at this point in the year? How does it compare to the last time we spoke?

Discussion Items:

- Transcript review from first interview
- Observation
- Probe to glean more detail and answer questions from first interview

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Date: Time: Length of Activity: Site:	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes (Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretations)
Activities	
Setting Description	

Teacher comments: Expressed in quotes	
Nonverbal communications	
Other relevant observations	
Unplanned events	

APPENDIX D

LIST OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. Data gathered from this survey will help the researcher to select participants that represent diversity in experience and demographic background.

Optional Demographic Information

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Position:

Level of Education:

Number of Years in Education:

Preliminary Study Questions

1. In your opinion, or based on what you know about your students, what types of trauma do you feel your students may have experienced? Circle all that apply.

Traumatic Grief (Grief that is severe, prolonged, and interferes with the person's functioning)
Crisis Trauma (Trauma related to an event where there is a threat to life, limb, safety, or sanity)
Abuse and/or Neglect (Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; a caretaker failing to meet the basic human needs of the child)
Poverty/Homelessness (repeated moving, loss of shelter or basic human needs)
Racial Trauma (Experiencing discrimination or oppression due to race)
Intergenerational Trauma (Trauma from a previous generation having effects on generations)
Unsure
None of these

2. Use this space to elaborate on your response to question 1, if you wish.

3. What is your perception of the impact that trauma has on the students in your classroom? Circle any that apply.

Difficulty forming relationships
Emotional dysregulation (outbursts of anger or sadness)
Defiance or disrespect
Difficulty focusing
Withdrawal/numbness
Academic difficulties
None of these
Other

4. Use this space to elaborate on your response to question 3, if you wish.

5. What emotions or feelings do you experience as a result of helping students who may have experienced trauma?

6. Use this space to elaborate on your response to question 5, if you wish.

7. Training/when and how/confirmation of traumatic event/need to know

REFERENCES

Abdul, E.-A. (2013, January 1). *Assessing the state of servant leadership, teacher morale, and student academic performance outcomes in a Florida elementary school district* [Doctoral dissertation, Grand Canyon University]. ProQuest.

Abraham-Cook, S. (2014). The prevalence and correlates of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and burnout among teachers working in high-poverty urban public schools. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* , *75*(2), 77–79.

Adama, E., Sundin, D., & Bayes, S. (2016). Exploring the sociocultural aspect of narrative inquiry: A dynamic research methodology. *Clinical Nursing Studies*, *4*(1), 1–8.

Alexander, J., & Hinrichs, C. (2019). *Building trauma-sensitive schools : Your guide to creating safe, supportive learning environments for all students.* Brookes Publishing.

Alkema, K., Linton, J. M., & Davies, R. (2008). A study of the relationship between self-care, compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout among hospice professionals. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care, 4*, 101–119.

Aloe, A. M., Amo, L. C., & Shanahan, M. E. (2014).Classroom management self-efficacy and burnout: A multivariate meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review, 26,* 101–126.

American Counseling Association. (2011). *Fact sheet #9: Vicarious trauma.* https://www.counseling.org/docs/trauma-disaster/fact-sheet-9---vicarious-trauma.pdf

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.).

American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents. (2009). *Children and trauma*.

American School Counselor Association. (2019). *ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs.*

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.

Anderson, K. R. (2006). *An exploration of the barriers which impede the effective implementation of servant leadership in Latin American evangelical organizations: A grounded theory study* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Barry University, Miami, FL.

Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research, 10,* 378–395.

Angrosino, M. V. (2005). Recontextualizing observation: Ethnography, pedagogy, and the prospects for a progressive political agenda. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 729–745). Sage Publications.

Arditti, J., & Savla, J. (2015). Parental incarceration and child trauma symptoms in single caregiver homes. *Journal of Child & Family Studies, 24*(3), 551–561. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1007/s10826-013-9867-2

Arens, A. K., & Morin, A. J. S. (2016). Relations between teachers' emotional exhaustion and students' educational outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 108*(6), 800–813. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1037/edu0000105

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2012). *Making the case for educating the whole child.* http://www.wholechildeducation.org/assets/content/mx-resources/WholeChild-MakingTheCase.pdf

Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education, 42*(3), 250–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907300433

Aurino, E., Fledderjohan, J., & Vellakkall, A. (2019). Food insecurity may negatively affect learning. *ASHA Leader, 24*(6), 21.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control.* Prentice-Hall.

Banerjee, D., & Rai, M. (2020). Social isolation in COVID-19: The impact of loneliness. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 66*(6), 525–527.

Barch, D., Pagliaccio, D., Belden, A., Harms, M. P., Gaffrey, M., Sylvester, C. M., Tillman, R., & Luby, J. (2016). Effect of hippocampal and amygdala connectivity on the relationship between preschool poverty and school-age depression. *The American Journal of Psychiatry, 173*(6), 625–634.

Barr, D. A. (2018). When trauma hinders learning. *Phi Delta Kappan, 99*(6), 39–44.

Bellis, M. A., Lowey, H., Leckenby, N., Hughes, K., & Harrison, D. (2014). Adverse childhood experiences: Retrospective study to determine their impact on adult health behaviours and health outcomes in a UK population. *Journal of Public Health, 36*(1), 81–91. https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdt038

Benner, G. J., & Garcia, J. J. (2019). Comprehensive trauma-informed care for the whole community: The whole child initiative model. *Educational Considerations, 44*(2), 1–12. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.4148/0146-9282.2179

Bennett, B. J. (2017). *Growth infusion: Embedding staff development in a culture of learning* [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Florida]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Benson, B. E. (2003). Life's little lessons: Teachers' stories of life experiences on practice. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 38*(1), 29–35.

Benson, J. (2017). When teacher self-care is not enough. *Educational Leadership, 75*(4), 38. http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ulh&AN=128250332&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 15*(2), 219–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Berry, A., & Forgasz, R. (2018). Disseminating secret-story-knowledge through the self-study of teacher education practices. *Studying Teacher Education, 14*(3), 235–245.

Betz, N. C. (2012, January 1). *Tides of school reform: A case for servant leadership* [Doctoral dissertation, College of Saint Elizabeth]. ProQuest.

Black, G. L. (2010). Correlational analysis of servant leadership and school climate. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice, 13*(4), 437–466.

Blaustein, M. E. (2013). Childhood trauma and a framework for intervention. In E. Rossen & R. Hull (Eds.), *Supporting and educating traumatized students: A guide for school-based professionals* (pp. 3–22). Oxford University Press.

Blitz, L., & Mulcahy, C. (2017). From permission to partnership: Participatory research to engage school personnel in systems change. *Preventing School Failure, 61*(2), 170–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2016 .1242061

Blodgett, C. (2013). *A review of community efforts to mitigate and prevent adverse childhood experiences and trauma. ACEs Public Private Initiative.* https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Prevent-ACEs-Blodgett.pdf

Blodgett, C., & Lanigan, J. D. (2018). The association between adverse childhood experience (ACE) and school success in elementary school children. *School Psychology Quarterly, 33*(1), 137–146.

Bochner, A. P. (2001). Narrative's virtues. *Qualitative Inquiry, 7*(2), 131–157.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Allyn and Bacon.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

Bonner, P. J., Warren, S. R., & Jiang, Y. H. (2018). Voices from urban classrooms: Teachers' perceptions on instructing diverse students and using culturally responsive teaching. *Education and Urban Society, 50*(8), 697–726.

Bostic, T. B. (2014). Teacher empathy and its relationship to the standardized test scores of diverse secondary English students. *Journal of Research in Education, 24*(1), 3–16.

Bouza, J., Camacho-Thompson, D. E., Carlo, G., Franco, X., Garcia Coll, C., Halgunseth, L. C., Marks, A., Livas Stein, G., Suárez-Orozco, C., & White, R. M. B. (2018, June 20). *The science is clear: Separating families has long-term damaging psychological and health consequences for children, families, and communities.* Society for Research in Child Development. https://www.srcd.org/policy-media/statements-evidence/separating-families

Brandell, J. R., & Ringel, S. (2012). *Trauma: Contemporary directions in theory, practice, and research*. Sage Publications.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.

Brave Heart, M. Y. H., & DeBruyn, L. M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research, 2,* 56–78.

Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R. (2003). Self efficacy beliefs and teacher effectiveness: Implications for professional development. *The Professional Educator, 26,* 13–22.

Bride, B. (2007). Prevalence of secondary traumatic stress among social workers. *Social Work, 52,* 63–70.

Brinkman, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.) Sage Publications.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development : Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Brown, E. C., Freedle, A., Hurless, N. L., Miller, R. D., Martin, C., & Paul, Z. A. (2020). Preparing teacher candidates for trauma-informed practices. *Urban Education, 1.* https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/0042085920974084

Brown, E. J., Amaya-Jackson, L., Cohen, J., Handel, S., Thiel de Bocanegra, H., Zatta, E., Mannarino, A. (2008). Childhood traumatic grief: A multi-site empirical examination of the construct and its correlates. *Death Studies, 32,* 899–923.

Brunette, A. (2004). *Self-care for teachers.* https://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/CEAP-HS-BK_Self-CareForTeachers.pdf

Bryant, D. J., Oo, M., & Damian, A. J. (2020). The rise of adverse childhood experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 12*(S1), S193–S194. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000711

Bryant-Davis, T., & Ocampo, C. (2006). A therapeutic approach to the treatment of racist-incident-based trauma. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 6*(4), 1–22.

Burke, N. J., Hellman, J. L., Scott, B. G., Weems, C. F., & Carrion, V. G. (2011). The impact of adverse childhood experiences on an urban pediatric population. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 35*(6), 408–413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.02.00

Burley, M. (2010). *High school graduation and dropout trends for Washington state foster youth (2005–2009).* No. 10-10- 3901. Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

Cambria, N. (2016, February 19). The crisis within: How toxic stress and trauma endanger children. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, pp. A4.

Cammarota, J., & Romero, A. (2006). A critically compassionate pedagogy for Latino youth. *Latin Studies, 4,* 305–312 https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600201

Canfield, J. P. (2014). Examining perceived barriers and facilitators to school social work practice with homeless children. *Children & Schools, 36,* 165–173.

Carter, K. K. (2017). Sad, not bad: Trauma informed care gets students the help they need. *American School Board Journal*, *204*(3), 52–53.

Carter, R. T. (2007). Racism and psychological and emotional injury: Recognizing and assessing race-based traumatic stress. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(1), 13–105.

Carter, R. T., & Forsyth, J. M. (2009). A guide to the forensic assessment of race-based traumatic stress reactions. *Journal of American Academics Psychiatry Law 37*(4), 28–40.

Carty, A., & Marie Farrell, A. (2018). Co-teaching in a mainstream post-primary mathematics classroom: An evaluation of models of co-teaching from the perspective of the teachers. *Support for Learning, 33*(2), 101–121. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1111/1467-9604.12198

Casey, E. C., Shlafer, R. J., & Masten, A. S. (2015). Parental incarceration as a risk factor for children in homeless families. *Family Relations, 64,* 490–504.

Centeio, E. E., Somers, C. L., Moore, E. W. G., Garn, A., Kulik, N., Martin, J., Shen, B., & McCaughtry, N. (2020). Considering physical well-being, self-perceptions, and support variables in understanding youth academic achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 40*(1), 134–157.

Center for Servant Leadership. (2016). *The servant as leader*. https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/#

Centers for Disease Control. (2020). *Preventing child abuse and neglect.* https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html

Centers for Disease Control. (2021). *Marriage statistics.* https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm#:~:text=Number%20of%20divorces%3A%20746%2C971%20(45,45%20reporting%20States%20and%20D.C.)

Cherniss, C. (1980). *Professional burnout in the human service organizations*. Praeger.

Cho, J., & Trent, A. (2006). Validity in qualitative research revisited. *Qualitative Research, 6*(3), 319–340.

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry.* Left Coast Press.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1996). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Teachers' stories, stories of teachers, school stories, stories of schools. *Educational Researcher, 26*(3), 24–30.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, J. (2007). Narrative inquiry. In B. McGaw, E. Baker, & P. Peterson (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed.). Elsevier.

Clandinin, D. J., Murphy, M. S., Huber, J. & Orr, A. M. (2009). Negotiating narrative inquiries: Living in a tension-filled mist. *The Journal of Educational Research, 103*(2), 81–90.

Clement, M. C. (2017). Women, teaching, and stress: Five steps for coping. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 83*(4), 39–41.

Cohen, J. A., & Mannarino, A. P. (2004). Treatment of childhood traumatic grief. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 33*, 819–831. doi:10.1207/s15374424jccp3304_17

Cohen, J. A., Mannarino, A. P., & Deblinger, E. (2017). *Treating trauma and traumatic grief in children and adolescents* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Cole, R., Hayes, B., Jones, D., & Shah, S. (2013). Coping strategies used by school staff after a crisis: A research note. *Journal of Loss & Trauma, 18*(5), 472–481. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1080/15325024.2012.719335

Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M. P., Gregory, C. A., & Singh, A. (2017). *Statistical supplement to household food security in the United States in 2016 [Table S-3]*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84981/ap-077.pdf?v=42979.

Coles, T. (2017, October). Compassion fatigue and burnout: History, definitions, and assessment. *Veterinarians Money Digest, 1*(4).

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2013). *2013 CASEL Guide: Effective social and emotional learning programs—Preschool and elementary school edition.* https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2013-casel-guide-1.pdf

Collie, R. (2020). The development of social and emotional competence at school: An integrated model. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *44*(1), 76–87. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/0165025419851864

Collins, C. (2014). For kids, living in poverty is living in trauma, experts say. *KERA News.* https://www.keranews.org/2015-10-06/for-kids-living-in-poverty-is-living-with-chronic-trauma-experts-say

Conderman, G., Bresnahan, E., Teacher, S. E., & Pedersen, E. (2009). *Purposeful co-teaching : Real cases and effective strategies.* Corwin.

Connelly, F. M., Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *19*(5), 2–14.

Cook, A., Spinazzola, J., Ford, J., Lanktree, C., Blaustein, M., Cloitre, M., & van der Kolk, B. (2005). Complex trauma in children and adolescents. *Psychiatric Annals, 35,* 390.

Cornett, V. (2020). Mental and emotional well-being in the time of COVID-19. *Piano Magazine: Clavier Companion*, *12*, 49–54.

Cowan, K. C., & Rossen, E. (2013). Responding to the unthinkable: School crisis response and recovery. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *95*(4), 8–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171309500403

Craig, S. (2016). *Trauma-sensitive schools: Learning communities transforming children's lives, K-5.* Teachers College: Columbia University.

Crawford, A. (2013). "The trauma experienced by generations past having an effect in their descendants": Narrative and historical trauma among Inuit in Nunavut, Canada. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 51.* 10.1177/1363461512467161.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice, 39,* 124–130. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Crippen, C. (2005). Servant-leadership: Sustaining democratic schools. *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership, 2*(1), 319–333.

Crites, S. (1971). The narrative quality of experience. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 39*(3), 291–311.

Crosby, S. D., Day, A. G., Baroni, B. A., & Somers, C. L. (2015). School staff perspectives on the challenges and solutions to working with court-involved students. *Journal of School Health, 85*(6), 347–354. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1111/josh.12261

Cutuli, J. J., Desjardins, C. D., Herbers, J. E., Long, J. D., Heistad, D., Chan, C.-K., Hinz, E., & Masten, A. S. (2013). Academic achievement trajectories of homeless and highly mobile students: Resilience in the context of chronic and acute risk. *Child Development, 84,* 841–857. doi:10.1111/cdev.12013

Delale-O'Connor, L. A., Alvarez, A. J., Murray, I. A., & Milner IV, R. (2017). Self-efficacy beliefs, classroom management, and the cradle-to-prison pipeline. *Theory Into Practice, 56*(3), 178–186, https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1336038

Delaney, M. C. (2018). Caring for the caregivers: Evaluation of the effect of an eight-week pilot mindful self-compassion (MSC) training program on nurses' compassion fatigue and resilience. *PloS One, 13*(11), e0207261. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1371/journal.pone.0207261

Delpit, L. (2012). *Multiplication is for white people: Raising expectations for other people's children.* New Press.

DePaoli, J. L., Atwell, M. N., Bridgeland, J., Civic Enterprises, & Hart, P. D. (2017). *Ready to lead: A national principal survey on how social and emotional learning can prepare children and transform schools: A Report for CASEL*. Civic Enterprises.

de Ruiter, J. A., Poorthuis, A. M. G., Aldrup, K., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2020). Teachers' emotional experiences in response to daily events with individual students varying in perceived past disruptive behavior. *Journal of School Psychology, 82,* 85–102. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1016/j.jsp.2020.08.005

de Thierry, B. (2016). *The simple guide to child trauma : What it is and how to help*. Jessica Kinglsey Publishers.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Simon & Schuster.

DeWitt, P. (2019). How collective teacher efficacy develops: The path to developing empowered team dynamics can be just as important as the destination. *Educational Leadership, 76*(9), 31–35.

Djuraskovic, I., & Arthur, N. (2010). Heuristic inquiry: A personal journey of acculturation and identity reconstruction. *The Qualitative Report, 15.* https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2010.1361.

Dobrin, A. (2012). The effects of poverty on the brain. *Psychology Today.* https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/am-i-right/201210/the-effects-poverty-the-brain

Dooly, M., Moore, E., & Vallejo, C. (2017). *Research ethics*. Research-publishing.net.

Douglass, B. G., & Moustakas, C. (1985). *Heuristic inquiry. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 25*(3), 39. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/0022167885253004

Duke, N. N., Pettingell, S. L., McMorris, B. J., & Borowsky, I. W. (2010). Adolescent violence perpetration: Associations with multiple types of adverse childhood experiences. *Pediatrics, 125*(4), e778–786. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009- 0597

Duplechain, R., Reigner, R., & Packard, A. (2008). Striking differences: The impact of moderate and high trauma on reading achievement. *Reading Psychology*, *29*(2), 117–136. doi:10.1080/02702710801963645

Dutil, S. (2019). Adolescent traumatic and disenfranchised grief: Adapting an evidence-based intervention for Black and Latinx youths in schools. *Children & Schools, 41*(3), 179–187. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1093/cs/cdz009

Ehlers, C. L., Gizer, I. R., Gilder, D. A., Ellingson, J. M., & Yehuda, R. (2013). Measuring historical trauma in an American Indian community sample: Contributions of substance dependence, affective disorder, conduct disorder and PTSD. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 133*(1), 180–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2013.05.011

Eklund, K., Kilpatrick, K., Kilgus, S., & Haider, A. (2018). A systematic review of state-level social-emotional learning standards: Implications for practice and research. *School Psychology Review, 47,* 316–326. https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017.0116.V47-3

Elias, M. J., & Haynes, N. M. (2008). Social competence, social support, and academic achievement in minority, low-income, urban elementary school children. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *23*, 474–495. doi:10.1037/1045-3830.23.4.474

Ellingson, L. L. (2009). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research: An introduction*. Publications.

Elliott, K. W., Elliott, J. K., & Spears, S. G. (2018). Teaching on empty: As more students suffer from trauma, compassion fatigue is becoming a problem for teachers and administrators alike. *Principal, 98*(2), 28–29.

Engec, N. (2006). Relationship between mobility and student performance and behavior. *Journal of Educational Research, 99*(3), 167–178.

Esteban-Guitart, M., & Moll, L. C. (2014). Funds of Identity: A new concept based on the Funds of Knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology*, *20*(1), 31–48.

Evans, R. (2015). *Why a school doesn't run—or change—like a business.* National Association of Independent Schools. https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/fall-2015/why-a-school-doesn-t-run-or-change-like-a-busi/

Felitti, V., Anda, R., Nordenburg, D., Williamson, D., Spitz, A., Edwards, V., Koss, M., & Marks, J. (1998). Relationships of child abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14*(4), 245–258.

Fescer, M. E. (2015). Classroom strategies for traumatized, oppositional students. *Reclaiming Children & Youth, 24*(1), 20–24.

Figley, C. (1997). *Burnout in families: The systematic costs of caring.* CRC Press.

Figley, C. R., & Mathieu, F. (2012). *Encyclopedia of trauma: An interdisciplinary guide.* Sage Publications.

Forbes, H., & Post, B. (2006). *Beyond consequences, logic, and control: A love-based approach to helping attachment-challenged children with severe behaviors.* Beyond Consequences Institute Publishing.

Forster, M., Gower, A. L., McMorris, B. J., & Borowsky, I. W. (2020). Adverse childhood experiences and school-based victimization and perpetration. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 35*(3/4), 662–681.

Fowler, M. (2015). Dealing with compassion fatigue. *Education Digest, 81*(3), 30. http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/login.aspx?d

Fox, B. H., Perez, N., Cass, E., Baglivio, M. T., & Epps, N. (2015). Trauma changes everything: Examining the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and

serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 46*, 163–173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.01.011

Franklin A. J., Boyd-Franklin, N., & Kelly, S. (2006). Racism and invisibility: Race-related stress, emotional abuse, and psychological trauma for people of color. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, *6*(2), 9–30.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2007). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals.* Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Frieze, S. (2015). How trauma affects student learning and behaviour. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education, 7*(2), 27–34.

Gallagher, C. M. (2015). *Educating traumatized children: The teacher experience* [Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Gallagher, M. K. (2014). Teachers' duty to report child abuse and neglect and the paradox of noncompliance: Relational theory and "compliance" in the human services. *Law & Policy*, *36*(3), 256–289. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1111/lapo.12020r

Gardner, R., & Stephens-Pisecco, T. L. (2019). Empowering educators to foster student resilience. *Clearing House, 92*(4/5), 125–134.

Garrett, K. (2014). Childhood trauma and its effects on health and learning. *Education Digest*, *79*(6), 4.

Geertz, C. (1993). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Fontana Press.

Gentry, J. E., Baggerly, J., & Baranowsky, A. (2004). Training-as-treatment: Effectiveness of the certified compassion fatigue specialist training. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, *6*, 147–155.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence.* Bantam Books.

Gone, J. P. (2013). Redressing First Nations historical trauma: Theorizing mechanisms for Indigenous culture as mental health treatment. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, *50*(5), 683–706.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge*. Routledge.

Goodman, G. S., & Young, I. P. (2006). The value of extracurricular support in increased student achievement: An assessment of a pupil personnel model including school counselors and school psychologists concerning student achievement as measured by an academic performance index. *Educational Research Quarterly*, *30*(1), 3–13.

Grbich, C. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Greene, R. W. (2014). *Lost at school: Why our kids with behavioral challenges are falling through the cracks and how we can help them.* Simon and Schuster.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). *The servant as leader.* Center for Applied Studies.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and. greatness.* Paulist Press.

Griffith, D., & Slade, S. (2018). A whole child umbrella. *Educational Leadership*, *76*(2), 36–38.

Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). What great principals really do. *Educational Leadership, 78*(7), 21–25.

Gross, N., & Lo, C. (2018). Relational teaching and learning after loss: Evidence from Black adolescent male students and their teachers. *School Psychology Quarterly : The Official Journal of the Division of School Psychology, 33*(3), 381–389. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1037/spq0000285

Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of collaborative school cultures with student achievement. *NASSP Bulletin*, *89*(645), 43–55.

Guin, K. (2004). Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 12*(42).

Halevi, E., & Idisis, Y. (2018). Who helps the helper? Differentiation of self as an indicator for resisting vicarious traumatization. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 10*(6), 698–705. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000318

Hammond, H. (2018). Teacher empowerment and teacher perceptions of the principal's servant leadership. *Lutheran Education,* 23–33.

Han, S. S., & Weiss, B. (2005) Sustainability of teacher implementation of school-based mental health programs. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 6,* 665-679. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-005-7646-2. PMID: 16328743.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school.* Teachers College Press.

Hart, S. C., DiPerna, J. C., Lei, P.-W., & Cheng, W. (2020). Nothing lost, something gained? Impact of a universal social-emotional learning program on future state test performance. *Educational Researcher*, *49*(1), 5–19.

Hartman, S. D., Waseeleski, D. T., & Whatley, M. A. (2017). Just breathe: The effects of emotional dysregulation and test anxiety on GPE. *College Student Journal*, *51*(1), 142–150.

Havermans, N., Vanassche, S., & Matthijs, K. (2017). Children's post-divorce living arrangements and school engagement: Financial resources, parent-child relationship, selectivity and stress. *Journal of Child & Family Studies, 26*(12), 3425–3438. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1007/s10826-017-0843-0

Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. *Qualitative Market Research, 3*(3), 118–126.

Hearst, M. O., Jimbo-Llapa, F., Grannon, K., Wang, Q., Nanney, M. S., & Caspi, C. E. (2019). Breakfast is brain food? The effect on grade point average of a rural group randomized program to promote school breakfast. *Journal of School Health, 89*, 715–721.

Helms, J. E., Nicolas, G., & Green, C. E. (2012). Racism and ethnoviolence as trauma: Enhancing professional and research training. *Traumatology, 18*(1), 65–74.

Henderson, D. X., Walker, L., Barnes, R. R., Lunsford, A., Edwards, C., & Clark, C. (2019). A framework for race-related trauma in the public education system and implications on health for black youth. *Journal of School Health, 89*(11), 926–933. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1111/josh.12832

Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. Basic Books.

Hetrick, R. L., Rodrigo, O. D., & Bocchini, C. E. (2020). Addressing pandemic-intensified food insecurity. *Pediatrics, 146*(4), 1–4.

Himmelstein, D. (2020). Stress tested. *School Library Journal, 66*(2), 26.

Hines, E. N., Thompson, S. L., Moore, M. B., Dickson, A. B., & Callahan, K. L. (2020). Parent-child separation due to incarceration: Assessment, diagnosis, and treatment considerations. *Zero to Three, 40*(4), 22–29.

Holme, J. J., Jabbar, H., Germain, E., & Dinning, J. (2018). Rethinking teacher turnover: Longitudinal measures of instability in schools. *Educational Researcher, 47*(1), 62–75. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.3102/0013189X17735813

Hornby, G., & Blackwell, I. (2018). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An update. *Educational Review, 70*(1), 109–119.

Horvat, E. M., Weininger, E. B., & Lareau, A. (2003). From social ties to social capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(2), 319–351. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312040002319

Immordino-Yang, M. H., Darling-Hammond, L., & Krone, C. R. (2019). Nurturing nature: How brain development is inherently social and emotional, and what this means for education. *Educational Psychologist, 54*(3), 185–204.

Institute of Recovery from Childhood Trauma. (2015). *Our theoretical underpinnings*. www.irct.org.uk

Jackson, J. F. (2017). Program evaluation: The impact of an elementary afterschool program on educating the tenets of the whole child. *Education Dissertations and Projects, 253*(1).

Jeynes, W. H. (2003). A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 35*(2), 202–218. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124502239392

Johnson, S. B., Riley, A. W., Granger, D. A., & Riis, J. (2013). The science of early life toxic stress for pediatric practice and advocacy. *Pediatrics, 131*(2), 319.

Joinson, C. (1992). Coping with compassion fatigue. *Nursing, 22*(116), 118–120.

Joppe, M. (2000). *The research process*. https://www.uoguelph.ca/hftm/research-process

Kamrath, B., & Bradford, K. R. (2020). A case study of teacher turnover and retention in an urban elementary school. *Educational Considerations, 45*(3), 1–18. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.4148/0146-9282.2181

Kardiner, A. (1941). *The traumatic neuroses of war*. Hoeber.

Kennedy, D. (2018). The new school. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 52*(1), 105–125.

Kenny, G. (2012). An introduction to Moustakas's heuristic method. *Nurse Researcher, 19*(3), 6–11.

Kiker, D. S., Scully Callahan, J., & Kiker, M. B. (2019). Exploring the boundaries of servant leadership: A meta-analysis of the main and moderating effects of servant leadership on behavioral and affective outcomes. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 31*(2), 172–197.

Kim, S., Crooks, C. V., Bax, K., & Shokoohi, M. (2021). Impact of trauma-informed training and mindfulness-based social-emotional learning program on teacher attitudes and burnout: A mixed-methods study. *School Mental Health, 13*(1), 55–68.

Kimbro, R. T., & Denney, J. T. (2015). Transitions into food insecurity associated with behavioral problems and worse overall health among children. *Health Affairs, 34*(11), 1949–1955. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0626

Kisa, Z., & Correnti, R. (2015). Examining implementation fidelity in America's choice schools: A longitudinal analysis of changes in professional development associated with changes in teacher practice. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 37.* https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373714557519.

Klusmann, U., Richter, D., & Lüdtke, O. (2016). Teachers' emotional exhaustion is negatively related to students' achievement: Evidence from a large-scale assessment study. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 108*(8), 1193–1203.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Corwin.

Ko, S. J., Ford, J. D., Kassam-Adams, N., Berkowitz, S. J., Wilson, C., & Wong, M. (2008). Creating trauma-informed systems: Child welfare, education, first responders, health care, and juvenile justice. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *39*(4), 396–404.

Koffman, S., Ray, A., Berg, S., Covington, L., Albarran, N. M., & Vasquez, M. (2009). Impact of a comprehensive whole child intervention and prevention program among youths at risk of gang involvement and other forms of delinquency. *Children & Schools*, *31*(4), 239–245.

Koltko-Rivera, M. E. (2006). Rediscovering the later version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Self-transcendence and opportunities for theory, research, and unification. *Review of General Psychology*, *10*(4), 302–317.

Krachman, S. B., LaRocca, R., & Gabrieli, C. (2018). Accounting for the whole child. *Educational Leadership, 75*(5), 28–34.

Kress, V. E. (2010). Resolving child and adolescent traumatic grief: Creative techniques and interventions. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, *5*(2), 158–176.

Krystal, H. (Ed.). (1968). *Massive psychic trauma*. International Universities.

Krystal, H. (1978). Trauma and affects. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 33*(12), 81–116.

Krystal, H. (1988). *Integration and self healing: Affect, trauma and alexithymia*. Analytic Press.

Kukla, S. (2009). Leavers, movers, and stayers: The role of workplace conditions in teacher mobility decisions. *Journal of Educational Research, 102*(6), 9.

Lang, S. N., Jeon, L., Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., & Wells, M. B. (2020). Associations between parent–teacher cocaring relationships, parent–child relationships, and young children's social emotional development. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 49*(4), 623–646.

Laskowski, T. (2020). Chaunté Garrett: Tending to emotions, finding new ways to connect. *Educational Leadership, 77*(9), 11

Leary, J. D. (2005). *Post traumatic slave syndrome: America's legacy of enduring injury and healing.* Uptone Press.

Lee, C. S., Anderson, J. R., & Klimes, D. B. (2016). Potentially traumatic experiences, academic performance, and psychological distress: The role of shame. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 94*(1), 41–50. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1002/jcad.12060

Leenders, H., de Jong, J., Monfrance, M., & Haelermans, C. (2019). Building strong parent–teacher relationships in primary education: The challenge of two-way communication. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 49*(4), 519–533.

Levine, P. (2010). *In an unspoken voice, how the body releases trauma and restores goodness.* North Atlantic Books.

Lieberman, A. F., & Osofsky, J. D. (2009). Poverty, trauma, and infant mental health. *Zero to Three, 30*(2), 54–58.

Lifton, R. (1973). *Home from the war: Vietnam veterans: Neither victims nor executioners.* Simon & Schuster.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage Publications.

Loomis, A. (2018). The role of preschool as a point of intervention and prevention for trauma-exposed children: Recommendations for practice, policy, and research. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 38*(3), 134–145. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121418789254

Lowe, S. R., & Galea, S. (2017). The mental health consequences of mass shootings. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 18*(1), 62–82.

Ludick, M., & Figley, C. R. (2017). Toward a mechanism for secondary trauma induction and reduction: Reimagining a theory of secondary traumatic stress. *Traumatology, 23*(1), 112–123. https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000096

Lussiez, Y. W. (2010). *The empathic principal: The relationship between empathy, transformational leadership, and teacher self-efficacy* [Doctoral dissertation, University of New Mexico]. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences. ProQuest Information & Learning.

Mahony, L., Walsh, K., Lunn, J., & Petriwskyj, A. (2015). Teachers facilitating support for young children experiencing parental separation and divorce. *Journal of Child & Family Studies, 24*(10), 2841–2852.

Martinez, A., Mcmahon, S. D., Coker, C., & Keys, C. B. (2016). Teacher behavioral practices: Relations to student risk behaviors, learning barriers, and school climate. *Psychology in the Schools, 53*(8), 817–830. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1002/pits.21946

Martinez, M. (2016). *Child abuse and neglect: Perceptions, psychological consequences and coping strategies.* Nova Science Publishers.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52,* 397–422. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review, 62*(3), 279–300. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.62.3.8323320856251826

Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman, & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 214–253). Sage Publications.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013*). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

McClatchey, I., Vonk, M., Lee, J., & Bride, B. (2014). Traumatic and complicated grief among children: One or two constructs? *Death Studies, 38*(2), 69–78. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1080/07481187.2012.725571

McIntosh, K., Canizal Delabra, A., & Kelm, J. L. (2016). In search of how principals change. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 18*(2), 100–110.

McIntyre, E. M., Baker, C. N., & Overstreet, S. (2019). Evaluating foundational professional development training for trauma-informed approaches in schools. *Psychological Services, 16*(1), 95–102. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1037/ser0000312.supp (Supplemental)

McKown, C. (2017, Spring). *Social and emotional learning: A policy vision for the future. Policy brief.* Princeton-Brookings.

McLaughlin, K. (2014). *How can trauma affect the brain?* Stress and Development Lab, University of Washington. http://stressdevelopmentlab.org

Meier, L. (2012). The effect of school culture on science education at an ideologically innovative elementary magnet school: An ethnographic case study. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 23,* 805–822.

Menard, K. S., & Ruback, R. B. (2003). Prevalence and processing of child sexual abuse: A multi-data-set analysis of urban and rural counties. *Law & Human Behavior, 27*(4), 385.

Meredith, C., Schaufeli, W., Struyve, C., Vandecandelaere, M., Gielen, S., & Kyndt, E. (2020). "Burnout contagion" among teachers: A social network approach. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology, 93*(2), 328–352.

Merriman, J. (2015). Enhancing counselor supervision through compassion fatigue education. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 93*(3), 370–378.

Mescia, N. & Gentry, J.E. (2004). *Understanding compassion fatigue: Helping public health professionals and other front-line responders combat occupational stressors and psychological injuries of bioterrorism defense for a strengthened public health response.* Florida Center for Mental Health Preparedness.

Metzger, M. W., Fowler, P. J., Anderson, C. L., Lindsay, C. A. (2015). Residential mobility during adolescence: Do even "upward" moves predict dropout risk? *Social Science Research, 53,* 218–230. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.05.004

Mezzacappa, D. (2018). Relax, heal, learn. *Education Digest, 83*(5), 55–60.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Moffitt, T. E., Arseneault, L., Belsky, D., Dickson, N., Hancox, R. J., Harrington, H., Houts, R., Poulton, R., Roberts, B. W., Ross, S., & Sears, M. R. (2011). A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*(7), 2693–2698.

Mohatt, N. V., Thompson, A. B., Thai, N. D., & Tebes, J. K. (2014). Historical trauma as public narrative: A conceptual review of how history impacts present-day health. *Social Science & Medicine, 106*, 128–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.01.043

Morgan, A., Pendergast, D., Brown, R., & Heck, D. (2015). Relational ways of being an educator: Trauma-informed practice supporting disenfranchised young people. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19*(10), 1037–1051.

Mott, R., Keller, K., Britt, R. J., & Ball, A. (2018). 'Out of Place around Other People': Experiences of young people who live with food insecurity. *Children & Society, 32*(3), 207–218. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1111/chso.12270

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Sage Publications.

Murphy, J., & Tobin, K. (2011). *Homelessness comes to school.* Corwin.

Mutton, T., Burn, K., & Thompson, I. (2018). Preparation for family-school partnerships within initial teacher education programmes in England. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 44*(3), 278–295.

Nastasi, B. K., Varjas, K., Schensul, S. L., Silva, K. T., Schensul, J. J., & Ratnayake, P. (2000). The participatory intervention model: A framework for conceptualizing and promoting intervention acceptability. *School Psychology Quarterly, 15*(2), 207–232. https://doi.org/10.1037/ h0088785

National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE. (2017). *Serving students experiencing homelessness under Title I, Part A. Updated.* McKinney-Vento Law into Practice Brief Series. U.S. Department of Education.

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html

National Institute of Corrections. (2021). *Statistics.* https://nicic.gov/projects/statistics

National Institute of Mental Health. (2016). *Helping children and adolescents cope with disasters and other traumatic events.* https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events/19-mh-8066-helpingchildrencopewithdisaster_158447.pdf

National Survey of Children's Health. (2012). Adverse childhood experiences. *Child Health Indicator and Subgroups SAS Codebook, 1*, 116–119.

Nealy-Oparah, S., & Scruggs-Hussein, T. C. (2018). Trauma-informed leadership in schools: From the inside-out: The foundation of being a trauma-informed leader is transformational "inside-out" work that heals adult trauma and develops social-emotional intelligence. How can we teach what we do not embody? *Leadership, 47*(3), 12.

Newell, J. M., & MacNeil, G. A. (2010). Professional burnout, vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion fatigue: A review of theoretical terms, risk factors, and preventive methods for clinicians and researchers. *Best Practice in Mental Health, 6*(2), 57–68. http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=60132515&site=ehost-live&scope=site

O'Connor, C. P. (2018). How school counselors make a world of difference. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *99*(7), 35. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/0031721718767858

Oberthur, A. (2020). Formula for trust and collaboration: 3 + 3 + 3 + 5 + 2. *Teachers Matter, 48,* 62–65.

Ogden, P., & Fisher, J. (2015). *Sensorimotor psychotherapy: Interventions for trauma and attachment.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(3), 329–347. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004008003008

Olsen, K. (2014). *The invisible classroom: relationships, neuroscience & mindfulness in school.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Olson, M. R., & Craig, C. J. (2005). Uncovering cover stories: Tensions and entailments in the development of teacher knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *35*(2), 162–182.

Oosterhoff, B., Kaplow, J. B., & Layne, C. M. (2018). Links between bereavement due to sudden death and academic functioning: Results from a nationally representative sample of adolescents. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *33*(3), 372–380.

Orapallo, A., Grant, B.-J., & Baker, C. N. (2021). *Examining the effectiveness of Trauma Smart® training: Staff satisfaction, knowledge, and attitudes.* Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy.

Osher, D., Bear, G. G., Sprague, J. R., & Doyle, W. (2010). How can we improve school discipline? *Educational Researcher, 39,* 48–58. http:// dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09357618

Osher, D., Penkoff, C., Sidana, A., & Kelly, P. (2016). *Improving conditions for learning for youth who are neglected or delinquent* (2nd ed.) National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth (NDTAC).

Panchal, N., Kamal, R., Orgera, K., Cox, C., Garfield, R., Hamel, L., & Muñana, C. (2020, April 21). The implications of COVID-19 for mental health and substance use. *Health Reform*, https://www.kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/

Patti, J., Holzer, A., Stern, R. S., Floman, J., & Brackett, M. A. (2018). Leading with emotional intelligence: Can developing their emotional intelligence help school administrators manage stress and lead more effectively? The New York City district is betting on it. *Educational Leadership*, *75*(9), 46.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage Publications.

Perry, B. D. (2002). Surviving childhood: An introduction to the impact of trauma. http://www.childtraumaacademy.com/surviving_childhood/lesson01/printing.html

Ploumis-Devick, E., & Follman, J. (1993). *Appreciating differences: Teaching and learning in a culturally diverse classroom.* Hot Topics: Usable Research.

Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of life: An introduction to the problems and literature of a humanistic method.* Unwin Hyman.

Poirel, E., & Yvon, F. (2014). School principals' emotional coping process. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, *37*(3), 1–23.

Polanyi, M. (1967). *The tacit knowledge dimension.* Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Porche, M. V., Fortuna, L. R., Lin, J., & Alegria, M. (2011). Childhood trauma and psychiatric disorders as correlates of school dropout in a national sample of young adults. *Child Development, 8*2(3), 982–998.

Reno, G. D., Friend, J., Caruthers, L., & Smith, D. (2017). Who's getting targeted for behavioral interventions? Exploring the connections between school culture, positive behavior support, and elementary student achievement. *Journal of Negro Education, 86*(4), 423–438. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.4.0423

Resler, M. (2019). *Systems of trauma: Racial trauma*. Family and Children's Trust Fund of Virginia.

Reuben, A., Moffitt, T. E., Caspi, A., Belsky, D. W., Harrington, H., Schroeder, F., Hogan, S., Ramrakha, S., Poulton, R., & Danese, A. (2016). Lest we forget: Comparing retrospective and prospective assessments of adverse childhood experiences in the prediction of adult health. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 57(10), 1103–1112. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1111/jcpp.12621

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life.* Rutgers University Press.

Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 923–948). Sage Publications.

Ringel, S., & Brandell, J. (2012). *Trauma: Contemporary directions in theory, practice, and research.* Sage Publications.

Rishel, C. W., Tabone, J. K., Hartnett, H. P., & Szafran, K. F. (2019). Trauma-informed elementary schools: Evaluation of school-based early intervention for young children. *Children & Schools, 41*(4), 239–248. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1093/cs/cdz017

Robinson, B. C. (2005). *Exploring career satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue as indicators of the quality of career engagement of public school educators* [Doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University]. ProQuest Dissertation Publications.

Rocco, T. S., & Plakhotnik, M. S. (2009). Literature reviews, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical frameworks: Terms, functions, and distinctions. *Human Resource Development Review*, *8*(1), 120–130.

Roffey, S. (2016). Building a case for whole-child, whole-school wellbeing in challenging contexts. *Education and Child Psychology, 33,* 30–42.

Rogers, J., & Orr, M. (2011). *Public engagement for public education: Joining forces to revitalize democracy and equalize schools.* Stanford University Press.

Rogers, W., & Meek Lange, M. (2013). Rethinking the vulnerability of minority populations in research. *American Journal of Public Health*, *103*(12), 2141–2146.

Roseby, S., & Gascoigne, M. (2021). A systematic review on the impact of trauma-informed education programs on academic and academic-related functioning for students who have experienced childhood adversity. *Traumatology.*

Rose-Krasnor, L., & Denham, S. (2009). Social-emotional competence in early childhood. In K. H. Rubin, W. M. Bukowski, & B. Laursen (Eds.), *Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups* (pp. 162–179). The Guilford Press.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data.* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Rumsey, A. D., & Milsom, A. (2018). Supporting school engagement and high school completion through trauma-informed school counseling. *Professional School Counseling*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19867254

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research.* Oxford University Press.

Saleem, F. T., Anderson, R. E., & Williams, M. (2019). Addressing the myth of racial trauma: Developmental and ecological considerations for youth of color. *Clinical Child Family Psychological Review*, *23*(1), 1–14.

Salloum, A., Bjoerke, A., & Johnco, C. (2019). The associations of complicated grief, depression, posttraumatic growth, and hope among bereaved youth. *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying, 79*(2), 157–173. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/0030222817719805

Salo, M., Appleton, A. A., & Tracy, M. (2021). Childhood adversity trajectories and violent behaviors in adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 1*. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/08862605211006366

Sanderson, D. R. (2003). Veteran teachers' perspectives on student mobility. *Essays in Education: Vol. 4.* https://openriver.winona.edu/eie/vol4/iss1/1

Saner, H., & Ellickson, P. (1996). Concurrent risk factors for adolescent violence. *The Journal of Adolescent Health, 19*(2), 94–103. https://doi.org/10.1016/1054-139X(96)00131-0

Santiago, E., Ferrara, J., & Quinn, J. (2012). *Whole child, whole school: Applying theory to practice in a community school.* R&L Education.

Santiago, R. T., Garbacz, S. A., Beattie, T., & Moore, C. L. (2016). Parent-teacher relationships in elementary school: An examination of parent-teacher trust. *Psychology in the Schools, 53*(10), 1003–1017. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1002/pits.21971

Sapharas, N. K., Estell, D. B., Doran, K. A., & Waldron, M. (2016). Effects of parental divorce or a father's death on high school completion. *Psychology in the Schools, 53*(8), 861–874. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1002/pits.21947

Savas, A. C., Bozgeyik, Y., & Eser, I. (2014). A study on the relationship between teacher self efficacy and burnout. *European Journal of Educational Research, 3*(4), 159–166.

Schepers, O. (2018). *A teacher at risk: Giving voice to teacher secondary traumatic stress* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado Boulder]. ProQuest Information & Learning.

Schroeder, T. (2017. Meditation for emotional wellbeing: A self-care strategy for nurses. *Beginnings, 37*(3), 10–11. https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cin20&AN=123661487&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Scurfield, R., & Mackey, D. (2001). Racism, trauma and positive aspects of exposure to race-related experiences Assessment and treatment implications. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 10*(1), 23–47.

Sergiovanni, T. (1984). Leadership and excellence in schooling. *Educational Leadership, 41*(5), 4–13.

Sergiovanni, T. (1992). Moral leadership. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (pp. 372–392). Jossey-Bass.

Seton, H. (2019). The elephant in the classroom. *Educational Leadership, 77*(2), 77–80.

Sharma, M. (2018). Seeping deficit thinking assumptions maintain the neoliberal education agenda: Exploring three conceptual frameworks of deficit thinking in inner-city schools. *Education and Urban Society, 50*(2), 136–154.

Shaw, J., & Newton, J. (2014). Teacher retention and satisfaction with a servant leader as principal. *Education, 135*(1), 101–106.

Sheehy Carmel, M. J., & Friedlander, M. L. (2009). The relation of secondary traumatization to therapists' perceptions of the working alliance with clients who commit sexual abuse. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56,* 461–467. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015422

Short, N., Norr, A., Mathes, B., Oglesby, M., & Schmidt, N. (2016). An examination of the specific associations between facets of difficulties in emotion regulation and posttraumatic stress symptom clusters. *Cognitive Therapy & Research*, *40*(6), 783–791.

Siegel, D. J., & Bryson, T. P. (2016). *The whole-brain child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind*. Langara College.

Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2018). Job demands and job resources as predictors of teacher motivation and well-being. *Social Psychology of Education, 21*(5), 1251–1275. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1007/s11218-018-9464-8

Skeen, S., & Tomlinson, M. (2013). A public health approach to preventing child abuse in low- and middle-income countries: A call for action. *International Journal of Psychology, 48(*2), 108-116. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2012.737467

Slade, S. (2020). Whole child spotlight: On mind-body connectedness. *Educational Leadership*, *77*(8), 1.

Sly, S. (2016). *Trauma in the classroom: Uncovering the truth about childhood adversity.* We Are The Change.

Smith, D. (2018). Create meaningful connections. *Educational Leadership, 75*(9), 43–44.

Souers, K., & Hall, P. (2016). *Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom*. ASCD Publishing.

Souers, K., & Hall, P. (2020). Trauma is a word—not a sentence. *Educational Leadership, 78*(2), 34–39

Spears, L. (2004). Understanding the practice of servant leadership. In L. Spears & M. Lawrence (Eds.), *Servant leadership: succeeding through trust, bravery and forgiveness* (pp. 9–24). Jossey-Bass.

Sporleder, J., & Forbes, H. T. (2016). *The trauma-informed school: A step-by-step implementation guide for administrators and school personnel*. Beyond Consequences Institute.

State Department of Education. (2019). *School report card.* https://dese.mo.gov/school-data

Stevens, J. E. (2012). *The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study—the largest, most important public health study you never heard of—began in an obesity clinic*. https://acestoohigh.com/2012/10/03/the-adverse-childhood-experiences-study-the-largest-most-important-public-health-study-you-never-heard-of-began-in-an-obesity-clinic/

Stoddard, S. A., Whiteside, L., Zimmerman, M. A., Cunningham, R. M., Chermack, S. T., & Walton, M. A. (2013). The relationship between cumulative risk and promotive factors and violent behavior among urban adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*, 57–65. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012- 9541-7

Sulkowski, M. L. (2014). The student homelessness crisis and the role of school psychology: Missed opportunities, room for improvement, and future directions. *Psychology in the Schools*, *53*(7), 760–771. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1002/pits.21936

Sweeton, J. (2017). *Here's your brain on trauma.* https://www.jennifersweeton.com/rewireyourbrain

Tennley, A. V., & Bute, J. J. (2009) Utilizing crystallization in qualitative methods. *Review of Communication, 9*(4), 340–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/15358590903151211

Tepper, E. L., & Palladino, J. M. (2007). *Compassion fatigue and burnout: Precursors to elementary special educators' exodus from teaching.* [Online submission]. Eastern Michigan University. ProQuest Information & Learning.

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

Thompson, G. L. (2004). Playing God with other people's children. *The High School Journal, 87(*3), 1–4. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1353/hsj.2004.0004

Tobin, K. J. (2016). Homeless students and academic achievement: Evidence from a large urban area. *Urban Education, 51*(2), 197–220.

Tomlinson, C., & Murphy, M. (2018). The empathetic school. *Educational Leadership, 75*(6), 20–27.

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837–851.

Turner, B. S. (2009). *The new Blackwell companion to social theory.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Turney, K., & Goodsell, R. (2018). Parental incarceration and children's wellbeing. *Future of Children, 28*(1), 147–164.

Tyler, P. M., Aitken, A. A., Ringle, J. L., Stephenson, J. M., & Mason, W. A. (2021). Evaluating social skills training for youth with trauma symptoms in residential programs. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 13*(1), 104–113.

U. S. Department of Agriculture. (2021). *Food security in the U.S.: Overview.* https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014a). *Fact sheet: Understanding historical trauma when responding to an event in Indian country.* https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4866.pdf

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014b). *SAMSHA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach.*

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma.* Viking.

Van der Kolk, B. A., Weisaeth, L., & van der Hart, O. (1996). History of trauma in psychiatry. In B. A. van der Kolk, A. McFarlane, & L. Weisaeth (Eds.), *Traumatic stress: The effects of overwhelming experience on mind, body and society* (pp. 47–76). Guilford.

Voight, A., Giraldo-García, R., & Shinn, M. (2020). The effects of residential mobility on the education outcomes of urban middle school students and the moderating potential of civic engagement. *Urban Education, 55*(4), 570–591.

Warren, C. A., & Lessner, S. (2014). Who has family business? Exploring the role of empathy in student-teacher interactions. *Penn Graduate School of Education Perspectives on Urban Education*, *11*(2), 122–131.

Weissbourd, R. (2009). The schools we mean to be. *Educational Leadership*, *66*(8), 26–31.

Wells, C. M., & Klocko, B. A. (2018). Principal well-being and resilience: Mindfulness as a means to that end. *NASSP Bulletin, 102*(2), 161. https://doi-org.proxy.library.umkc.edu/10.1177/0192636518777813

Wilkerson, K., Perusse, R., & Hughes, A. (2013). Comprehensive school counseling programs and student achievement outcomes: A comparative analysis of ramp versus non-ramp schools. *Professional School Counseling*, *16*(3), 172–184.

Williams, J. J., Tunks, J., Gonzalez-Carriedo, R., Faulkenberry, E., & Middlemiss, W. (2020). Supporting mathematics understanding through funds of knowledge. *Urban Education, 55*(3), 476–502.

Williams, M., Printz Pereira, D., & DeLapp, R. (2018). Assessing racial trauma with the Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale. *Psychology of Violence, 8,* 735–747. 10.1037/vio0000212.

Wolf, P. J., Maloney, L. D., May, J. F., DeAngelis, C. A., & University of Arkansas. (2017). *Charter School Funding: Inequity in the City*. School Choice Demonstration Project.

Zacarian, M. D,, Alvarez-Ortiz, L., & Haynes, J. (2020). Meeting student trauma with an asset-based approach: Students living in adverse circumstances often lack positive recognition in schools. *Educational Leadership, 78*(2), 69–73.

Zalaznick, M. (2020). Whole-child education powers healthy society. *District Administration, 56*(2), 6.

Ziaian-Ghafari, N., & Berg, D. H. (2019). Compassion fatigue: The experiences of teachers working with students with exceptionalities. *Exceptionality Education International, 29*, 32–53.

Zimmerman, G. (2014). The covariates of parent and youth reporting differences on youth secondary exposure to community violence. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 43*(9), 1576–1593.

Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 17*(2–3), 191–210.

Zylowska, L., Ackerman, D. L., Yang, M. H., Futrell, J. L., Horton, N. L., Hale, T. S., Pataki, C., & Smalley, S. L. (2007). Mindfulness meditation training in adults and adolescents with ADHD: A feasibility study. *Journal of Attention Disorders, 11*, 737. https://doi.org/10.1177/1087054707308502

VITA

Jennifer Northcutt is a lover of learning and a lifelong educator. Inspired by her "Mimi," her beloved grandmother and fellow lifelong educator, Ms. Northcutt has a rich and eclectic background in education and counseling. She earned her bachelor's degree in Education from Northwest Missouri State University in 2006, and her master's degree in Counseling and Guidance from the University of Missouri Kansas City in 2017.

Ms. Northcutt holds teaching certificates in English Language Arts, Special Education, Elementary Education, and School Counseling. Ms. Northcutt's career has taken her from special education teacher, to English teacher, to counselor, and she has served in rural, suburban, and urban settings. Currently, Ms. Northcutt is a Professional School Counselor at Raytown High School in Raytown, Missouri. She is active in national, state, and regional organizations and is currently on the Executive Board of the Greater Kansas City School Counselors Association. Ms. Northcutt also enjoys being an adjunct instructor for the Department of Counseling at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, which she views as an opportunity to "pay it forward" in gratitude for her excellent educational experience.

While her first love is teaching, Ms. Northcutt has a great love for mental health counseling and is currently pursuing her therapy license in the state of Missouri. She has received certification and extensive training in trauma counseling and is always engaged in continued education regarding the mental health needs of children, adolescents, and adults. An advocate for the mindset that those we serve in schools are humans first and students second, Ms. Northcutt enjoys working with teachers, administrators, and parents to help deliver education and training on issues related to meeting the needs of the whole child.

As a doctoral student, Ms. Northcutt is eager to embark on the next chapter of her career. With plans to continue her career as a school counselor for awhile, Ms. Northcutt is also exploring ways that she can combine her love for education and her love for counseling into a service that provides coaching and consulting to school stakeholders. She plans to publish books and articles within the educational community. Ms. Northcutt also plans to continue her work as an adjunct professor, and to work with fellow educators and researchers to study additional phenomena related to the work that we do as educators.

Ms. Northcutt and her husband of 12 years have two young children and two dogs. In her spare time, which is sure to increase after the completion of this study, Ms. Northcutt enjoys reading and writing and has been working on a novel for the past seven years, with no end in sight. She also enjoys the theatre—especially musical theatre—and loves to spend time taking in the vibrant arts and culture in her beloved hometown, Kansas City.