

The Lived Experience of Elementary Teachers in Trauma Affected Schools

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January 14, 2022

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Copyright

Abstract

Teaching is regarded by many to be a noble and challenging profession in the best of times. A teacher is responsible for delivering information to students to prepare them to successfully enter the workforce later in life. The role of a teacher has expanded throughout our history to address multiple needs of all students. Given societal challenges such as poverty, substance abuse and other traumas, there are ever expanding responsibilities asked of teachers in addition to their usual teaching load.

This Dissertation in Practice (DiP) strives to explore the lived experience of elementary teachers who teach trauma-affected youth. Specifically, this researcher is focusing on the concept of individual and collective teacher efficacy as it relates to longevity in the field of education. I envision an opportunity to investigate the way daily interactions with trauma-affected students transfer to a teacher's sense of efficacy and accomplishment.

This study looks at a school system in Southern Vermont with several elementary schools. Approximately 25% of American children will experience at one traumatic event in their lives (SMAHSA, 2015). Using various metrics to evaluate student behaviors, it has been found that the schools in this study have students who are affected by trauma. The supervisory union has partnered with consultants to train school personnel in the most productive way to help students who are experiencing trauma in their lives. As a researcher-practitioner who also works in this studied school system, I am curious about the short- and long-term effects that working directly with students experiencing trauma has on the efficacy of teachers and longevity in elementary

schools.

Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method (IPA) to explore teacher efficacy will afford this researcher the ability to bracket my experiences as both a student of trauma and as a former elementary teacher who worked with trauma-affected youth. IPA was chosen as it allows the researcher to use semi-structured interviews that invite the participant to speak freely about their feelings in a way that other methods might not.

The study begins with Section 1 which will introduce the reader to the inquiry and explore gaps in current literature about the topic. It will also review the research questions developed including the theoretical frameworks that grounds this study. Several authors (Glesne, Brookfield, Kincheloe, and McLaren) describe critical thinking and critical theory in a way that is a foundation for the research. Kellner (2003) frames the use of the critical theory of education to examine current education practices. The research will also be evaluated through the concept of teacher self-efficacy along with critical theory.

Section 1 also explains Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, et al., 2009) as a methodology. Included in this section is also the data collection and analysis used in this study.

Section 2 will outline the setting and history of the organization and the analysis of the organization is studied. Section 3 will consist of the scholarly review of material read and interpreted that formed a comprehensive foundation of understanding of the areas of teacher self and collective efficacy and trauma-affected teaching.

Section 4 outlines the plan for dissemination of the findings within the place of research.

Section 5 includes a plan for scholarly contribution to the field in the form of a publish-ready article encompassing the study findings as well as the plan to disseminate the information for the

benefit of the school system. Section 6 comprises the scholar-practitioners personal reflection of the journey that culminates with this DiP.

Keywords: efficacy, critical theory of education, trauma-affected, teacher burnout, secondary stress, Interpretative phenomenological analysis, vicarious trauma

Acknowledgement

I am grateful for the people in my life that have supported me personally and professionally through this doctoral journey. My husband, Mark has been a part of many one-way conversations regarding self-doubt, committee meetings and overall progress. He has patiently listened and supported me consistently, even when the topics were not of any interest to him. The rest of my family(Kelsey, Ashley, Robert, and Peyton) have also been along for the books and articles strewn about the house and post-its on the walls used to code interview data.

The Mixed Tape cohort has worked together from the first weekend we were together, deciding if we wanted to enter this program. We have shared our deepest feelings on a multitude of topics as we learned and explored our thinking together. We have supported each other outside of the class structure with Sunday Zoom sessions to talk about our progress, which has been beneficial.

The professional support of the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union has been instrumental in this doctoral journey. District leadership have partnered with me with their time and financial support. My career in this district has been time well spent.

I am thankful for my committee and the leadership of Dr. Phil Littlefield . I will always appreciate the honest conversations we had as well as the faith you had in my ability to finish. Your collective guidance was a gift.

Section 1: Introduction to the Dissertation

Background

The Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU) operates within Bennington County, Vermont, and is located at the southern part of Vermont State on the border of both Massachusetts and New York. Within the district, there are six elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. In the elementary schools, the student population ranges from one school with less than one hundred students to another with over four hundred students. Of the six elementary schools, three of them serve students from kindergarten through fifth grade, while the other three send their students to the middle school from sixth to eighth grade.

Traumatic events are happening within families all over the United States. It is estimated that close to 71% of children (ages 0-17) nationwide have experienced traumatic events beyond Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) (Gross, 2021). According to recent data about Bennington County, the population is roughly 36,054 citizens with a median household income of \$52,251 (data.usa.io/profile/geo/bennington-vt). As of June 2020, the latest official Vermont data showed that there were double the numbers of nonfatal opioid overdoses compared to the same period in the past year (<https://www.benningtonbanner.com>).

The poverty rate for Bennington County as of June 2020, was 18.7% compared to the national average of 13.1% (data.usa.io/profile/geo/bennington-vt). Of note is the 15% increase

of people experiencing homelessness with 88 people (including 11 homes with children).

Starting in March of 2020, individuals and families facing homelessness were moved to local hotels, allowing all the ability to social distance. The most recent data shows that there are 166 people living in local hotels, some of which are children (<https://benningtonbanner.com>).

According to the Assistant Superintendent of the SVSU, the journey to becoming a trauma informed district started in 2017. District leadership noticed an uptick in externalizing and internalizing behaviors manifested in students in all schools. The administration identified staff in each school building to participate in a cohort focused on learning more about trauma issues that affected the children and families. This group of educators spent two years working through the curriculum on Trauma 1 and Trauma 2 courses with a psychologist specializing in understanding youth affected by trauma and continued consultation as the plan to push out more training internally evolved.

Following the evaluation of current practices, the supervisory union recognized the need to support families living with trauma by using a comprehensive approach. Administrative teams gathered to develop a strategy to help families, along with mental health professionals, to address this critical need. In 2017, a staff member in each school was offered the opportunity to receive training related to trauma-informed practices. In subsequent years, the groups have grown to include several staff members who represent most of the schools. The groups formed into cohorts within their respective schools to bring the information to colleagues.

The district decided to expand upon its trauma-informed practice through a partnership with Castleton University. Trainings were offered for professional staff through both Castleton and the University of Kansas. From that work, a Comprehensive 3-tiered Interventions and Supports (Ci3t) plan was developed (Lane et al., 2015). The SVSU continued to utilize Positive Behavior Support strategies with fidelity in the schools to give students clear expectations of appropriate behavior.

District leadership also added training for administrators to focus specifically on employee wellness. This program's goal was to support the staff, helping the student's

experiencing trauma in their lives. Employees were made aware of mental health counseling options.

Through multiple learning and consulting opportunities, tiered supports were identified by the district level team. Results were compiled into a Multi-Tiered System of Support implementation manual for each school that was then compiled into a manual for the district. The supervisory union adopted a social skills curriculum for each of the schools to assist students in gaining social skills with fidelity across the district.

As staff looked closely at students who have been entered into the school-wide information system (SWIS), it became apparent that a high percentage of the behavior incidents that happened in the school involved students who are living in possibly traumatic home situations. SWIS data is used consistently within the school district to inform student teams of behavior incidents that happen within the school day. This data point is instrumental in referring students for supports and interventions with trained professionals.

The world is experiencing challenges related to the pandemic, poverty, and political unrest. Lipsky (2018) described, “ I don’t think we can have too much humility and compassion toward ourselves and others as we consider what may cause overwhelm” (p.28). With the information about the needs and trials facing families in the SVSU community in mind, this research is intended to give light to the lived experiences of the teachers working with all students daily.

Statement of Inquiry

Communities all over the country are struggling with poverty and trauma issues.

Southern Vermont is no exception to this phenomenon. The impact of trauma within a school system affects the student, the classroom, and the school as a whole organization (Palva, 2019). Chronic stress in childhood can have long term impact and alter our genes as well as the biological blueprint of future generations (Lipsky, 2018, p.28).

The global pandemic that the world continues to struggle with has added a layer of complexity to already existing issues of poverty, drug abuse and other negative occurrences for children. Before schools closed due to the pandemic of COVID-19, many students viewed school as a sanctuary with hot meals, caring adults, and friends. The social isolation coupled with an increase in familial stressors due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols has made it even more challenging for students.

Educators going forward will be focusing on recovery services for students' social and emotional skills, leaving academic goals to be secondary. While student recovery plans are in place for the summer of 2021 and into the fall, there has not been a plan to address recovery for the teachers who have worked tirelessly through the pandemic despite a multitude of challenges.

When a school system adopts a trauma-informed approach, they commit to operating sensitively to all families' needs (Palva, 2019). To implement a trauma-informed approach, the school system needs to develop a graduated training schedule that allows all school personnel to be trained (Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016). While the supervisory union has taken the initiative to contract with experts in trauma and its impact on children, this training has been extended to a select few professionals in the district.

The plan to roll out the training to others gets lost in the daily work of managing children and families of varying needs. As a result, some teachers have the benefit of additional training to work with students affected by trauma, and others are without the training. The disparity of

training results in possible increased behavior referrals from one teacher and fewer from another teacher who may use a restorative practice model in their classroom.

A unified approach by a school system regarding trauma-informed practice benefits ~~for~~ staff and families alike (Gross, 2020). Staff training for all adults that work with students is beneficial for students as well as staff morale. Continuity of intervention within a school system increases communication and trust between families and the school system. Teacher retention and job satisfaction are more attainable with a unified support system for those affected by trauma.

District leadership has embarked on well- intentioned training within the SVSU to address the needs of students and families in Bennington County. Despite their best intentions, the trainings have not been made available to all employees. In many of the elementary schools in the district training designed to help trauma affected youth has been offered to the building principal, school counselors, behavior specialists and perhaps one classroom teacher. The original design plan was for those who have been trained to then become the trainers in the school and disseminate the information to all.

The realities of the school day coupled with vicarious trauma issues have made it difficult for this plan to ~~to~~ has made it increasingly difficult for professionals to attend to issues beyond daily survival as they work diligently to support students both educationally and emotionally.

To deliver consistent messaging and strategies for students and their families, all professionals and support staff in the schools need to have the same training and time to develop the skills to help students during the school day. Inconsistency in how students are addressed

when they fail to perform within expected behavior parameters serves to stunt the healing process and can promote student disengagement.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study examined the lived experiences of teachers navigating the day-to-day expectations as professionals alongside the social and emotional needs of all their students. The researcher endeavored to examine the lived experience of elementary school teachers working with students who are in situations in which they are experiencing trauma where they live.

Within the Bennington community there have been concerns for families due to an increase in opioid use, affordable housing shortages and poverty. Each of those concerns were exacerbated by COVID-19. As noted by researchers, when the daily lived experience of teachers is brought to light then school systems can work together to support both students and personnel in the school (Pawlo et al. 2019). It is only through bringing forth the vicarious trauma experienced by educators that the school system can move forward to support teachers.

This study tells the stories of teachers working with students experiencing trauma as a foundational step toward training and support initiatives for all elementary teachers. When teachers are given training and support to assist with their daily teaching expectations, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction and stay at their positions (Curry & O'Brien, 2012).

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the research study asked teachers to be reflective and insightful on their own experiences in their daily life as a teacher (Van Manen, 2015). This method of study acknowledges that there is no true end to the inquiry as using

words to describe a person's lived experience is challenging and ever changing (Van Manen, 2015).

The purpose of the study is to examine the lived experience of elementary school teachers working with trauma affected students. The scholar practitioner will illuminate opportunities to support educators in the school system to prevent teacher burnout and increase retention of teachers.

Design of the Study

Qualitative research (methodology) is a means of exploring and undertaking the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009, p. 4) It involves emerging questions and procedures data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of data (Creswell, 2009, p4).

The goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is more holistic and often involves a rich collection of data from various sources to gain a deeper understanding of individual participants, including their opinions, perspectives, and attitude (Creswell, 2009). This often involves an inductive exploration of the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, or concepts and then describing and interpreting those categories (Nassaji, 2015).

Phenomenologists want to know what the experience was like to live it for the participants, not just the person's reaction to the experience (Connelly, 2010). It has been

broadly described as a philosophy or theory of the unique and interested in essentially what is not replaceable (VanManen, 2015, p.7).

Phenomenological research aims at establishing a renewed contact with original experience (VanManen, 2015 p31). This type of research strives to bring the lived experiences of a person into light for exploration. When a researcher uses this method, they do not stray into predetermined procedures and structures, rather the researcher and the subject determine the limitations throughout the process together (VanManen, 2015). Using these guideposts in the research, the goal is to ask teachers to recount their experiences as teachers as they occur daily (VanManen, 2015).

Research Questions

- 1.What is the lived experience of elementary teachers working with students affected by familial trauma?
- 2.How do teacher attitudes toward students experiencing familial trauma affect overall job satisfaction?
- 3.How do teachers view their effectiveness in implementing trauma-informed practices?
- 4.How do teachers view the need for training in trauma-informed practices for all staff in a school?

Practitioner Setting for the Study

The study sites were the elementary schools within the Southwest Vermont Supervisory

Union (Molly Stark School, Bennington Elementary School, Monument Elementary School, Pownal Elementary School, Woodford Hollow School, and Shaftsbury Elementary School). The interviews happened either via Zoom or in person and took the schedules of the participants into consideration. Using IPA as the method allowed the researcher the gift of interviewing a smaller sample of people while allowing for multiple follow up interviews for clarity.

The researcher was able to interview five teachers, one from each of the elementary schools (excluding Woodford Elementary due to its size). Once the initial interviews were completed, the researcher made the determination of subsequent follow up interviews with the participants.

Selection of participants

Five participants were selected based on a random sampling of grade levels in the various schools noted. There was a representation of nearly each grade level in the study. The intention was to have at least one elementary teacher from the primary grades (K-2), one or more from the intermediate grades (3-4), and one or more from upper elementary (5-6) represented in the study. The goal of the researcher was to interview five teachers. Of the teachers interviewed there were one kindergarten teacher, one first, one second, a fourth and a sixth-grade teacher respectively.

Data collection tools

For this research study, the method used was Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Using random sampling of selected grade level elementary teachers, the researcher interviewed five teachers from within the SVSU. The interviews were read deeply multiple times by the researcher. Following the initial reading step, the transcripts were then used to note all

interesting details that emerge. From this important step, themes emerged allowing the researcher to look for connections between the themes.

With each interview the process happened in the same way, with the addition of bracketing prior information to view each transcript on its own. After all the transcripts were evaluated, the researcher examined the patterns that emerged from all the interviews. Following the final analysis of the interviews, the researcher completed an overall analysis to address the fundamental research inquiry regarding self-efficacy and teachers who work with trauma affected students.

The emphasis of the research method was to examine the lived experience of elementary teachers who are working with trauma affected students. Van Manen (2015) defines the lived experience as our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life which reflects the beginning and end point of phenomenological research, it is the breathing of meaning (p.35). This method of research asks the participants to view the lived experience in a multi-dimensional manner, even though it is something that we experience in our day to day lives (VanManen, 2015).

Phenomenology describes the “what” and “how” of individual’s learned experiences, but does not explain or analyze descriptions (Creswell, 2013) A study is determined to be phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms, especially interested in what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people. The underlying philosophy of IPA is crucial to understanding how the research design works (Smith, 2004).

Husserl proposed that phenomenology involved the careful examination of human experience (Smith, 2014). He was particularly interested in finding a means by which someone

might come to accurately know their own experience of a given phenomenon and would do so with a depth and rigor which might allow them to identify the essential qualities of that experience (Smith et al., 2009 p 12).

A person may be so immersed in their experience that they are unaware of it (Creswell, 2013). When a person is engaged with an “experience” of something major in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening and IPA research aims to engage with these reflections (Smith, et al., 2009, p 1).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences (Smith et al., 2009 p.1). As explained by Smith, Flowers & Larkin, IPA works independently of other methods and research expectations and is designed to allow participants to understand their own experience (2009).

One of the key features of IPA is the experience of the subject being studied (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Noon, 2018). The parts of the experience are examined to get to the real sense of meaning and how an experience translates into meaning (Eatough & Smith, 2017). IPA is idiographic in the practice of wholly investigating and understanding the experience of one person before moving on to another interviewee (Eatough & Smith, 2017). The use of a double hermeneutics approach gives the researcher the ability to work deeply within the meaning of the experience detailed in the interviews, gaining understanding throughout the process (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

Using IPA also opens research to drawing connections into politics and social theory (Eatough & Smith, 2017). IPA researchers strive to be transparent about their backgrounds and experiences and must interpret data through this lens when analyzing the interviews (Smith, 2004). Using this method allowed the researcher to hear the stories of the teachers as they navigate through their daily experiences with their students.

IPA is interpretive and is therefore informed by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation (Smith, 2004; Noon, 2018). Through the use of the hermeneutic circle, the researcher is able to come back around to salient points in the interviews to continue to interpret the experience (Smith et al., 2009) The IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic because the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their own experience (Smith 2004 p.3) IPA strives to ascertain in detail what the experience for this person is like, what sense this particular person is making of what is happening to them.(Smith, 2004).

IPA uses semi-structured interviews, and the participant has an important role in what is covered in that they determine the direction of the interview (Smith, 2004, p4). Transcripts of interviews are analyzed case by case through a systematic, qualitative analysis then turned into a narrative account of where the researcher's analytic interpretation is presented in detail and is supported with verbatim extracts from participants (Smith, 2004, p4).

Another important aspect of IPA as a research method is intentionality. Intentionality describes the relationship between the process occurring in consciousness, and the object of attention for that process (Smith et al., 2009 p.13). The authors suggest that when using IPA, the

researcher should look deeply at the aspects of our lives that we take for granted (Smith et al., 2009).

To demonstrate the purposeful introspection the researcher can bracket ,or put to one side, the taken for granted world to concentrate on our perception of that world (Smith et al., 2009, p. 13). VanManen (2015) explained that one must be able to recall the experience in such a way that the essential aspects, the meaning structures of the experience as lived through are brought back to the nature of that experience (p.41).

Overall, in IPA research there is an attempt to understand other people's relationship to the world in an interpretive manner (Smith et al, 2009). The focus is on the attempts to make meaning out of the subject's activities and to the things happening to them and how the researcher interprets the experience (Smith et al, 2009; Callary et al., 2015).

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Using IPA as a method for research always involves interpretation. Interpretation without recognizing one's predisposed opinions is dangerous and is an aspect that the researcher needs to be mindful of (Smith, et al., 2009). As a veteran educator in the district of the study, I am striving to be mindful of my personal and professional opinions and hope to be transparent regarding them in the analysis following all the interviews.

Asking those interviewed through the IPA process to do a second or multiple interviews may skew the essence of the interview (Smith, 2004). Scholars have reported that when subjects are re-interviewed by the same interviewer, there is a natural inclination to give responses that are thought to be what the interviewer is looking for (Smith et al., 2009).

The practice of revisiting a participant for clarification is a potential threat to the rigor of interpretive studies (Callary et al., 2015) When asked to revisit an aspect of an earlier interview, a participant may overemphasize it, believing the researcher must think it important or relevant to the study. This desire for the participant to say, “the right thing” is known as the “halo effect” (Callary et al., 2015).

This is an applied research study. As a teacher in this district for 24 years, there is a level of insight brought to the study. Currently, I am an administrator in the district. This position puts me in a supervisory role with special education teachers working in grades 6-12. I conducted my study with classroom teachers in grades K-5. I have a collegial relationship with many teachers in the district given my years of service. Although I am not in a supervisory position in relation of any of the study participants, I realize that this process could result in complications professionally that would possibly be problematic.

Through the IPA reflection statement which is participant oriented and has a sense of oneself I was able to explore why this project resonated with me both professionally and personally. This is a step by step detailed and descriptive journey of what it took for the researcher to get to the destination (Alase, 2017 p. 18) explaining the twists and turns in the process. Alase (2017) shows some guiding questions to keep in mind while conducting the research study (p.18).

Controls

As the researcher, I bracketed my own personal experiences as both an elementary special education teacher and as a person who experienced trauma in my childhood. The personal reflection included in the dissertation in practice will give the reader insight into the

reasons for choices and possible hesitations in initial and follow up interview questions. This researcher made a conscious decision in the phrasing of follow up questions as to not either lead the interviewees or share person accounts from the researcher's past experiences.

The study followed guidelines outlined within the IRB. Participants determined the time frames of the interviews based on their schedule and level of comfort with the process.

Delimitations

A consideration for my study involved conducting the study within my employer, the supervisory union as I am both as a former teacher and currently an administrator. The decision to interview elementary teachers was intentional as I have no supervisory relationship with teachers who teach in the elementary schools. I do, however have a collegial relationship with many teachers in the SVSU.

Ethical Considerations

Any research study including human subjects requires consideration of how the participants will be protected from the risk of physiological and psychological harm. My study has been designed to follow the requirements set forth by the Southern New Hampshire University Institutional Research Review Board. To remove any potential concerns of coercion, informed consent was obtained by a third party not connected to this study.

Participants were reminded that their participation is voluntary, and they may end the interview at any time they feel it became too uncomfortable to continue. Because the participants were asked to recall and share information of a personal and potentially emotional nature, I offered to debrief after the interviews with anyone who desired, in order to support any needs that may have come up that they wish to discuss further.

Data from the interviews were kept private as they were stored in a password-protected computer. Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym (or one was chosen for them), to protect their privacy. I do not believe there was any social, economic, physical, or legal harm to participants in any way. This research study received no funding from any outside source, and no potential conflicts of interest are evident.

Results and Discussion

This study shows that a representative sample of elementary teacher in a small supervisory union in southern Vermont are impacted by students in their classrooms who have been affected by trauma. Each of the teachers were able to describe their day, often detailing incidents in which students were out of control (yelling, refusing to work, running out of the room, becoming violent).

The classroom teachers had different levels of experience as educators and training to teach students affected by trauma. One of the teachers considered herself “lucky” that she didn’t have any “big behaviors” while another recounted times of crying at work and feeling that she was powerless to prevent someone from getting injured.

One of the themes that was pervasive in the study was one of safety issues impeding the learning process in the classrooms. The teachers each were able to tell stories of student behaviors that interrupted lessons. Some of the teachers also spoke of the disruptions of the teaching day, either student behavior/needs or schedule changes as well as “many people in and out of my classroom”. Interestingly, one of the teachers explained that she must “be creative” and conduct lessons daily outside to allow the students to play outside or “she won’t be able to teach anyway”.

One of the teachers did not voice any large concerns about the student behavior in her classroom currently but was able to recount a story about a student who made it challenging to continue to teach. She was able to find a solution for that student that allowed her to successfully join the classroom. Other teachers spoke about feeling like the school was out of control and feeling the dread that someone was going to get hurt. This teacher talked about a bad day as “calling for help and no one is coming”.

When asked about their future plans, it was amazing to me that every single teacher responded that they had a very clear timeline to the end of their teaching career, and each sees a position move to becoming an interventionist (Math or ELA) as their next steps.

Definition of Key Terms

Trauma: Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (SAMHSA, 2014, p.11).

Restorative Practice: Can be described as an umbrella of tools that can be used to create a culture of care to establish positive relationships that prevent conflict and misbehavior and to repair relations that have been damaged by conflict and harm (Kline, 2016; Sprague & Tobin, 2017)

Vicarious traumatic stress and secondary traumatization: This is an indirect result of trauma suffered by others and is experienced by people who deal with the traumatized individuals or with traumatizing situations (Gross, 2020, p. 64).

Trauma Informed Approach: A program, organization, or system that is trauma informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery, recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved in the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2014 p.13).

Significance of the Study

Given the current state of the world during the pandemic, many families and their students are experiencing trauma in their homes and their communities. The school system has also been traumatized during this time. School buildings are re-opening, yet COVID -19 guidelines stay in place and alter the classroom experience for students and teachers alike. The hope of this study is to examine the possible vicarious trauma that educators are facing. Once the sampling of interviews is analyzed, the results will be shared with district leaders. The hope is to offer supports that could be put in place to retain teachers who may be experiencing struggles with their self-efficacy as educators.

As the medical community comes together to address the needs of our students, a new type of resilience has shown through. People who were not usually in communication with each other, now depend on each other for their survival. We have entered a transformative time in our history with many opportunities for all of us to prioritize our lives in a new way with fresh eyes.

Our schools will answer the challenge presented to us by working together in partnership with others in our community to support our school community through this challenging time. All over the country school systems work together to address the needs of the community they are situated in for the benefit of the children. Using research-based intervention

strategies such as Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) and Comprehensive Integrated 3-tiered Intervention (Ci3t), school systems are working to accentuate the positive aspects of students and their families. Reward systems are put in place to build up students by rewarding their positive actions during the school day.

Using a positive behavior support system to build up students will enable students to be successful and more engaged in their academic program. As the students move through the school system and into adulthood, they will become positive and productive members of the society and workforce.

Working with students who have experienced trauma, and their families is a large undertaking that requires coordination between many agencies and stakeholders. School systems are developing plans to address the needs of their students and families in unique and innovative ways. Some of the work includes training and communication with all staff members in the school versus training only being available for licensed teachers. This shift is one that will take some time to embrace given the time and financial implications of this change.

Summary

Some students and their families were under stress prior to COVID-19. Many have been dealing with the impacts of declining wages, inadequate housing, and traumatic events in their lives. As a school system, all the employees are committed to educating the whole child that comes to school each day.

By using research-based interventions and investing in training for all employees, a school will be better suited to deliver consistent support and instruction to all children.

Consistency of education is especially important for students and especially so for students who have experienced trauma.

“The ability to deal with a crisis is largely dependent on the structures that have been developed before the chaos arrives (George, 2004, p.67). Listening to the voices of the teachers will give insight to the district of what the needs are to support everyone in times of chaos and beyond.

Uncovering the lived experience of teachers within the SVSU working with all students offers the school district the opportunity to support teachers in a comprehensive manner that could lead to a decrease in teacher burnout. Studying teacher self-efficacy through the lens of the lived experience of a representation of elementary teachers gives district administration important information going forward.

Section Two: Practitioner Setting for the Study

Introduction

The research study will occur within the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union(SVSU). The school system is located in southern Vermont, bordering Massachusetts and New York. It comprises six elementary schools that feed into a middle school that is followed by a high school and technical center. There are nearly four thousand students receiving their education in the SVSU. Like other school districts, the SVSU has made strides to offer continuing education to employees and to support families in need.

Recently, there have been changes in the administrative structure at the district level that have resulted in some unease for teachers and paraprofessionals. One change involved moving from a special education department to a student services department. With these structural changes came personnel changes that are continuing to take time for staff to reconcile. A neighboring district is also being absorbed into the SVSU as of July 1st, giving many pauses as they try to determine if this change will affect their position within the supervisory union.

History of the Organization

Within the SVSU, there are roughly three thousand learners in grades PreK to 12th. There are several outreach facilities to address student needs in early education as well as those who need a more intensive behavior program for their emotional and physical safety. The elementary schools feed into one middle school that students attend and follow on into a high school which is attached to a career and technical school.

Organizational Analysis

The district operates within the political frame of the Four-Frame Model (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The four-frame model is a version of a mental model you could use to map out a

organization's current situation . The frames are structural, human resources, political and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The district recently made some changes to the administrative structure and moved from a special education department to a student services department. The SVSU also merged with a neighboring district in July. This has been a highly contentious subject, in which neither side wishes for the merger.

As an employee of this district, I believe there is at time some jockeying for power happening behind the scenes. Based on the current atmosphere of change, my organization would be in the jungle category as a metaphor for the political area (Bolman & Deal, 2008). According to Bolman and Deal (2008), the political frame views organizations as roiling arenas hosting ongoing contests of individual and group interests (p.194).

From a political perspective, goals, structure, and policies emerge from an ongoing process of bargaining and negotiation among major interest groups. The main characteristic of this metaphor is power, conflict and competition (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Morgan (2006) defines a metaphor as something that implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervades how we understand our world generally and that it creates distortions or constructive falsehoods (p. 4).

Using the Bolman and Deal (2008) four-frame model, the metaphors for organizational ethics are excellence, caring, justice and faith (p. 402). I believe that our organization's ethic is one of a combination of caring and excellence. The SVSU is a district that is striving for excellence. Given that many district level administrators were teachers themselves, there is an apparent sense of caring for teachers as well as students. "Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union believes that every child deserves the opportunity to receive what they need to develop their full academic and social potential" (<https://www.svsu.org>).

The central concepts for my organization that I assume are in play are power, conflict, competition, organizational policies . This description fits the current reality at the district level. The district abruptly switched from a special education leadership to one of student services. With the change in administrative structure came some new administrators overseeing areas that they had not experience of in the past. These changes have made both special education and classroom teachers unsure as they try to analyze the current power structure. The changes have left some teachers and support personnel to wonder who they report to, who is directly supervising them and their position expectations.

Leadership changes may lead many employees to have issues with the power structure and possibly blame people, the bureaucracy or thirst for power themselves. A change such as this could also manifest itself as anxiety for employees with reactions ranging from defensiveness, dependency, or fight/flight (Bolman, 2013).

The SVSU could be viewed as an organization in change. As noted by Hatch, an organization is in a state of change given the perspectives and interactions of those working within the organization (2006). Within the adjustments to the school system through administrative position changes or merger with a neighboring district, there are also the lasting impacts of the pandemic on how the organization moves forward. Hatch explained that it is challenging to see an organization through just one lens as it is evolving and responding to the needs of those in the organization (2006).

It is important to be transparent about my view of the district that may be influencing my assumptions about the organization. I began my professional career as a special education teacher in the district at Molly Stark Elementary School for fifteen years. I was recruited to come to a neighboring district to take the position of Director of Special Education. I held that

position for three years. At the end of that time, I decided to come back to my original district to resume my teaching career.

My role in the organization is that of an associate director of student services for students in grades 6-12. This is a departure from the long-standing model of special education leadership has been an adjustment for all involved. Where the district utilized a director of special education for many years, there is now a director of student services. The new administrative structure is designed to include all students in programming and assistance and not exclusively those students who receive special education.

The student services department is committed to working alongside educators and families to address the needs of students. If there is a concern from a parent or teacher that a student may benefit from an evaluation for special education services, then the student services team would coordinate the assessment and relay that information to the student's team. Through the evaluation process, the educational team would uncover strengths and challenges that the student possesses. The team would work together to develop a plan to help the student to succeed.

Emerging Questions & Epistemological Assumptions

Looking at the epistemological assumptions, or how I hope to reveal answers to my questions, I will look at this experience through the worldview of Social Constructivism. Creswell (2009) describes this world view as one in which the individual seeks to gain an understanding of the world in which they work and live (p.6). This method calls for the use of open-ended questions to gather information. One of the highlights of this worldview in the deep look at how individuals interact within their place of work as well as where they live (Creswell, 2009).

One of the assumptions of the Constructivist worldview is that absolute truth cannot be found and that the research is always going to be imperfect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.7). For this study one of the most pertinent key assumptions is that the research seeks to develop relevant statement that can explain a concern (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.7). Using this lens to view the phenomenon of how elementary teacher view their ability to teach students affected by trauma will help district leadership to see where there are opportunities for support to be given to their staff.

Organizational Analysis

The Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union functions as an organization in Flux and Transformation (Morgan. 2006). Within the metaphor of flux and transformation lies the theory of autopoiesis, which suggests that through self-reflection the school district can experience opportunities to evolve as an organization(p. 287). The research study will deliver findings to assist the district in their transformational process.

This school year, staff have been asked to change assignments, school to report to, and for some, their roles in the school. Having so many changes in staffing alongside a global pandemic has been challenging for all involved. The location of the SVSU can allow families to move between Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont easily. If families decide to move between states, they can access services and supports to provide for their children. School personnel have been asked to add students to their classrooms with little notice and to also bid farewell to students who have moved unexpectedly.

In analyzing the map of my organization, it has potential for innovation. One reason I believe members of the organization would be receptive to innovation is that there has been

turnover in staff. While this longevity of staff members is a positive statement to the school, it is a factor that can be a roadblock to innovative ideas.

A school system is an organization that has a complex structure and many individual and environmental factors that can influence the achievement of the system's goals and student success (Celik & Kahraman, 2018 p. 2721) Within a school, the teachers work together with other school personnel to deliver an education to the students of the community (Pierce, 2019). For the work to be successful, it is important that the members of the collective are included in the decision-making processes (Engin, 2020).

Teachers working together to address gaps in skills and accentuating strengths within the group, can provide an educational experience designed to give students the skills they need to be successful citizens. The expectations and limitations of the school community, factor into the development of strategic planning for education staff to deliver the education to the students (Pierce, 2019).

Thankfully, people are generally good and want to help each other succeed (Cameron et al., 2011). Positive social behavior is more likely to continue to grow and thrive versus negative behavior within an organization (Maitlis, 2011). Positive practices can serve to buffer an organization from the negative effects of trauma or distress by enhancing resiliency, solidarity, and a sense of efficacy (Cameron et al., 2011,p.288).

Organizationally, educators who are experiencing professional burnout voice the feelings of work overload and a lack of appreciation along with an ever-changing finish line for success (Maior et al., 2020). Teachers can also struggle with reactive modes of responding to challenges that increase negative feelings rather than reduce them (Maior et al., 2020). Support for teachers

as they navigate the multiple educational, safety and emotional needs of their students will stave off burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2020).

One of the challenges within a school is the natural organizational structure of individualism. Each educator operates in isolation as teachers retreat to their classrooms with “their” students (Banerjee et al., 2017). A teacher’s workplace can help frame their work satisfaction and their likelihood of burnout (Banerjee et al., 2017). Isolation can make it difficult for educators to get support if it is needed. Pods of students during the pandemic has produced socially isolating situations for students as well.

The teachers in a school building are active participants in the culture of the school. They can either find solidarity in the establishment or feel isolated from the other professionals they work with (Banerjee et al., 2017). Teachers can work collaboratively within their organization to promote a positive atmosphere, primarily when they exhibit challenging behaviors (Banerjee et al., 2017).

Trauma informed practices are becoming prevalent in schools across the nation (Blitz, Anderson, Saastamoinen, 2016). Trust between colleagues is at the foundation of collaborative work within any school setting (Brighthouse, Ladd, Loeb 2018).

Leadership Analysis

The SVSU operates in Bennington County, Vermont, servicing over three thousand students in eight public schools. There is also an early education program providing intervention for students ages 3-5. The school district works collaboratively with the local hospital, a regional technical center attached to the high school and the community college located in Bennington. The leadership structure of the district includes one superintendent, two assistant

superintendents, director of curriculum and instruction, a director of early childhood and a director of student services. The student services department was formed following the departure of the director of special education. Continuing within this new structure ,there is an associate director of student services for grades 6-12 and 2 Associate Directors sharing the elementary schools and one associate director for the early education department.

The district central office also includes many other professionals working in the areas of finance, technology, and human resources. While some district level administrators have worked in the SVSU for several years, there are also new positions that can confuse the employees as well as the community.

I have been an employee of the SVSU for twenty-four years, much of this time was as a special education teacher, and more recently as an associate director of student services. This length of service has afforded me a history of both operations in the past and how they seem to be evolving. Currently, district leadership is in the same crisis management mode as every district in the country as we work to educate students both remotely and in person while, attempting to make conditions safe for all.

Through research, it has been discovered that when a system uses participative leadership strategies, there is improvement in school climate and teacher outcomes as teachers voice a sense of control over their work environment (Benoliel & Barth, 2017). Participative leadership strategies are currently not the standard operating method in the district; this would be an avenue to explore if leadership believed in its merit.

Summary

In exploring the leadership of the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, the resonating fact is that the one constant is change. Leadership positions in individual schools and within the supervisory union have changed over time. For employees with a long history with the organization, there can be an element of distrust with the leadership related to prior events.

If members of the district are reluctant to have honest conversations about the leadership of the organization, there could be challenges to positive change. Brown talks about the need for trust for groups to work together and take risks, and for people to take risks to begin to trust each other (Brown, 2018).

Section Three: Scholarly Review of the Study

Introduction

Teachers utilize their social capital within the school setting daily navigate through the needs of their students (Edinger & Edinger, 2018). While classroom doors might be closed teachers depend on their network to support and encourage each other throughout the school day and beyond (Edinger & Edinger, 2018). Cultivating an active teaching force has been a challenge in the United States for some time, further necessitating a look into reasons teachers may decide to leave the profession (Edinger & Edinger, 2018).

Review of Current Literature

Teacher Self Efficacy

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and to execute courses of action required and designated types of performances” (p.391). Teachers use their personal and professional judgment throughout the school day. Self-efficacy is a cognitive symbol of personal beliefs about how individuals are capable to perform certain tasks and is influential in the success, optimism, determination, and greater efforts of individuals in challenging conditions (Celik & Kahraman, 2018).

How a teacher feels about themselves and confidence in their abilities can factor into decisions he or she makes (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). There is a connection between how confident a teacher feels and how competently they manage their classroom(Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). Students’ opportunities to learn and develop skills are classroom management components that teachers are responsible for (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

In the past, it was thought that classroom management was a catch-all term to include classroom behavior. In looking more deeply at the concept of classroom management is about

more than behavior (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). As we look at students who live in poverty or with other challenges, it is essential to note that teacher confidence in creating a safe learning environment might break the cycle of disadvantaged students and incarceration (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). Societal inequity, racism, and discrimination play a role in the obstacles a student can encounter as they travel through the educational system, generation after generation (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). The management system of the classroom has implications for how students function in society and interacts with others (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

A teacher uses their social, emotional competency skills throughout their school day (Oberle et al., 2020). How a teacher conducts themselves concerning their interactions with students causally relates to their outcomes (Maier et al., 2020). If a teacher identifies as unsatisfied in their current job assignment, that dissatisfaction can manifest itself in the interactions with students involved (Maier et al., 2020).

Teachers feel confident when they can adequately navigate the students' needs and learning styles they are working with (Yildizli, 2019). If a person does not have a positive sense of self efficacy, they risk giving up easily when faced with a challenge (Yildizli, 2019). When a teacher displays a positive self-efficacy, they likely have an optimistic view of the achievement of the students they work with (Yildizli, 2019).

Using innovative ideas and embracing collaborative practices are looked upon more favorably when a teacher feels a stronger sense of self-efficacy (Banerjee et al., 2017). To understand a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, one must realize that it is not solely about confidence in ability but also confidence in motivating others to learn (Delale-O'Connor et al.,

2017). The unwavering dedication that teachers show as they continue to work through challenges to ensure students are given what they need to learn is unparalleled (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

Bridging the gap between the classroom and the students' homes also gives the teacher the ability to recognize traumas as they affect the students (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). This knowledge can help teachers work effectively with students, although this is a gap in teacher preparation training.

As teachers evolve in their careers, they develop their teaching style that reflects their academic and personal knowledge and experience (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Sometimes, a school system's constraints can inhibit a teacher's ability to transform in their teaching style in their career (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). At times like this, a teacher may begin to doubt their career choice.

A teacher's self-efficacy, along with their knowledge of the subjects they teach, can all combine to the teachers' behavior as it relates to how they present material to students (Herman et al., 2018). Looking at past accomplishments construct a person's self-efficacy beliefs (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Like students, if a teacher experiences success with a task, they are more likely to attempt the task again (Herman et al., 2018). This goes the other way as well, and if a teacher experiences a lack of success with a task, they are reluctant to attempt the task again for fear of failure (Herman et al., 2018).

It is important to remember the direct correlation between a teacher's self-efficacy and the performance between a teacher's self-efficacy and his or her students (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). There is a connection between teachers' self-efficacy and their potential for burnout (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019).

Motivation can play a role in helping teachers feel as if they can accomplish their goals (Engin, 2020). When teachers are experiencing burnout, they suffer from diminished motivation (Engin, 2020). Motivation both to learn (students) and to impart knowledge (teachers) works together to fulfill each person's professional goals (Yildizli, 2019).

The basis for the decisions comes from that teacher's belief in their abilities (DelaleO'Connor et al., 2017). Guskey and Passaro (1994) stated that teacher efficacy is a teacher's belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated (p.4).

Schools are places for students to learn and for teachers to perform or teach students the information that they need (Yildizli, 2019). A teacher's effectiveness to deliver an education to students can be impacted by how they view themselves as an educator and as a person (Yildizli, 2019). If a teacher has a positive sense of self- efficacy the duties of imparting knowledge and engaging students will come more easily and seem attainable (Yildizli, 2019).

Self- efficacy is a key factor in teacher effectiveness as belief in planning, organizing and the ability to accomplish those goals that are necessary to achieve educational goals (Celik & Kahraman, 2018, p.2722). Teachers have the ability to be innovative in their teaching strategies which can help them to remain positive about the possible outcomes (Yildizli, 2019).

“People have always strived to control the events that affect their lives. By exerting influence in spheres over which they can command some control, they are better able to realize desired futures and to forestall undesired ones” (Bandura, 1997 p.1). People have a fundamental belief that they can affect change in their lives, or they will cease to try to achieve anything

(Bandura, 1997). Believing in your own abilities in your professional life can give a glimpse into how a person will cope during times of adversity (Bandura, 1997)

When a person is performing an action intentionally, it is referred to as agency (Bandura, 1997, p.3). People often believe that they are working toward a specific goal, yet the results may not be what is desired. Personal efficacy factors into professional efficacy as demonstrated when an educator believes that nothing, they can do to improve their condition, they will likely stop trying (Bandura, 1997).

The most important characteristics of teachers with high self-efficacy is that they view working with students as important and valuable (Yildizli, 2019, p.113). In fact, these teachers understand the dual role of both challenging those ready to learn beyond the curriculum as well as to support those who need differentiated instruction (Yildizli, 2019).

Implications for student achievement

Exposure to poverty, loss, abuse, and violence creates the type of neurophysiological stress response that potentially interferes with children's ability to autonomously regulate their emotions and behavior (Cooper, 2010; Jaycox et al., 2012; Jensen, 2009). When children have traumatic experiences, they have a higher risk of developing a range of physical, mental health, and behavioral difficulties that will affect them in both school and life (Cooper, 2010; Gershoffe et al, 2007)

In 2020, Gizem Engin, of Ege University conducted a study on primary school students' achievements and motivation as related to teacher motivation and self-efficacy as well as other factors (Engin, 2020). He found that there was an increase in the students' academic achievement that went along with the teachers increase in motivation levels. Student

achievement levels were also higher when the teacher demonstrated higher self-efficacy levels (Engin, 2020). The research results pointed to the statement that “teachers with a high level of motivation can plan, implement and pursue their educational duties more consistently which brings out higher academic achievement” (Engin, 2020, p.18)

There is a plethora of research detailing the lives of students living within traumatic circumstances all over our country (Rochester, 2019). If educators are striving to be successful in educating these students, there are ways to garner optimum outcomes (Rochester, 2019). One of the techniques to hope to foster success teaching students affected by trauma may be to develop an understanding of the student’s world rather than expecting that they will understand the world of the school system (Rochester, 2019). This engagement with a group other than one’s own will help to develop a critical conscience (Rochester, 2019). This emergence of critical conscience will help to develop a sense of resilience in educators (Rochester, 2019).

Teachers spend time and energy planning lessons designed to move a student’s education forward. Each area included in planning these lessons are affected by a teacher’s beliefs in themselves as a person as well as an educator (Salgado et al., 2018). Research has shown that teachers have the greatest effect on student performance, despite all possible outside influences in a student’s life (Salgado et al., 2018). In fact, if a teacher has a strong sense of self-efficacy, they will be undeterred by the challenges befalling a student and work diligently to educate the student (Salgado et al., 2018).

Instructional Leadership can open avenues for the support that educators may need who are struggling with self-efficacy issues (Qadach et al., 2020). When school principals include teachers in the overall vision of the school, teachers become invested in the mission and are open to working together to reach the collective goals (Qadach et al., 2020). Lending this

support and encouragement can reduce the incidents of teacher burnout and resignations (Qadach et al., 2020).

A teacher's sense of efficacy is likely to be especially influential on your children because their beliefs about their capabilities are still relatively unstable, peer structures are relatively informal and young children make little use of social comparison information in evaluating their capabilities (Bandura, 1986, p.242). A person's perceptions of their abilities can happen while the person continues to have a healthy self-esteem, especially if the person did not place a great deal of value in the unsuccessful endeavor (Bandura, 1997).

If a teacher has become robotic in their teaching and disengaged from the tasks at hand, they in essence preserve their self-esteem from the potential sense of failure. This phenomenon does not stop a person from feeling a sense of pride for a job well done (Bandura, 1997). It has been shown that there is a connection between how a teacher views his or her abilities and how they manage the students in their classroom (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). A teacher's sense of self-efficacy will guide them and frame the belief that they are an active participant in the act of teaching (Khan et al., 2015).

Teachers depend on their sense of confidence throughout the school day both when the lessons are going well, and when things are not going according to plan (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). When a teacher believes that they can overcome challenges and continue to educate the students before them, they are relying on their sense of self-efficacy to carry on (Delale, O'Connor et al., 2017).

Teacher efficacy is "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she can affect student performance" (Zhou, 2019, p.73). When a teacher experiences success it will raise their efficacy beliefs as instances of repeated perceived failures will decrease the feelings of self-efficacy

(Zhou, 2019). A teacher's attitude can be reflected in their teaching style and how they compose themselves professionally (Yildizli, 2019).

For students to have access to the curriculum, they need to feel safe to take academic risks while feeling physically safe in the classroom setting (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). The classroom atmosphere can give a glimpse both into the learning as well as the social hierarchy of the students (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). At the helm, the classroom teacher must balance the emotional, physical, and educational needs of all the students (Banerjee et al., 2017).

Traditionally, teachers have balanced the demands of educating students from all backgrounds with individual needs while attempting to teach in a way that students can be deemed proficient according to standardized high stakes tests. COVID-19 has made this task even more challenging for educators and continues to do so as the nation moves forward into recovery and next steps. The coming years will give building and district leaders some much needed information for thoughtful student-centered planning that will benefit both teachers and students.

Collective Teacher Efficacy

Bandura (1986) explained the concept of collective efficacy in relation to teachers. In this scenario, teachers believe that together they can affect positive change by working together. Bandura stated, "perceived personal and collective efficacy differ in the limit of the agency, but in both forms, efficacy beliefs have similar sources, serve similar functions and operate through similar processes (p.478). Collective teacher efficacy can be regarded as an extension of individual teacher efficacy as the teachers functioning as a faculty (Zhou, 2019). School leaders

can help teachers band together to assist each other to develop a greater sense of collective efficacy which will have a positive impact on the students at the school (Pierce, 2019).

Trauma Affected Students

Pre COVID-19, schools have been serving communities with high rates of poverty and despair. The poverty rate in America in 2020 was 17.8 %(<https://www.pbs.org>). The political landscape has been deeply divided and some industries have either closed or relocated out of the country. These community challenges affect the school system as the school students are exposed to significant family and environmental stressors that impact their ability to learn and feel safe (Anderson et al., 2015).

If schools want to address the whole student, complete with academic and non-academic stressors that affect them, an entire school approach will be necessary to make this possible (Anderson et al., 2015). Bloom (1995) identifies strong relationships between teachers and other classroom staff as a fundamental component of trauma-responsive care.

Perfect, Turley, Carlson, Yohannan & Giles estimate that approximately two out of every three school-age children are likely to have experienced at least one traumatic event by age seventeen (2016). Traumatic responses, or how trauma shows itself, can depend on each person's individual experiences (Gross, 2020). Each child may exhibit signs of trauma differently, so it may be challenging for the adults in their lives, especially if the child is not demonstrating outward behaviors (Bell et al., 2013).

There are what Gross (2020) calls "Big E" traumas (p.13) which include events that are one time or repeated circumstances that lead to the disruption of a sense of safety, attachment,

and stability, especially for a child. These events can be very traumatic for students (Gross, 2020; SAMHSA, 2014).

Trauma at an early age changes the foundation in which a child builds the rest of their life. If there is trauma during the formative years, all other experiences will be viewed through that lens, affecting the child into adulthood (Gross, 2020). Gross (2020) explains that the circuits related to emotions and cognitive abilities can cause a shut down if traumas happen in a child's life.

When a school system adopts a trauma-responsive approach, they commit to operating in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of all families (Wilson, Pence & Conradi, 2013). To thoroughly implement a trauma-informed approach, the school system needs to develop a graduated training schedule that allows all school personnel to gain knowledge and experience (Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016).

Children who experience trauma suffer an immediate negative impact on their ability to learn and retain information within the school setting (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Further exacerbating the situation is that when a child experiences traumatic events early in their lives when the brain is still forming its pathways, its infrastructure is negatively affected (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Students can struggle with cognitive deficits, mental health concerns, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, physical symptoms, and substance abuse because of trauma during childhood (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019).

During trauma, the parts of the brain needed to survive by shutting down or leaving the situation take over (Sciaraffa et al., 2018). The other features that regulate emotion and thinking cannot function properly (Gross, 2020). Within the brain, the amygdala and hippocampus, along with the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex, are affected by trauma (Gross, 2020).

Trauma that happens at an early age can have a lasting detrimental effect on children and their developing brain (Sciaraffa et al., 2018).

The areas in the brain that are potentially affected by trauma are responsible for censoring how we act, think, remember, problem-solve, analyze information, create new ideas, and generally engage in creativity and innovation (Gross, 2020, p.54). Throughout a school day a student or teacher can be retriggered by a memory, or other sensory input. When this happens the brain releases cortisol, thus disrupting their neurodevelopment along with the immune system (Gross, 2020). Neural pathways can also be damaged by the effects of repeated traumatic events throughout a person's life leading to either over or under reaction to situations (Gross, 2020).

This disruption can happen in the lives of children who live in homes where there is substance abuse is present (Sciaraffa et al., 2018); (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019)). Children living in unsafe environments are at an increased risk of using drugs themselves, experiencing challenges in school, and suffering from anxiety (Brundage & Levine, 2019).

One of the significant factors for children in this country is the opioid epidemic on a national scale (Brundage & Levine, 2019). While there are various efforts to help the adults struggling with addiction, there is a lack of focus on the children living with those who are addicted (Brundage & Levine, 2019).

It was noted that there were eight million children in the United States who lived in households with at least one parent with a substance abuse disorder from 2009 to 2014, with most of these children being under the age of 5 (Brundage & Levine, 2019, p.5) Brundage & Levine also note that over 2 million grandparents had taken over the role of primary caregiver for their grandchildren due to drug abuse within the family (2019, p.5)

Brundage and Levine (2019) explain that according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rise in opioid overdose deaths can be outlined in three distinct waves, with the first one beginning with an increase in the prescribing of opioids in the 1990s resulting in overdose deaths. The second wave began in 2010, with increases in overdose deaths involving heroin. The third wave started in 2013 with significant increases in overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids, often including illicitly manufactured fentanyl (Brundage & Levine, 2019, p.9). A longitudinal study of children at risk for abuse and neglect found that by age 12 only 10% of those children had experienced no adverse childhood experiences (Sciaraffa et al., 2018).

Often children who are victims of trauma may demonstrate behavior outbursts or become withdrawn. Untrained professionals may see these behaviors as defiant and recommend punitive punishment for the misbehavior (Anderson et al., 2015). What is coming to light is that deep in the neuro network of some children who have experienced trauma, they fight, flee, or disassociate from the experience in profoundly ingrained and automatic (Anderson et al., 2015).

Gross (2020) defines trauma as a derivative from the Greek for “physical wound” coupled with the psychological definition as an emotional injury (p.9). Research has shown that if students have a higher number of adverse family experiences, they are more likely to have a higher mental health diagnosis (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Children who are subject to abuse may not know that their experiences are trauma, especially if the abuse is cumulative and commonplace in their home (Gross, 2020). “There are three parts to the trauma equation: traumatic events for some, responses to those events, and some of the responses leading to and manifesting as trauma symptomatology” (Gross, 2020

p.10). If a student has all three of these conditions, then a whole team approach could be necessary for treatment (Gross, 2020).

Gross makes a distinction between traumatic events and the people that these events happen to (2020). When we look at the person and what has happened to them, we are then more readily able to give support and assistance (Gross, 2020). Some children will not experience the posttraumatic effects of trauma and will utilize resilience techniques to move beyond the trauma (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Children who have been impacted by adverse childhood experiences (ACES) often experience social, emotional, and cognitive challenges and may make unsafe choices, struggle with learning, or suffer from interpersonal relationships (Cavanaugh, 2016). These challenges can become evident in a school setting through academic struggles or behavior incidents (Cavanaugh, 2016). At times, the trauma may manifest itself as aggressive behaviors, attendance issues, delays in skills needed for school success, or the student withdrawing from others in the school environment (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Perceptions of students who experience trauma can be different from other students. A student who lives in a traumatic environment may view the setting as usual, where a diverse student might view it as chaotic and unsafe (Gross, 2020). Students and adults alike can be affected by large traumatic events such as natural disasters or smaller traumas that happen daily and accumulate to give general instability in a person's life (Gross, 2020). The effects of traumatic events in childhood have the possibility of lingering into adulthood negatively that stunts children's possible future if not addressed (Bell et al., 2013).

Vicarious Trauma

Cavanaugh (2016) describes vicarious trauma as the needs of adults who work directly with children experiencing trauma. This can also be referred to as compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, or secondary victimization (Cavanaugh, 2016). When a person works with others who have been traumatized, they run the real risk of falling into the category of secondary victimization (Cavanaugh, 2016).

As explained by Gross (2020), vicarious trauma is an indirect result of trauma suffered by others and experienced by those who work with those traumatized (p.64). A person experiencing vicarious trauma will typically experience a threat to and change their view on life, their story, and their sense of hope (Gross, 2020, p.64).

The environment that the child lives in presents the problem, not the child. Some children are expected to function in an environment that forces them to adopt coping strategies that do not work in a typical setting (Carello & Butler, 2015). According to Gross (2020), “Burnout may occur precisely because one is with humans (and all their emotions) for so long and the effort is exhausting” (p.63).

Schools can help students struggling with trauma issues by not removing the trauma-sensitive or difficult to talk about material from the curriculum (Carello & Butler, 2015). Given the high rates of trauma among children, along with the likelihood of community challenges, teachers can act in compassionate ways to offset the trauma being experienced (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017).

Teachers internalize the student’s trauma as it becomes apparent which can lead to compassion fatigue (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019). Paradoxically, when a teacher is experiencing compassion fatigue because of vicarious trauma, they may become desensitized to the student as

a survival strategy (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019). The bleakness of the situation coupled with feelings of overwhelm can activate an internal flight response from the adult working with students affected by trauma (Hupe & Stevenson, 2019).

For those affected, this can look different depending on the person. Some who have experienced this may lose sleep or have a preoccupation with the traumatic event they have knowledge of or even avoid talking about the traumatic event completely (Cavanaugh, 2016). Anderson et al. explain that if schools are working to understand all students, one of the first steps would be to abandon the zero-tolerance policy (2015).

Children who have been traumatized will often not react expectedly; at times, these children's actions are interpreted as violent when it is not intended that way (Anderson et al. 2015). Some students' internalized behaviors could result in suspension when the direct opposite should be the outcome. In these instances, suspending or punitive punishments can retrigger the trauma for some students (Anderson et al., 2015). In extreme cases, students who exhibit challenging or dangerous behaviors over a sustained time frame may be referred to attend a different school with a more comprehensive or therapeutic approach (Anderson et al., 2015). Students who are responded to punitively, are at a double disadvantage as they did not ask for the trauma to happen to them, nor are they intentionally acting out (Gross, 2020).

When a student appears to be engaged in behavior that would make an adult believe it was from a recent trauma, it may be a delayed reaction that re-triggers the student's trauma (Gross, 2020). Some of the confusion for adults working with students occurs as the delayed behaviors can seem challenging to trace to their origin and can also produce an emotional response that does not always match the situation (Gross, 2020). When affected children grow up without intervention to mediate these traumatic incidents, the adults they turn into often

continue the same pattern of behaviors without understanding where they are coming from (Gross, 2020).

It is a common idea that all children should come to school ready to learn (Lawson et al., 2019). Some of the roadblocks for students to be prepared to learn can be student attendance, school engagement, and other challenges in the student's home environment (Lawson et al., 2019). As explained by Delale-O'Connor et al., even with the challenges of working with children who have a history of trauma, there has been little attention paid to the needs of the teachers who work with these students (2017).

Researchers have found that school personnel are experiencing through students, that the rise in family poverty along with addictions and other familial challenges has created barriers to student learning (Lawson et al., 2019). A family's state of poverty can impact students some of these can include family food insecurity, parental stress, and possible substance abuse (Lawson et al., 2019).

Teachers play an essential role in assisting students who have been affected by trauma, including recognizing that the student requires help. They can also be instrumental in referring him or her to the appropriate people to get them the services that they and their family might need (Bell et al., 2013). If a student receives help and acknowledgment of the trauma in their lives while they are in school, they tend to complete the intervention (Bell et al., 2013).

Consistency in approach and response to interventions within the entire school community is a component for students in general, and it is critical for students who have experienced trauma (Cavanaugh, 2016). Staff members can help students strive for consistency by giving them warnings and training for possibly upsetting events such as fire drills and

changes in routines while continuing to strive to have stable expectations in place when possible (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Compassion Fatigue

Larson and Stamm (2008) proposed compassion satisfaction to be “the sense of fulfillment or pleasure that therapists derive from doing their work well” (p.282). Compassion fatigue is made up of three elements: the level of satisfaction a person gets from their work, how well a person feels that they are doing the job, and the level of support they feel they have from coworkers (Larson & Stamm, 2008).

The average teacher wears many hats and engages in many jobs during the school day (Koenig et al., 2018). It has been found that teaching is one of the most stressful careers a person can enter, rivaling other community jobs such as emergency medical workers and those engaged in social work (Koenig et al., 2018). The stresses that teachers deal with daily can lead to burnout or compassion fatigue (Koenig et al., 2018, p.260). When teachers feel stress and possible burnout, this can negatively impact the students in the classroom (Koenig et al., 2018).

Families impacted by poverty could face mental health challenges from situations within their home environment that prompts a trauma response (Lawson et al., 2019). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are evaluated to ascertain the level of support and intervention a student would need from the school system (Lawson et al., 2019). Information regarding the severity of traumatic events shows that children often suffer from long term effects of these disruptions to their typical development.

As each child is different, so can be how they demonstrate the impact of trauma on their lives (Lawson et al., 2019). Some students display their dysregulated feelings by acting out and

disrupting classes, while others contain their feelings and make it challenging for professionals to properly assist them correctly (Lawson et al., 2019).

In general, teachers are not trained or prepared to work therapeutically with students who have experienced trauma (Lawson et al., 2019). This lack of awareness can become challenging for teachers, as they can experience secondary traumatic stress (STS). No one is spared from STS; each school employee, from the cafeteria worker to the principal, can be impacted by a student experiencing trauma (Lawson et al., 2019). According to Lawson et al, Untreated STS loom among the hidden causes of adult disengagement, depression, mood swings, sleep deprivation, substance abuse, divorce, and problematic educator workforce turnover (p.423).

If a school community can develop mechanisms to detect trauma in students, perhaps the same attention can be paid to adults who work with traumatized youth (Lawson et al., 2019). To fully embrace the concept of a trauma-informed school, both the students and the adults who work with the students need the benefit of care and understanding. Through a partnership with mental health agencies and community support, children and adults alike can receive important interventions to process traumatic events in their personal or professional lives (Lawson et al., 2019).

Schools employ mechanisms to determine the academic and behavioral needs of students. Professionals, both internally and outside of the school, are used to assisting students and their families (Lawson et al., 2019). Processes such as these have generally been sufficient to address student needs. Children and families' needs surpass traditional support and intervention (Lawson et al., 2019). As teachers and other professionals are exposed to the stories

the students share, they fall victim to the cost of caring, necessary to impact their longevity in their career (Delale,O'Connor et al., 2017).

The idea that a professional adult in a school setting would be traumatized by a student is a relatively new concept for people to understand. Within the development of trauma-informed schools, not all aspects of the possibility of secondary trauma were envisioned (Lawson et al., 2019). Preservice teacher education does not have a standard approach to secondary trauma as a possible component to a teacher's daily life in a school setting (Lawson, et al., 2019).

Secondary stress syndrome has been associated with burnout and compassion fatigue (Delale,O'Connor et al., 2017). Burnout refers to job-related exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and low self-efficacy (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020, p2). Researchers have found high occupational stress rates, including burnout and secondary stress syndrome, among teachers (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020, p 2) The effects of burnout include negative student behaviors and lack of academic resources as well as reduced job satisfaction that can contribute to teacher turnover (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020).

The difference between compassion fatigue and burnout is the amount of time it takes for the condition to manifest itself. Compassion fatigue can occur with just one interaction. burnout is a gradual condition that develops over time and accumulates exposure to traumatic events (Koenig et al., 2018). witness the effects of the trauma that students experience along with all the stories the students might tell them regarding their lives outside of school (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017)

To continue to work effectively with all students, teachers need the tools and understanding to address their secondary trauma in a way that allows them the ability to continue to work with students in a meaningful manner (Lawson et al., 2019). With the proper training and support, educators can begin to protect themselves from future events and heal from prior traumatic experiences (Lawson et al., 2019).

Trauma literacy is based on the knowledge of how adverse childhood experiences produce trauma, how primary trauma and secondary trauma are related, the symptoms and estimated pathways of secondary trauma, similar conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, ways to plan and prioritize trauma-related learning (Lawson et al., 2019 p. 424).

Compassion satisfaction is an individual's satisfaction with the positive feelings of help and their sense of self-efficacy related to helping (Christian-Brandt et al, 2020). Compassion satisfaction might serve a protective role against compassion fatigue among helping professionals (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020, p3).

Trauma-Informed Approach

Schools engaged in trauma-informed care need to work on a large and small scale and ensure safety for all students in their care (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). This work often begins with agreeing on a shared understanding of the lives that the students live in (Gross, 2020). Teachers buy-in and district administration support to a long-term project that will include difficult work is essential for this shift in thinking (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) (2014) outlined four key assumptions underlying trauma-informed approaches: (a) a realization of the widespread prevalence and impact of trauma, (b) a recognition of the signs of traumatic

exposure, and (c) a response grounded in evidence-based practices that (d) resists re-traumatization of individuals (Christian-Brandt, et al, 2020, p2). Trauma-informed schools also have the added responsibility of responding with cultural sensitivity to the students' plight and families in the school community (Cavanaugh, 2016). Scheduled check-ins with crucial staff and families' opportunities to connect with school personnel can facilitate meaningful communication for every culture's family.

In all schools, adults are working with students affected by trauma, even if they do not realize this while interacting with them (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Other organizations and community-based professions interact with people who may be experiencing trauma in their lives (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). There is an awareness that many students in our schools live in situations, currently or in the past, that have led them not to feel safe from harm (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Evans & Coccoma (2014) explains that trauma-informed practice is focused on the method that "encourages providers to approach their clients' personal, mental, and relational distress with an informed understanding of the impact trauma can have on the entire human experience." (p.1). An essential facet of trauma-informed practice is that it must represent a safe space for the traumatized person (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Trauma-informed practice should focus on educational strategies across a continuum of multitiered systems of support (MTSS) such as school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS) (Cavanaugh, 2016). Trauma-informed schools systematically acknowledge the prevalence of trauma and recognize how trauma can impact children, families and educators, and school staff and incorporate a comprehensive perspective on the trauma that enacts trauma informed practices throughout the school system (Gubi et al., 2018).

Trauma-informed settings can be created and sustained by ensuring safety, establishing trustworthiness, maximizing choice, maximizing collaboration, and prioritizing empowerment (Fallot & Harris, 2009). These skills are essential to making trauma-informed settings work productively and safely for all involved (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Trauma-informed is not just applied to specific practices but is meant to include an entire organizational structure and has a chance of being successful if it is reflected in its purpose, policies, and mission (Cavanaugh, 2016).

Schools using a trauma-informed approach utilize their wealth of knowledge when they are implementing this approach. An organization must strive to make safety paramount, trustworthy, and transparent with all stakeholders (Rigard et al., 2015). Utilizing colleagues for support and collaboration and acknowledging the cultural and other possible factors within the school is an essential step to changing school culture from one of punitive punishment to trauma informed (Rigard et al., 2015).

Teachers can choose to work outside of the school with mental health professionals as part of a treatment team with students or utilize strategies within the classroom setting to benefit them (Bell et al., 2013). Schools offer a plethora of possible interventions based on a whole school initiative for positive behavior support and multi-tiered support systems that can be specialized to assist students in need and students in general (Bell et al., 2013). Schools that embrace the philosophy of informed trauma practice allow their professionals to explore the dynamics of trauma and how it affects children and families. The impact of trauma on both the student and the school adults focuses on all staff in a school operating as trauma informed (Gubi et al., 2019).

Trauma-informed school psychologists have the skills set to recognize trauma in various ways and refer students and their families to assistance and support rooted in evidence-based practices (Gubi et al., 2019). Focusing on both recognizing the addressing trauma in students and making families aware of possible interventions may result in students being successful in school and parents becoming faithful members in the educational process (Gubi et al., 2019).

Imagine if schools responded to trauma-exposed students' needs by integrating effective practices, programs, and procedures into all aspects of an organization and culture through professional development and training? In that case, there is a higher chance of success for all students (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Placing a priority on adopting a trauma-informed approach, schools embark on a mission to completely shift the school's thinking and operation for the students' emotional and educational needs (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). When a school utilizes a shared understanding of trauma exposure and builds on the knowledge to train all the staff, they are using a trauma-informed approach with fidelity (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). One of the most critical building blocks for a school to begin their work in a trauma-informed manner is establishing who the classroom staff, teaching assistants, and other vital community members work closely with the students (Anderson, Blitz, Saastamoinen, 2015).

How all school staff works with children are trained to impact the classroom environment and the school climate (Anderson et al., 2015). Schools that are viewed as successful develop a caring and collaborative culture where all students are fully included, and there is genuine shared leadership within the school (Anderson et al., 2015). Burgess & Mayes (2007) go so far as to posit that without training and support, classroom staff remains in a subordinate position to the classroom teacher, affecting their standing in the classroom.

Forming a reciprocal relationship with all adults in the classroom begins with open communication and the teamwork model for decision making (Anderson et al., 2015) . Some of the roles are muddy as classroom teachers are often regarded as supervisors when they may not be working in that capacity. This ambiguity and lack of clear supervision structure leaves all employees on shaky ground and takes away from work at hand (Anderson et al., 2015),

The most crucial aspect of trauma-informed care is to make every effort to minimize the risk of accidentally retraumatizing those involved (Carello & Butler, 2015). There are also risks to others working with the student's experiencing trauma, such as vicarious traumatization or completely new traumatization (Carello & Butler, 2015). According to Gross (2020), teachers can experience secondary trauma that can affect their ability to do their jobs effectively. At times secondary trauma can be attributed to less patience, irregular sleep patterns, or relationship challenges that affect educators and support staff who work with students who are living with trauma (Gross, 2020).

A trauma-informed approach includes working from the belief that a student's actions causally relate to their lived experiences (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Reframing responses to student behavior can prevent misunderstandings related to behavior. Changing the question from "What is wrong with this student?" to "What happened to this student?" can make a big difference in how an intervention happens for a student (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Moving forward into strategies for working with all students, if the approach is entrenched in the negative and students are expected to move over it, persevere, be resilient or think differently, then we are falling victim to deficit thinking that is a different direction than we should be headed (Gross, 2020). School-based trauma-informed care is a new way of

switching up the negative trajectory of teacher wellness, burnout, and job satisfaction (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020)

In trauma-informed schools, personnel at all levels have a basic understanding of trauma informed trauma and how trauma affects student learning and behavior (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Harris & Falot (2001) explain that to be trauma-informed is to understand how violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives of individuals involved. School staff are then left to apply that understanding to the school environment in such a way as to accommodate trauma survivor's needs (Harris & Falot, 2001). For trauma-informed schools to be genuinely responsive to the people they work with, there needs to be an understanding that the work must happen within all levels of the school system. Students can feel free of being re-triggered if the training to be trauma-responsive happens from district administration to all adults working in the school (Gross, 2020).

If the implementation of trauma-informed care is not fully systemic, it runs the risk of harming the progress students could make with a comprehensive system (Gross, 2020). Harris & Falot (2001) explain the intersection of understanding regarding trauma-informed and trauma-specific services by replacing the word trauma with disability. Drawing upon the work of universal design, trauma-informed practice allows for every teacher to access trauma intervention similarly as the practice of universal design works to give access to all students in a school (Carella & Butler, 2015)

Trauma-informed practices include social-emotional development and problem-solving skills that classroom staff can deliver daily, thus making this a consistent factor in the student's life (Anderson et al., 2015). Cavanaugh (2016) goes so far as to say that schools are often the primary provider of mental health services for a student. For a school to perform in a manner

that helps traumatized students, all staff must be treated uniformly and afforded the same opportunities for training and support (Anderson et al., 2015). Teachers buy-in and having a shared understanding of the problems associated with traumatized students are crucial for the school to both make progress and refrain from re-traumatizing students (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Teacher Burnout

Burnout has been described as a condition that continues over time as a direct response to a position's challenges (de Vera Garcia, M. Inmaculada Vicente & Gambarte, 2019). The person experiencing burnout will have feelings of exhaustion (mental or physical) and negative feelings toward their abilities and position (Maior et al., 2020). Teachers using their coping skills and resiliency along with a strong sense of self-efficacy can work through feelings of burnout (de Vera Garcia, M. Inmaculada Vicente & Gambarte, 2019) The practice of high-demand decision making throughout the day with an increasing number of students and curriculum demands can lead to the feeling of teacher burnout (Iancu et al., 2018). When adults or children are overwhelmed with challenging situations they can suffer from an overload to their nervous system (Lipsky, 2018)

Over the past decade, the demands, and stressors that teachers deal with have increased (Oberle et al., 2020; Simões & Calheiros, 2019). Teachers who leave the education profession name burnout as the primary reason for doing so (Oberle et al., 2020). Some of the reasons that folks have decided to leave teaching are not enough to support student behaviors, challenging student needs, and high stakes curriculum expectations (Oberle et al., 2020).

There is an increased risk of burnout for teachers because they work so closely with others (Yildizli, 2019). A teacher can experience exhaustion and a general loss of interest in the

aspects of their lives that used to be joyful (Yildizli, 2019). When a teacher is affected by low self-efficacy, the instruction and interactions with the students are impacted (Yildizli, 2019). It has been found that if a teacher has a lower sense of self-efficacy and is asked to deal with troublesome issues in the classroom, they are more likely to suffer from burnout (Yildizli, 2019).

Teacher burnout affects both the professional parts of a teachers' life and their physical health (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2020). When a teacher feels demoralized, they no longer believe that the practices of the school system are in the best interests of the students (Santoro, 2020). When a teacher feels burnout, there is an inclination to distance themselves from their students (Oberle et al., 2020). This disengagement can increase students' negative behavior, perpetuating a negative cycle (Oberle et al., 2020). If a teacher is exposed to a stressful environment for an extended period, they can fall victim to burnout (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019).

This burnout condition follows the teacher's disengagement from the damaging factors of their job (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Burnout can affect both colleagues and students as the concerned teacher may also project negative thoughts and cynical feelings toward others, thus creating a toxic work environment for many (Simoes & Calheiros, 2019). Burnout can be defined as a state of not feeling typical emotions or accomplishments along with negative feelings about their profession (Corbin et al., 2019).

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

My epistemological viewpoint relies upon interviewing elementary educators and interpreting the information regarding their experiences. Using a transformative worldview as the lens provides the researcher a voice for the participants, raising the consciousness or

advancing an agenda to change and improve their lives. The results of the inquiry can become a united voice for reform and change (Creswell, 2018, p.9). For the purposes of this study the intent is to support teachers through learning how they perceive their success in the role of educator working with trauma affected students.

My researcher identity stems from my ontological views as a researcher. While I realize that my interest in the research topics is drawn from my personal experiences, my intent is to share the information with those who continue to work with trauma affected students. Within this research there is the understanding that we are operating within a shared vision of reality. I can reflect on prior experiences to bolster what I am researching, while I acknowledge that there are circumstances that are unique to a particular group or individual.

The axiological viewpoint that I most generally associate with is one to create knowledge for understanding a situation. I also hope to raise awareness and give voice to teachers working with trauma affected students in hopes of avoiding teacher burnout and leaving the field of education.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are grounded in critical theory (Glesne, 2006). According to Glesne (2006, p.10), “Critical theory research takes you toward describing “what is” which is the intention of interpretivism, and toward describing “what could be.” The hope is that this study unmasks some of the attributes of trauma and teacher efficacy in our current schools. The hope is that results of the study can be disseminated to help support teachers.

Brookfield (1987) also states that “critical thinkers are actively engaged with life, they see themselves as creating and recreating aspects of their personal, workplace, and political

lives. They appreciate creativity, they are innovators, and they exude a sense that life is full of possibilities” (p.13). The possibility that teachers can lead a satisfying professional life is an attainable goal.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) explained that critical theory is in play to attempt to explain the deficits of a social reality and way in which change can happen possibly through a transformation of social structures. This study was conducted using the critical theory of education framework. The elements of the framework are rooted in viewing education through the social and political lenses that dominate society (Kellner, 2003). Kellner (2003) describes education’s critical theory as an instrument to examine education during current times.

A critical theory of education aims to reconstruct education so that transformation is possible within the teaching profession for all involved (Kellner, 2003). Looking into the future and envisioning the outcomes of a transformative movement in education is the goal of the critical theory of education (Kellner, 2003).

Another component of this study is teacher self-efficacy and social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1977) as the way a person sees themselves as a learner or performer at different times in their lives. Bandura proposes that if a professional feel that they are not empowered in their position, that they could possibly have a lower sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is based on social cognitive theory in that it emphasizes that people can influence things they will do. Social Cognitive Theory is considered as the beliefs of individuals in capacities that are dominant and specific to a particular situation (Celik & Kahraman, 2018, p 2722).

Social cognitive theory acknowledges that people do not live their lives in isolation, they work together to produce results that they desire (Bandura, 1997). People's shared belief in their capabilities to produce effects collectively is a crucial ingredient of collective agency (Bandura, 1989). Collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individuals (Bandura, 1986). Both individual and collective efficacy beliefs are a combination of the teachers' personal disposition coupled with their workplace and how they interact with that workplace (Pierce, 2019).

Systemic trauma theory helps the researcher examine how exposure to trauma affected individuals over time can lead to the caregiver becoming victim to the negative side effects of the trauma themselves (McCormack & Adams, 2015). This difficult work can impact the caring individual as they may no longer possess the ability to exist in the same reality as others in their workplace (McCormack & Adams, 2015). The work of McCormack & Adams was in relation to how therapists using the medical model may experience vicarious distress from complex trauma (2015).

Figure 1

Over-Arching Theories of the Study

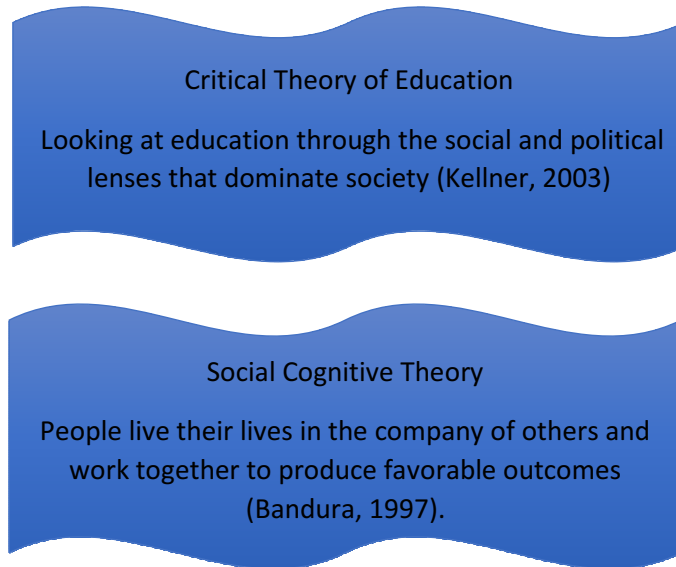
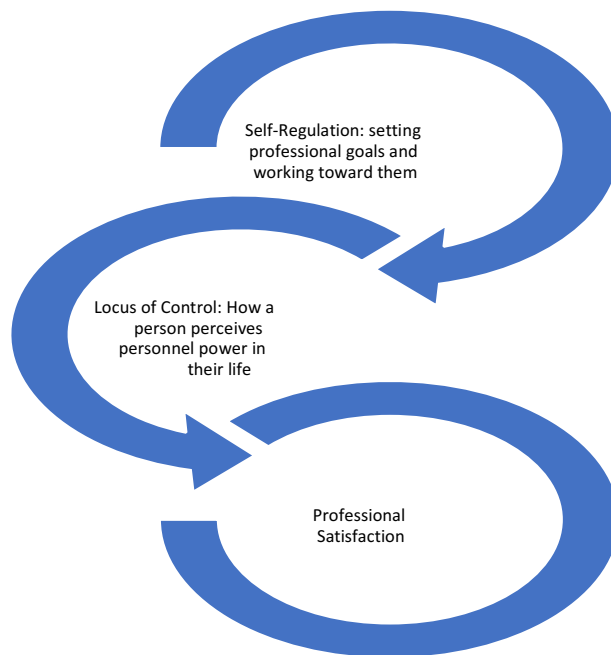


Figure 2

Teacher Self-Efficacy



Conceptual Framework

One of the concepts used to develop the context of the conversations that are happening that are most relevant to the topic discussed is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The tenets of AI can be foundational in promoting a positive job experience for educators by improving job satisfaction and overall mental health (McArthur-Blair & Cockell, 2018). McArthur-Blair & Cockell (2018) explain that using Appreciative Inquiry involves looking at the possibilities that exist within an organization. This exploration happens using the 4D model of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In essence, teams work together to explore the strengths and talents of the team and generate a plan to work collectively to thrive (McArthur-Blair & Cockell, 2018).

The concept of positive social change is included as a foundational aspect of overall improvement to a teacher's job experience as it can transform and improve the environment toward a better place. Employees can feel more activated in their mission than they have in the past when there is hope present in their lives. Using this concept, employees can begin to see change in their workplace along with people ridding themselves of areas that are not sustainable for the group (Lencioni, 2002).

Gaps in literature related to focus of practice

Much is written about trauma affected youth in the school systems of the United States. Similarly, scholarship abounds regarding teacher efficacy both individually and as a teaching collective. One can find research on compassion fatigue, satisfaction fatigue and teacher burnout without much difficulty. Various authors have portrayed those working with trauma affected individuals as vulnerable to secondary trauma (McCormack & Adams, 2015). "Many studies

recognize that the empathic support given by therapists increases their own likelihood of developing vicarious trauma distress and related psychopathy” (McCormack & Adams, 2015, p.1).

The foundation of this study is rooted in the gap in literature that explores the way in which students affected by trauma and teacher self-efficacy could be intertwined. Through interviews and analysis of the teacher’s words, the researcher hopes to articulate their lived experience in a way that demonstrates this relationship.

How schools can help students and families

The Elementary and Secondary Act was recently reframed to become Every Student Succeeds Act (Public Law 114-95). This law makes explicit provisions for trauma-informed approaches in student support, along with academic enrichment, to prepare educators and other school employees to assist all students (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). As explained by Gubi et al. (2019), schools are charged with implementing trauma-informed practices that are evidence based and recognize the widespread impact of complex trauma and supporting trauma-sensitive schools.

When working with students who may be affected by trauma, the school counselor, psychologists, and social workers can help teachers cope with the stress of the difficult work they do daily (Cavanaugh, 2016). If a teacher wants counseling outside of the school, there are opportunities with health professionals to help them process the school day’s events to allow the teacher to disengage from the school day in a healthy way (Bell et al., 2013).

School personnel need to reflect on their state of being and how they come into their workday (Cavanaugh, 2016). When a school employee continues to wrestle with their emotional challenges, it creeps into the interactions that they might have with children who are possibly traumatized. This intersection of troubled students and embattled adults can lead to a lapse of good judgment on both parts as well as lingering damage for all involved (Cavanaugh, 2016). Gross (2020) defines vicarious trauma as an indirect result of trauma suffered by others and is experienced by people who deal with traumatized individuals or traumatizing situations (p.64),

When an educator finds themselves troubled to the point of being unhealthy about the life of one of their students, it is referred to as secondary trauma (Gross, 2020). Gross notes that secondary trauma happens to adults working with students, and they can be traumatized by the event themselves (p. 65). To protect their personal and professional boundaries, educators should check in with their well-being when working with students who have been affected by trauma (Gross, 2020). When differentiating between vicarious and secondary trauma, Gross explains that while two different people may experience the same trauma, someone with vicarious trauma will be changed at their core by the event (p.64)

This is the wear and tear that people experience through continual stress. When the autonomic nervous system is on full alert, stressors act on the body and the mind flooding the bloodstream with chemicals such as cortisol (Gross, 2020. p.80). This overflow of cortisol can be harmful to a person's body and brain and can lead to further damage (Gross, 2020).

Pathways to change

Restorative Practice is emerging as an alternative to exclusionary and punitive school-based disciplinary practice. The focus on restorative practice is on community building, self-

responsibility, and creating a space for youth dialogue and leadership, implemented using a three-tiered approach that equally engages all stakeholders (Ortega, Lyubansky, Nettles & Espelage, 2016; Garnett et al., 2019). Many schools currently use a multi-tiered system of support that the work of restorative practice can work alongside.

Another method to assist schools with positive behavior would be School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). The information that can be garnered from universal screenings utilized by SWPBIS can prevent traumatization (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

School-wide restorative practices can address documented achievement gaps and discipline disparities (Garnett et al., 2019). Restorative practices are an option for schools that wish not to exclude and punish students who have not functioned within the traditional school discipline structure (Garnett et al., 2019). Using a school-wide approach can also repair any harm that may have occurred within the previous school discipline structure (Kline, 2016; Sprague & Tobin, 2017)

Gross (2020) proposes a method of school-wide approach generating from both the top of the organization and the bottom at the same time. A strategy such as this could help students not be re-traumatized by the school (Gross, 2020). Students who have experienced trauma can be made to feel victimized again if punitive or shame-inducing discipline practices are used (Gross, 2020). Some of the changes that can happen within a school system that could benefit all children, especially those who have been traumatized, could happen on an organizational level (Gross, 2020). Changes that are more organic from the classroom are deemed trauma-responsive and can function as the universal design to benefit all students.

For a restorative practice to work effectively, a clear implementation plan starts slowly with engagement work with the adults in the school community. The organizational culture is examined to determine the organization's strengths and challenges that hinder progress toward the school's goals (Garnett et al., 2019).

Access to learning opportunities concerning how power and influence work in society are classroom management components (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). The order and hierarchy that students work within their classroom is a microcosm of how the other aspects of their environment function (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2017). It is for these reasons that the traditional model of classroom management that relegates the teacher as the authoritarian doling out punishment and removal from the classroom no longer serves students in general (Delale,O'Connor et al., 2017).

The broader implications for breaking the cycle of disenfranchisement and disengagement of students of color or living in poverty is articulated by President Barack Obama in 2014 when he said, "In too many cases, our criminal system is a pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails." (Parsons, 2014). Teachers have come to understand that in learning about students and their lives outside of school, they have a chance to access student success (Delale,O'Connor et al., 2017).

Section Four: Contribution to Practice

Introduction

Communities all over the country are struggling with poverty and trauma issues. Southern Vermont is no exception to this phenomenon. The impact of trauma within a school system affects the student, the classroom, and the school as a whole organization (Palva, 2019). Chronic stress in childhood can have long term impact and alter our genes as well as the biological blueprint of future generations (Lipsky, 2018 p.28).

The global pandemic that the world continues to struggle with has added a layer of complexity to already existing issues of poverty, drug abuse and other negative occurrences for children. For many students' pre-pandemic, school was a sanctuary with hot meals, caring adults, and friends. The social isolation coupled with an increase in familial stressors due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols has made it even more challenging for students. Review of the literature detailing the current sense of professional self-efficacy of teachers has determined a priori codes of teacher longevity, health (physical and mental) and teacher success.

A unified approach by a school system regarding trauma-informed practice benefits staff and families alike (Gross, 2020). Staff training for all adults that work with students is beneficial for students as well as staff morale. Continuity of intervention within a school system increases communication and trust between families and the school system. Teacher retention and job satisfaction are more attainable with a unified support system for those affected by trauma.

Results/Findings of the Research Study

In the process of conducting elementary teacher interviews, it was important for the study to have a representation of elementary teachers throughout the district. For this research each of the elementary schools was represented through teacher interview. There was an intentional use of teachers in different grades, to allow for the voices of various grades to be heard through the interviews.

The research questions that framed the inquiry were the following:

1. What is the lived experience of elementary teachers working with students affected by familial trauma?
2. How do teacher attitudes toward students experiencing familial trauma affect overall job satisfaction?
3. How do teachers view their effectiveness in implementing trauma informed practices?
4. How do teachers view the need for training in trauma informed practices for all staff in a school?

Using the work of Smith (2009) for the foundation of the study alongside the restriction of COVID-19 the steps following were implemented to conduct the interview section of the study. Following the guidelines of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, a sample of elementary teachers from various grades were interviewed. The same questions were posed to

each teacher beginning with demographic information to ease the teacher into the interview process (Creswell, 2013).

The interviews were conducted over Zoom based on teacher scheduling considerations. Using Zoom allowed for recording of the interview as well as transcription of the interview. Following the interviews, the transcriptions were analyzed first for accuracy or gaps in the interview that may have been due to technology issues. When it was determined that the transcripts were accurate, the researcher examined the interviews for themes that expressed the aspects of the daily lived experience that were significant for each of the individual subjects (VanManen, 2015).

The first step in analyzing the rich data transcribed from interviews involved reading and re-reading the written representation of the interviews (Smith et al, 2009). This step was crucial when using this method as it set the stage for future interviews. After completing the first step, the researcher added notes on the transcript that were determined to be interesting or areas that the researcher wanted to re-examine with the subject. Smith et al (2009) notes that there is a clear phenomenological focus on the words of the subject at this point, likely used to describe the things that matter to the person being interviewed (p.83). These comments can in the future lead to developing themes or to give richer descriptions to the written words (Smith et al., 2009).

The procedure that was used to conduct the interviews began with interviewing each teacher individually on Zoom as well as digital recording device, as a backup if needed. The same questions were posed to each teacher. The Zoom transcripts were saved using a pseudonym for each teacher on the researcher's password protected computer. Excerpts of the transcript follow as a representation of the interview process as it unfolded.

Table 1*Excerpts of Verbatim Transcript*

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of elementary teachers working with students affected by familial trauma?

DC: What do you think that students affected by trauma look like in your classroom?

A: *“Um, they are, they come in on edge. I would say that their stress level is a just at norm higher than my other kiddos, they are tense, they are very easily triggered by things. They’re hesitant to really engage with what’s going on. I always kind of think about it when you watch little kids learn to swim and you know how kids who can’t swim yet are hanging on the side of the pool? I feel like there is always a piece of them that’s not completely comfortable.”*

Research Question 2: How do teacher attitudes toward students experiencing trauma affect overall job satisfaction?

DC: How do you see your career in education unfolding?

C: *“I enjoy what I’m doing now however there are days when I feel burnt out. I have some compassion fatigue this year because of certain things happening in my classroom. If it happened in the beginning of my career, I would have been like “Oh, God!” I don’t want to feel that way. I don’t want to like this is somehow normal because it’s not. I don’t even recognize it*

sometimes and that's scary, but its desensitized. I guess that's it, I feel, and I don't want to feel the way I do."

Research Question 3: How do teachers view their effectiveness in implementing trauma informed practices?

DC: How prepared do you feel to help students who may be affected by trauma?

E: *" Well, it's been a long time, but I do have a Bachelor's of Arts degree in social work. So, I do have an educational background in that and compounded with my teaching experience. And I think I have a natural, empathic way with the kids. And I also, when I don't know something, I go seek it out. I say to myself, what do I do about this, what do I do about that. So, I do feel pretty comfortable in being able to see it, or to certainly work with children."*

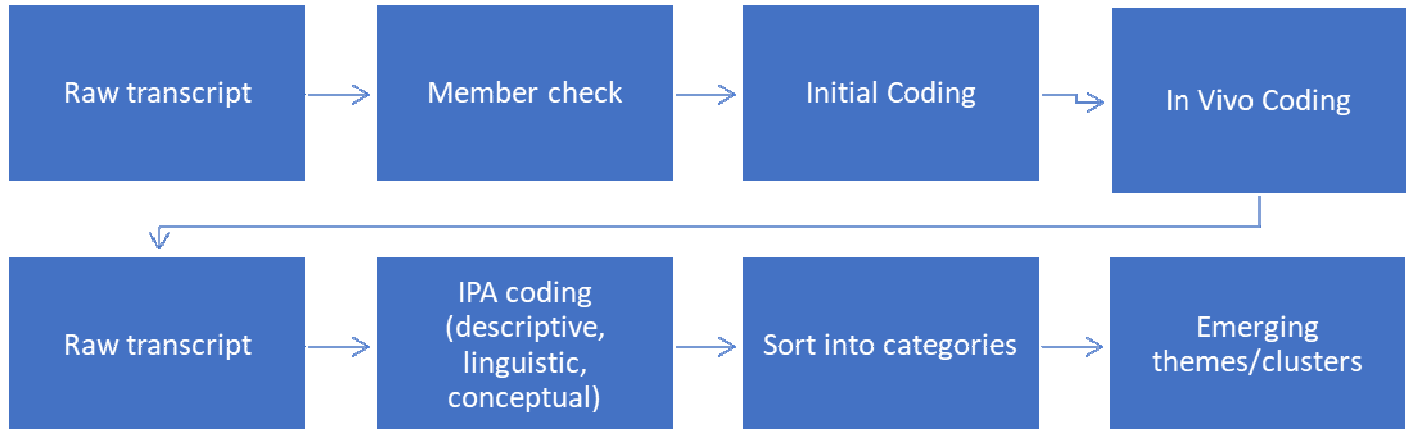
Research Question 4: How do teachers view the need for training in trauma-informed practices for all staff in a school?

DC: How prepared do you feel to help students who may be affected by trauma?

C: *"It didn't feel right in my position to be able to even start the process of helping any of these kiddos, so I think I just got to the point where I just feel I need to do something for myself just so I feel I can understand where these kids are coming from and being the process of trying to help."* *"So, how do I feel now? So, before I was probably at a zero or one and I might feel maybe like a 4 or 5. I still feel there's so far to go, and I still don't feel supported at school."*

Figure 3

Process of Study



To begin the analysis, each of the transcripts were formatted as a new document with empty columns on each side for noting. Each transcript was processed individually using In Vivo coding (Saldana, 2016). Text that resonated as significant were highlighted and notations were made. The notations were set aside case by case and would be used in the overall analysis later in the process. Themes were developed after reading over each transcript. One of the themes that emerged in each interview was following the introductory question: “Tell me about a day at your job”. The question was designed to ease the teacher into the interview process, but the responses became a consistent theme in which the teachers seemed to feel that they had to justify each minute of their day. The responses were at times a breakdown of the entire day moment by moment. As the analysis developed the described exchange was included in the theme of feelings about the job. Each interview analysis conducted individually, in order of collection and with bracketing.

Table 2

Excerpt from interview-In Vivo Coding

A: Question: How do you feel at the beginning of the day, and how do you feel at the end?

Oh, I come in every day, feeling like I'm going to do a great job, and I've had time to think about what happened the day before and preset, and my stress is regulated.	"Every day"
And there are days that by like 10:00 in the morning, my stress is beyond what is healthy.	"Beyond healthy"
About the end of the day, like when they are still there then I am done with it	"Done with it"
At the end of the day, I would say, end of the day which seems like the end of you, right, we're exhausted. Yeah, we're exhausted by the end of the day. I'm exhausted by the end of the day.	"We're exhausted" "The end of you" "I'm exhausted"
Okay, and it does feel different like so, like 3:05 the bell rings and they all leave, and the pickups come. And then you have to stay til 3:30, like any difference and how that, like when you drive out at 3:30 vs like when the kids leave it doesn't feel the same.	"Feels different" "Have to stay"
It isn't like once they leave, the stress leaves. It allows a little Time for everyone to kind of take a breath.	"Not the same" "Stress doesn't leave" "Take a breath"

Found Poem based on excerpt

Every day
Beyond healthy
Done with it
We're exhausted
I'm exhausted
Feels different
Have to stay
The end of you
Stress doesn't leave
Not the same
Take a breath

Each transcript was analyzed individually to find the themes that resonated in the interview. Following the individual analysis, the transcripts were evaluated together to find common themes. A physical matrix was created with the following categories: strengths/successes, feelings about the job, psychological signs, physical symptoms, and future. The following is the table that depicts excerpts from that analysis.

Table 3*Sample of teacher responses*

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E
Strengths/ Successes	Partner teacher	Has tools Colleagues	Other same grade teachers	Knows who to ask for help	Motivated students Admin support Confident
Concerns/ Challenges	Justify the day Inconsistencies	schedule	Paras Desensitized Doesn't want to feel this way	Schedules Pandemic Surprises Not enough time	Inconsistencies Not enough tools Students not emotionally present
Feelings about Job	Justifying time Unrealistic expectations	AM- high energy PM- drained Unremarkable Each day is the same	Helpless Not supported Ineffective	Not enough training AM excited PM spent	Overwhelmed
Psychological Signs	Trap thinking it will get better Too much stress Past traumas revisited	Hard time distancing from work Feels like giving up	Isolated worried	Concerned for students/families	Feeling helpless
Physical Symptoms	Exhausted Crying Exhausted x3	Completely drained physically Very tired	Excited/ Energetic	Emotionally and Physically Tired	Exhausted
Future Plans	Interventionist May leave education	Curriculum Work	Literacy Interventionist	Interventionist Master's Degree	Specialist 2-3 years Lottery

**Teachers were given the pseudonym of A,B,C,D,E*

The researcher used the following analytic memo to expand upon developing ideas as they emerged.

Table 4*Analytic Memo*

Elementary teachers face many challenges in their day. Some are risk takers and go against the given schedules to bring students outside, citing the need to be creative to deliver instruction. Each teacher described their day in a very detailed manner. *Do they feel that they must justify their time?* Those interviewed begin each day energized and leave at the end of the day exhausted (mentally and physically). In each school, there are students experiencing trauma, even if it looks different. Teachers are all thinking about leaving the teaching profession within the next five years and moving into a coaching position within the district.

At each stage there was an opportunity to reflect and ask questions to try and seek the understandings that the teachers wanted the researcher to understand. This reflection gave an opportunity to think deeply about how the teachers are making sense of their day-to-day experience teaching elementary students who may be affected by trauma during a global pandemic.

Table 5*Excerpt from interview transcript*

Interview question: How do you feel at the beginning of the workday and at the end of the workday?

Teacher C: So, I will tell you in the morning I usually am very full of energy, very excited to start the day. Full of possibilities and hopes. By the end of the day most day I am completely...ummmm drained. Just emotionally, physically it just takes a lot out of you. Just feels and then that's when I have some problems with ummmm you know my stress eating"

By delving deeper into the words of the participant, the researcher can try to make connections through themes, working whole to part then circling back from part to the whole

(Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Smith et al (2009) details some of the possible ways to achieve connections with the themes such as abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, numeration, function, and others (pps. 96-99). Using polarization, the following statements were gleaned from teachers.

Table 6

Polarization Analysis

Negative Feelings about job	Sources of Support or Joy for Teachers
Emotionally exhausted Harboring fear and anxiety Feeling that going in and doing your best and still not being able to do your job is hard to swallow Lack of training Feeling really tired	Colleague connections Restorative circles Can talk without retribution Walking with partner teacher “Connection makes it better for me” Awesome paraprofessional People are solving problems together

Following the use of In Vivo coding with each transcript and the development of the analytic memo, the researcher conducted a second level of coding and analysis by using a clean, second copy of each transcript with blank columns to the left and right of the text. This coding involved using Exploratory Noting. Each transcript was analyzed fully before moving on to the next transcript using the following method as outlined (Smith et al, 2009):

- a. Using descriptive coding, the researcher wrote notes from the transcript that were descriptive in nature. An excerpt from Interview A:

“But when they get outside and get an opportunity to run around and interact.

Right? And I find that if I don’t do that, I don’t get to teach anyway.” The

descriptive comment made for that statement was Accepting that no outside time equals no teaching.

- b. The entire transcript was then re-read and using color coding to record the words or statements that were linguistic comments in the right column. In Interview B when asked the question, “What does a good day at work look like?”, the teacher used the words “*I got it!*” “*I understand and I know the lightbulb went off – you know when they look at you and it’s that look, they get when they really do get it*” The teacher’s comments were a combination of a student’s excitement and her feeling when she realized that the student understood the concept.
- c. In the following step, the entire transcript was again re-read, and using color coding, the researcher noted the conceptual or questions that came to mind based on the understandings of the teacher’s interviews. In interview C when the teacher responded to the question “How prepared do you feel to help students who may be affected by trauma?” The response was “*We are a trauma sensitive school and for years I was just trying to get them to define- what does that mean? You’re saying all the magic words, but what does it mean?*” The conceptual comment/question noted was that the teacher was looking for clarity and was wondering what a trauma sensitive school is.
- d. Each transcript was analyzed using the same steps while bracketing information and impressions that had been noted previously.

Table 7

Excerpts from interviews:

Interview	Descriptive	Linguistic	Conceptual
A	Rote -minute by minute tale of the day	Laughter- nerves?	Is she trying to justify her day?
B	Trauma is not cookie cutter	“Not just a normal bump in the road”	Is day after day predictable or boring?
C	Morning meeting different because of COVID	Casual mention of missing some lunch daily	Connections seem to matter a great deal
D	Good day = consistency	“So that’s kind of hard”	How does she feel about all of the traffic in and out of her room?
E	Not always a smooth transition into school	Changes from pre-COVID to present time	Does she always want the students to succeed?

**Teachers were given the pseudonym of A,B,C,D,E*

Each transcript was evaluated in the same manner first using in vivo followed by process coding the researcher looked deeply at the interview transcripts using the IPA method. As each interview was completed, large chart paper was used to demonstrate the preliminary thoughts/themes/further questions. This resulted with five large pieces of paper with multi-colored sections of thinking at this stage.

Table 8

Themes from Interviews

Themes					Interesting quotes
Interview A	Pressures of the job	Psychological Issues	Physical symptoms	Future	“When I don’t like it here, I’m done!”
Interview B	A school day is	Physical/ Psychological	Successes/ Challenges	Future	“I’ll do it until I feel like this isn’t for me

		Issues			anymore”
Interview C	Feelings about job	Copes	Values	Concerns	“I don’t want this to be normal!”
Interview D	A school day is...	Successes/ Challenges	Feelings	Future	
Interview E	School is...	Strengths	Challenges	Future plans	

**Teachers were given the pseudonym of A,B,C,D,E*

Developing assertions

Through reading online posts and listening or participating in informal conversation with classroom teachers, the following a priori code was developed. *An elementary teacher’s job is demanding.*” Using the a priori coding process of evaluating the statements of the teachers during the interview and analysis process affirmed the concern that elementary teachers in the SVSU are experiencing challenges in their classrooms with students they are impacting the length of their teaching career. Each of the teachers responded to the question of their future with an answer that they planned to leave the classroom and move into another position in the future. Each of the teachers were able to describe both physical and psychological symptoms that affected them in various degrees.

The researcher, using the in-depth analysis of the teacher interviews generated the assertion that the elementary teachers in the study are experiencing vicarious trauma in their daily job. The assertion is derived from the statements of the teachers such as “By the end of the day most days, I am completely drained. Just emotionally, physically just takes a lot out of you.” “There are days that by like 10:00 in the morning, my stress is beyond what is healthy.” “A

good day is one when none of the students has a meltdown” “I think everyone feels very pressured and squeezed into these little boxes of time and if you miss that window of time, you’ve missed that service or you missed, working with, or what we’re doing and what you were supposed to do, and it becomes frustrating.”

Target Journal and Rationale

As an emergent leader with decades of experience in the SVSU, the Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies matches my professional philosophy of positive leadership. The article will be published in this journal as it proposes to guide leaders through research and inquiry topics related to organizational issues.

This publication uses a screening review to determine the appropriateness of a submission. The submission cannot be under consideration with another publisher or published elsewhere.

The article for submission be in APA 7 format. Pages are to be double spaced and in 12-point Times Roman. Margins will be 1 inch on all four sides.

The sections in the article may include the following: Title Page, Abstract (150-250 words), Keywords, Text, Notes, References, Tables, Figures and Appendices. While there is no minimum length of manuscript, the recommendation is to not exceed 45 pages in length.

Cover Letter

December 4, 2021

Please find enclosed a manuscript for submission to your publication, *The Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*.

The work is the result of a three-year endeavor of professional learning and research. Teachers and support personnel are interacting daily with students affected by some degree of trauma.

This paper hopes to both bring the daily work of those working in elementary schools to light, it is also a plan to support those working with students affected by trauma.

None of this paper will be used in another published, under review, or planned papers apart from the publishing of the dissertation in its entirety through Southern New Hampshire University.

The proposal for this paper was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Southern New Hampshire University on July 13, 2021.

There has not been a prior submission of this paper, or any version of it to JLOS. This paper is not under review at any other journals.

Title Page

The Lived Experience of Elementary Teachers in Trauma Affected Schools

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Dawn M. Campbell

The Lived Experience of Elementary Teachers in Trauma Affected Schools

Teaching is regarded by many to be a noble and challenging profession in the best of times. A teacher is responsible for delivering information to students to prepare them to successfully enter the workforce later in life. The role of a teacher has expanded throughout our history to address multiple needs of all students. Given societal challenges such as poverty, substance abuse and other traumas, there are ever expanding responsibilities asked of teachers in addition to their usual teaching load.

This article will explore the lived experience of elementary teachers who teach trauma-affected youth. Specifically, this researcher is focused on the concept of individual and collective teacher efficacy as it relates to longevity in the field of education. There were opportunities to investigate the way daily interactions with trauma-affected students transfer to a teacher's sense of efficacy and accomplishment.

This study looks at a school system in Southern Vermont with several elementary schools. Approximately 25% of American children will experience at one traumatic event in their lives (SMAHSA, 2015). Using various metrics to evaluate student behaviors, it has been found that the schools in this study have students who are affected by trauma. As a researcher-practitioner who also works in this studied school system, I remain curious about the short- and long-term effects that working directly with students experiencing trauma has on the efficacy of teachers and longevity in elementary schools.

Key words: *efficacy, critical theory of education, trauma-affected, teacher burnout, secondary stress, interpretative phenomenological analysis, vicarious trauma, efficacy*

The Lived Experience of Elementary Teachers in Trauma Affected Schools

Introduction

Communities all over the country are struggling with poverty and trauma issues. Southern Vermont is no exception to this phenomenon. The impact of trauma within a school system affects the student, the classroom, and the school as a whole organization (Palva, 2019). Chronic stress in childhood can have long term impact and alter our genes as well as the biological blueprint of future generations (Lipsky, 2018 p.28).

The global pandemic that the world continues to struggle with has added a layer of complexity to already existing issues of poverty, drug abuse and other negative occurrences for children. For many students' pre-pandemic, school was a sanctuary with hot meals, caring adults, and friends. The social isolation coupled with an increase in familial stressors due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols has made it even more challenging for students.

A unified approach by a school system regarding trauma-informed practice benefits to staff and families alike (Gross, 2020). Staff training for all adults that work with students is beneficial for students as well as staff morale. Continuity of intervention within a school system increases communication and trust between families and the school system. Teacher retention and job satisfaction are more attainable with a unified support system for those affected by trauma.

Much is written about trauma affected youth in the school systems of the United States. Similarly, scholarship abounds regarding teacher efficacy both individually and as a teaching

collective. One can find research on compassion fatigue, satisfaction fatigue and teacher burnout without much difficulty.

Various authors have portrayed those working with trauma affected individuals as vulnerable to secondary trauma (McCormack & Adams, 2015). “Many studies recognize that the empathic support given by therapists increases their own likelihood of developing vicarious trauma distress and related psychopathy” (McCormack & Adams, 2015, p.1).

Social cognitive theory acknowledges that people do not live their lives in isolation, they work together to produce results that they desire (Bandura, 1997). People’s shared belief in their capabilities to produce effects collectively is a crucial ingredient of collective agency (Bandura, 1989). Collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individuals (Bandura, 1986). Both individual and collective efficacy beliefs are a combination of the teachers’ personal disposition coupled with their workplace and how they interact with that workplace (Pierce, 2019).

Systemic trauma theory helps the researcher examine how exposure to trauma affected individuals over time can lead to the caregiver becoming victim to the negative side effects of the trauma themselves (McCormack & Adams, 2015). This difficult work can impact the caring individual as they may no longer possess the ability to exist in the same reality as others in their workplace (McCormack & Adams, 2015).

This qualitative study examines the lived experiences of teachers navigating the day-to-day expectations as professionals alongside the social and emotional needs of all their students. The researcher endeavors to examine the lived experience of elementary school teachers working with students who are in situations in which they are experiencing trauma where they live.

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the research study will ask teachers to be reflective and insightful on their own experiences in their daily life as a teacher (Van Manen, 2015). This method of study acknowledges that there is no true end to the inquiry as using words to describe a person's lived experience is challenging and ever changing (Van Manen, 2015).

The emphasis of the research method is to examine the lived experience of elementary teachers who are working with trauma affected students. Van Manen (2015) defines the lived experience as our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life which reflects the beginning and end point of phenomenological research, it is the breathing of meaning (p.35). This method of research asks the participants to view the lived experience in a multi-dimensional manner, even though it is something that we experience in our day to day lives (VanManen, 2015).

Research Questions

- 1.What is the lived experience of elementary teachers working with students affected by familial trauma?
- 2.How do teacher attitudes toward students experiencing familial trauma affect overall job satisfaction?
- 3.How do teachers view their effectiveness in implementing trauma-informed practices?
- 4.How do teachers view the need for training in trauma-informed practices for all staff in a school?

Practitioner Setting for the Study

The study sites were the elementary schools within a local Supervisory Union. The interviews happened either via Zoom or in person and took the schedules of the participants into consideration. Using IPA as the method allows the researcher the gift of interviewing a smaller sample of people while allowing for multiple follow up interviews for clarity.

For this research study, I was able to interview five teachers, one from each of the elementary schools. The interviews occurred over the Zoom platform and lasted between 45-60 minutes in duration. Once the initial interviews were completed, the researcher provided the teachers with a copy of the written transcript to ensure the accuracy of the interviews. The researcher met with each of the teachers separately via Zoom after they read the transcript.

The purpose of the meeting was for the teacher and researcher to do any follow up questioning and for the teacher to determine if the transcripts represented their interview. The researcher did not feel the need to ask any further questions as the interviews were complete. The teachers individually agreed that the transcripts were an accurate reflection of their interview.

Selection of participants

Five participants were selected based on a random sampling of grade levels in the various schools noted. Of the teachers interviewed there was one kindergarten teacher, one first, one second, a fourth and a sixth-grade teacher respectively.

Data collection tools

The process used to conduct the interviews was as follows: Using the work of Smith (2009) for the foundation of the study alongside the restriction of COVID-19, the steps following were implemented to conduct the interview section of the study. Using IPA, five elementary teachers from various grades were interviewed. The same questions were posed to each teacher beginning with demographic information to ease the teacher into the interview (Creswell, 2013).

After the interviews are transcribed for the first time, the researcher examined them for themes that express the parts of the daily lived experience that are significant for the individual subject (VanManen, 2015). The first step in analyzing the rich data transcribed from interviews involved reading and re-reading the written representation of the interviews (Smith et al, 2009).

Following the completion of the first step, the researcher then added notes on the transcript that are determined to be interesting or areas that the researcher wanted to re-examine with the subject. Smith et al (2009) notes that there is a clear phenomenological focus on the words of the subject at this point, likely used to describe the things that matter to the person being interviewed (p.83). These comments can in the future lead to developing themes or to give richer descriptions to the written words (Smith et al., 2009).

Each transcript was evaluated in the same manner first using in Vivo coding followed by the researcher looking deeper at the interview transcripts using the IPA method.

Data analysis

For this research study, the method used was Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Using random sampling of selected grade level elementary teachers, the researcher interviewed five teachers from within the supervisory union. The interviews were read deeply multiple times by the researcher. Following the initial reading step, the transcripts were then used to note all interesting details that emerge. From this important step, themes emerged allowing the researcher to look for connections between the themes.

With each interview the process happened in the same way, with the addition of bracketing prior information to view each transcript on its own. After all the transcripts were evaluated, the researcher examined the patterns that emerged from all the interviews. Following the final analysis of the interviews, the researcher completed an overall analysis to address the fundamental research inquiry regarding self-efficacy and teachers who work with trauma affected students.

Results and Findings

This study shows that a representative sample of elementary teacher in a small supervisory union in southern Vermont are impacted by students in their classrooms who have been affected by trauma. Each of the teachers were able to describe their day, often detailing incidents in which students were out of control (yelling, refusing to work, running out of the room, becoming violent).

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of elementary teachers working with students affected by familial trauma?

The classroom teachers had different levels of experience as educators and training to teach students affected by trauma. One of the teachers considered herself “lucky” that she didn’t have any “big behaviors” while another recounted times of crying at work and feeling that she was powerless to prevent someone from getting injured. One of the themes that was pervasive in the study was one of safety issues impeding the learning process in the classrooms. The teachers each were able to tell stories of student behaviors that interrupted lessons.

Some of the teachers also spoke of the disruptions of the teaching day, either student behavior/needs or schedule changes as well as “many people in and out of my classroom”. Interestingly, one of the teachers explained that she must “be creative” and conduct lessons daily outside to allow the students to play outside or “she won’t be able to teach anyway”.

2. How do teacher attitudes toward students experiencing familial trauma affect overall job satisfaction?

One of the teachers did not voice any large concerns about the student behavior in her classroom currently but was able to recount a story about a student who made it challenging to continue to teach. She was able to find a solution for that student that allowed her to successfully join the classroom. Other teachers spoke about feeling like the school was out of control and feeling the dread that someone was going to get hurt. This teacher talked about a bad day as “calling for help and no one is coming”.

When asked about their future plans, every single teacher responded that they had a very clear timeline to the end of their teaching career, and each sees a position move to becoming an interventionist (Math or ELA) as their next steps

3. How do teachers view their effectiveness in implementing trauma-informed practices?

The sample of teachers each voiced their concerns with how effective they felt as teachers given the needs of the students in their classrooms. Given this information as it was outlined in the interviews, the leadership of the district could use this information to provide support for the students and their families in new ways. The school leadership has a unique opportunity to support the teachers and school personnel as part of a larger effort of enhance the lives of the children in their classrooms.

4.How do teachers view the need for training in trauma-informed practices for all staff in a school?

Some of the teachers mentioned trauma training that they had received through the district. They voiced the fact that the skills they learned were helpful in their work with traumatized students. The teachers also spoke of the need for all staff, specifically paraprofessionals to have similar training to facilitate consistent interactions with students and families.

The plan to support school personnel through mental health counseling and stress relieving exercises coupled with outlets for those working with students affected by trauma, is a blueprint that is intended to evolve and grow as the needs for support change.

Next Steps

Students and their families were under stress prior to COVID-19. Many have been dealing with the impacts of declining wages, inadequate housing, and traumatic events in their

lives. As a school system, all the employees are committed to educating the whole child that comes to school each day.

By using research-based interventions and investing in training for all employees, a school will be better suited to deliver consistent support and instruction to all children. Consistency of education is especially important for students and especially so for students who have experienced trauma. “The ability to deal with a crisis is largely dependent on the structures that have been developed before the chaos arrives (George, 2004, p.67). Listening to the voices of the teachers will give insight to the district of what the needs are to support everyone in times of chaos and beyond.

Uncovering the lived experience of teachers working with all students offers the school district the opportunity to support teachers in a comprehensive manner that could lead to a decrease in teacher burnout. Studying teacher self-efficacy through the lens of the lived experience of a representation of elementary teachers gives district administration important information going forward.

Section Five: Contribution to Practice

Introduction

Interviews with elementary teachers within the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union revealed that the teachers are feeling exhausted and overwhelmed daily. The stress of the pandemic alongside societal trauma has made the job of a teacher challenging. When asked about the length of their career in teaching going forward, all the teachers responded with plans to leave the classroom in the near future.

The teachers described feeling overwhelmed in their classroom, student behaviors impacting the lessons and a feeling of defeated in their practice. There was also a common theme of the need for more targeted training in trauma informed teaching. Increasing the resilience capabilities of teachers is the primary focus of the contribution to practice.

Ann Masten stated, “What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships and in their communities” (as cited in Benard, 2004, p.iv). The educators interviewed within the SVSU, spoke in detail about their care and concern for the students in their classrooms as well as their colleagues.

Healthy organizations recognize that the best decisions emerge out of complex, diverse participatory processes that engage people’s creativity for innovation (Bloom & Farragher, 2013 p 37). Such organizations are naturally safe spaces for all to perform their job duties as well as to work to ensure those employees’ well-being is prioritized (Bloom & Farragher, 2013).

A school system is looked on as being resilient when it operates as a true community where teachers, families and students connect through caring relationships, communicate positive beliefs about each other, and participate in a shared vision that all children are our children (Bernard, 2004). It is important to prioritize the emotional safety of the adults working with students and families in the school system, to maintain a healthy environment for all (Tischio, 2021). Acknowledging that there is suffering occurring in the lives of both the students and adults daily is an important component to a healthy environment for all (Porosoff, 2021).

A Sanctuary model (Bloom & Farragher, 2013), can be designed to frame the work of people in an organization. The staff are encouraged and feel supported to make what are sometimes radical shifts in the very foundation of the way, they think, what they feel, how they communicate and how they practice. For a Sanctuary model to work, it must be:

- Easily understood by all the staff and clients
- Be adaptable to a variety of settings
- Stress the need for empowerment of all organizational members and improved integration of services and
- Stress the need for constant creativity and imagination (Bloom & Farragher, 2013)

Communities all over the country are struggling with poverty and trauma issues. Southern Vermont is no exception to this phenomenon. The impact of trauma within a school system affects the student, the classroom, and the school as a whole organization (Palva, 2019). When a school system adopts a trauma informed approach, they make a commitment to operating in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of all students (Wilson, Pence &

Conradi, 2013). To implement a trauma informed approach, the school system would need to develop a graduated training schedule that allows for training of all school personnel (Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016).

Some children in the United States can either be victims of violence or are witness to it on a daily basis (Craig, 2008). The violence that the students witness, or experience can limit their ability to access their education in a meaningful manner and can have an impact on others in the classroom (Craig, 2008). When teachers respond to student challenges, they also take the risk that they will be affected by the stress professionally and personally.

Trauma stewardship is the practice of caring for others who have experienced hardship or trauma. The adults who work with students and families in the SVSU have a propensity to experience vicarious trauma. When professionals are involved in the traumas of those they work with, they are vulnerable to being impacted and have difficulty separating their needs from those they are serving (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009). Acknowledging the suffering of those in your workplace can occur through intentional ignoring behavior that isn't harmful to others, or by addressing the underlying needs that bring forth behavior (Porosoff, 2021).

Daily, teachers must use a degree of emotional detachment to remain engaged in their work in a healthy manner. One of the challenges that they face is that some events can trigger past experiences for teachers that can make them feel unsafe in their teaching position (Craig, 2008). Situational empathy can protect the teachers as they strive to help students. Kise and Holm(2021) explain that understanding our own emotional intelligence gives the ability for educators to react to student behavior in a manner that addresses the emotional needs of the students.

It can be challenging for professionals to realize when they are affected by trauma as they can become de-sensitized to the interactions they experience with others and previous coping mechanism no longer serve them (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009). Many are hesitant to admit that they are affected by trauma as that is a door that cannot be shut once it is opened.

There are some warning signs to be aware of related to trauma exposure such as employees voicing that they are feeling helpless and hopeless, staff having a sense that they cannot do enough, are hypervigilant, have diminished creativity, minimize chronic exhaustion, experience physical and mental ailments, feel angry and cynical and act with fear (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009). They may also experience signs of vicarious trauma, including nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and depression (Craig, 2008, p. 150).

For teachers to come into their classrooms every day ready to receive their students, it is important to realize that the actions of students can bring about past or current issues for the teacher. When an adult has experienced trauma in their own lives, they can be re-traumatized by the actions of students. In a typical classroom, teachers are exposed to words and actions that may in essence remind them of a negative experience in their past, making it nearly impossible for them to fairly assess the student's behavior (Kise & Holm, 2021).

School systems can support all employees who are affected by trauma by building compassion and a sense of community with supports in place for support. In this model, staff are included in the development of the supports with encouragement and a sense of accountability from district leadership. A sense of community is critically important as isolation can be a result of staff being impacted by trauma (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009).

Schools can work on the following areas to assist both the professionals and the students in the schools: Systemic policies such as planning proactively, safety policies as well as discipline and community collaboration. Schools can also work on safety planning, including legal issues with parents such as custody plans, restraining orders, and information sharing practices. For schools, it can be challenging to create discipline procedures that are designed to create a safe learning environment while supporting trauma informed work (Craig, 2008).

Recently, educational leaders have incorporated compassion into addressing student behaviors. Compassion can be utilized as a mutually beneficial gift for both students and adults. When teachers view student behavior challenges through the lens of empathy, there is the potential for other students to benefit thus creating collective empathy (Tischio, 2021). When adults look beyond student behavior, to the possible unmet need, they can impart compassion rather than discipline. Ultimately, the goal would be that students can learn the skills necessary to value their personal choices and to work toward positive choices (Porosoff, 2021).

Teachers can make changes in their professional life to develop resiliency during these challenging times. One of the tools a teacher can use is to create clear boundaries between their teaching day and their personal life. Educators who are working to preserve their personal and professional limits demonstrate the ability to professionally decline invitations or directives involving increased job responsibilities(Aguilar, 2021). Setting limits on the workday is important for educators to allow an adequate amount of time for rest and personal interests, which creates a space for teachers to recover from the stresses of the job(Aguilar, 2021).

For school systems to be successful in the work of trauma informed practice, the system should strive to have a partnership with the community. The collaborations between mental health professionals to address any supports needed to address trauma informed issues for individual students and their families (Craig, 2008). In this community, school personnel can access services through United Community Resources during the school day if a student is experiencing extreme behavior challenges. At times this is a useful tool and can open the door for families to receive mental health services through this group.

Practitioner Contribution

Transformative scenario planning can be used to effectively implement collaboration that addresses complex issues such as those experienced by students and teachers in education today (Kahane, 2012). One of the strategies is to put the issues out in the open, which can facilitate new thinking (Kahane, 2012). The team must agree at the onset of creating this team that they will be vulnerable at times and will be working together to support themselves along with sharing information with the rest of the faculty (Kahane, 2012).

Humble leadership will create and reflect the relationships that can respond to this accelerating rate of systemic change and will empower work groups to build and maintain critical adaptive capacity to capitalize on accelerating change (Schein & Schein, 2018, p.6). Part of this work involves finding out ways to best understand all the team members and to seek out ways to offer supports and help to build personal resiliency (Schein & Schein, 2018).

To support the adults who work with students affected by trauma, there will be an intentional plan to address the needs of adults in the school environment. A phased in approach

will be implemented which will be introduced on the first days of the school year, generally the last week of August. Yearly, all of the school employees will gather in the auditorium of the high school to open the new academic year. Throughout this in-service day all employees come together to network with each other and to hear important information as it relates to the upcoming year.

There will be an emphasis on systemic policies to address the safety of students and the well-being of staff collectively. Some of the areas that schools will be focusing on include discipline, drop off and pick up routines, and information sharing with interested parties. A renewed focus on collaboration with community partners will also be implemented.

Information about the need for support for staff who may be affected by secondary stress will be provided to all via a presentation. A slide show of signs to be aware of will be shown to the group along with support opportunities that employees can utilize as needed. There will also be a plan developed for follow up sessions with smaller groups of staff in each school throughout the school year to continue to support all staff.

Some strategies that could be used are:

- Using positive self-talk
- Avoid rash responses
- Take time to form solutions
- Intervene only when there is a threat to safety
- Keep the focus on student needs, not adult feelings
- Daily physical exercise

- Eating nutritious meals
- Rest and relaxation
- Socialize with friends and loved ones
- Participate in meaningful personal relationships
- Companionship with other professionals
- Know your limits, set limits, and communicate those limits with others
- Write in a journal
- Debrief with a trusted friend or colleague
- Connect to causes important to you
- Celebrate successes
- Spiritual rejuvenation such as prayer and meditation practices
- Mindfulness practices to reduce stress and anxiety
- Create a list of healing activities
- Limit exposure to violent material
- Make self-renewal part of everyday life
- Give time to reconnect with yourself
- Use a cleansing ritual to create a boundary between work and home
- Use school-based collaboration to reduce isolation (Craig, 2008)

Plan for Dissemination

All school staff will be given a printout of the slide show of the first day presentation to take with them following the in-service session. At each subsequent session that happens at the

individual schools throughout the school year, the staff will be given information about secondary stress and how it manifests itself in employees. There will also be pamphlets available with resources for staff to use as needed to get assistance if their situation warrants some sort of intervention.

Staff will be given opportunities to voice what their needs are to feel physically and emotionally safe in their workplace. The way the staff input will be gathered would happen through different means. The leadership in each building and the supervisory union will receive training in responding to staff needs in a positive and engaging manner and in the options available for staff who may be looking for outlets and support outside of the school environment. Staff leaders will be identified through a volunteer process who will be resources for other members of the school. These leaders will be given training on trauma informed practices, responsiveness to staff needs as well as advocating for resources to support staff members.

Table 9*Staff Opportunities for Wellness*

Opportunity	Facilitator(s)	Objective
Survey- secondary stress	https://www.naadac.org/assets/2416/sharon_foley_ac15_militarycultureho2.pdf	http://www.proqol.org/uploads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score_3-2012.pdf
Self-help sessions	https://www.porticonetwork.ca/web/childhood-trauma-toolkit/compassion-fatigue/compassion-fatigue-what-to-do	https://www.pdfFiller.com/jsfiller-desk14/?requestHash=cb7812ca60d05bd28522a5958845b5a9b29a03327789430a50c845f07f2b92bd&et=12f&pr
In house and outside counseling	Dave Melnick of NFI Community based clinicians School based clinicians	Counseling during the work day at no cost to the employee to promote overall well being
Activities for staff and families	Personal trainers School physical education teachers	Enjoying family activities together to promote positive mental health through exercise

Figure 4*Slide of Explanation*

Statement of Opportunity

Communities all over the country are struggling with poverty and trauma issues (Bethel, 2014). Southern Vermont is no exception to this phenomenon. The impact of trauma within a school system affects the student, the classroom, and the school as a whole organization (Palva, 2019).

When a school system adopts a trauma informed approach, they make a commitment to operating in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of all families (Wilson, Pence & Conradi, 2013). In order to completely implement a trauma informed approach, the school system would need to develop a graduated training schedule that allows for training of all school personnel (Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016).

This slide would be presented as an overall explanation of the importance of the work to support teachers during this challenging time.

Figure 5

Strategies for Support

Strategies for Support

There will also be a plan developed for follow up sessions with smaller groups of staff in each school throughout the school year to continue to support all staff.

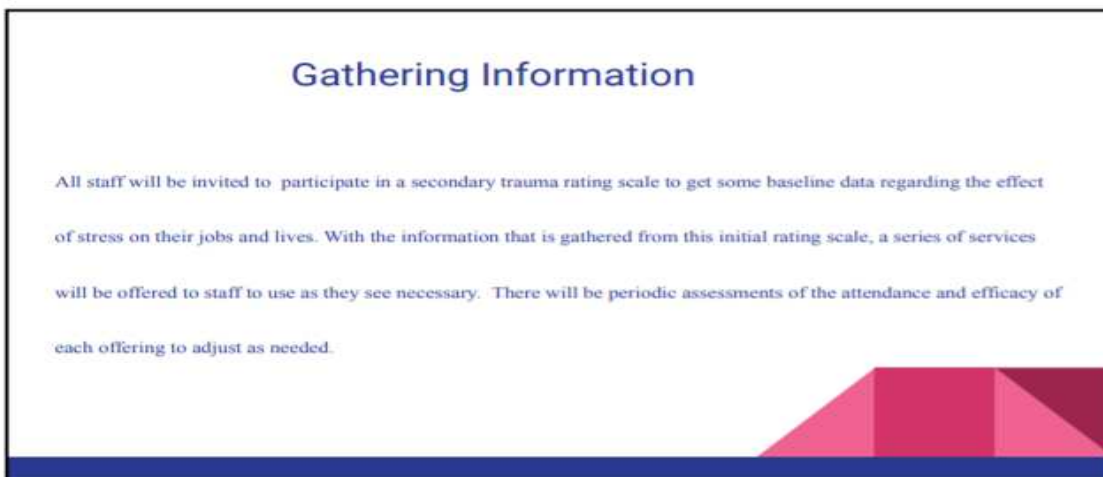
Some strategies that could be used are:

- Using positive self-talk
- Avoid rash responses
- Take time to form solutions
- Intervene only when there is a threat to safety
-

This slide would represent an example of the possible suggestions school leadership supports for all staff.

Table 6

Gathering Information



This slide represents a possible way district leader could gather information to tailor support options for all staff.

Figure 7*Visual Representation of Trauma Exposure*

(van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009, p.i)

Positive leadership involves the implementation of multiple positive practices that help individuals and organizations achieve their highest potential, flourish at work, experience elevating energy, and reach levels of effectiveness difficult to attain otherwise (Cameron, 2013,

p.2). Addressing the issues associated with the effects of trauma on staff members can be met through positive leadership practices as the act of positivity can be heliotropic, meaning that people tend to move toward positive energy (Cameron, 2013) Building on positivity will allow an organization to build capacity to spread positive experiences throughout the organization.

Given the complex needs of school staff who are working daily with traumatized students, it will be important for there to be multiple opportunities for the option of assistance. Inservice presentations for all staff in a relaxed atmosphere with colleagues followed by smaller information sessions at individual schools will give employees an opportunity to access the services available to them. During a faculty meeting there will be opportunities to use strategies of positive leadership to both identify energizers and look for opportunities to communicate as a team to increase the positive outcomes available to all staff.

While there are challenges in the job expectations of the employees within the school system, there are also opportunities to reframe the way staff are interacting with each other and colleagues. Through positive organizational strategies such as identifying the energizers in the organization. Energizers are folks who help others to flourish, are trustworthy, dependable, are genuine and authentic, see opportunities and express gratitude and humility (Cameron, 2013 p.57).

Summary of Implications

Leadership in the SVSU have a unique opportunity to engage with the information gathered in this study. The researcher has been supported professionally throughout the entire research process, leading to an opportunity to share the findings with district leaders. There is a

plan to meet as a team to disseminate the research results in the near future. Given the recent initiatives such as Wellness Coordinator and Family Engagement Specialists, the district has demonstrated a commitment to the health and well-being of their staff as well as the students in the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union.

Further Research Implications

This research study gave insight into the lived experience of elementary teachers working with trauma affected students. Future researcher topics could include an analysis into how pre-service teachers are prepared in their college programs for entering the classrooms with trauma affected students. Another connected research topic may be an examination of the reasons teachers are leaving the profession or why are teachers staying in the profession.

Teachers are vitally important to our society. Exploring standards to prepare educators for their career as well as implementing programs to support them in their job has the potential to retain teachers. Providing opportunities for educators to work with students in a manner that is healthy for all has the potential to benefit the school system and community.

Section Six: Practitioner Reflection

Introduction

I am the first person in my family to graduate from high school. To now be an administrator in a school district after twenty-three years as an educator would have not thought to be possible when I was a child. I have lived my entire life in Bennington, Vermont. I have a smattering of memories that when reflected upon as an adult make me wonder how I have achieved what I have. Both of my parents had been married prior to meeting. My father worked in the restaurant field, and he told the story of his first wife and baby daughter dying within 6 months of each other. The baby of SIDS, the wife I do not know how she died. My mother was married to a man who I surmise was abusive and possibly an alcoholic. They had one son who I met when I was around 5. He had decided to live with my grandparents when my parents married.

Memories of my childhood include coming home to all the doors removed from the apartment and the power shut off. There are vivid memories of my younger brothers and I running from bats inside of the home. We moved a great deal, always apartments, never a home that you could make your own by painting the walls as they weren't our walls. We rarely had both a working car and a working telephone at the same time and food insecurity was real. We were the house that folks dropped off the decorated boxes of food on at the holidays.

I would like to think that my parents did the best that they could. We were always put first, my brothers and I felt safe and loved even when it was unstable all around us. As an adult I realize that my mother was an alcoholic. She was rarely awake in the mornings to send us off to school and unable to attend any school functions, so I was shuffled off with other mothers for Girl Scouts activities. My brothers and I missed at least 20 days of school each year. How we passed onto the next grade is beyond me. I was a natural reader, so I was always able to catch up with what I missed.

When I was around 5 years old my father had his first heart attack, ending up being hospitalized several times locally and a triple bypass performed at Albany Medical Center. A few years after that he had another heart attack and needed a pacemaker placed in his chest. The lead wire to that pacemaker malfunctioned and he had to have a second device put in his chest while leaving the defective one in. He was able to live with these obstacles for many years which was amazing, but he couldn't work. Our family lived on his Social Security Disability monthly payments.

My mother suddenly became ill the first day of the sophomore year of high school and died of cervical cancer 3 weeks later. I was 15 years old when this happened so as the oldest child, I became the mom of my 2 younger brothers and medical proxy for my disabled father. I was the person who talked with my father's doctor when they found that he had colon cancer and were preparing for his surgery. Despite all his medical problems, my father lived until I was 27.

I think my childhood gives me a unique perspective into the lives that students are experiencing in a classroom. I am not sure if any of my teachers realized about my home life as I was not a student who struggled with academics or behavior. I was absent a lot, but I caught up and would sit quietly while mayhem happened around me. I am sensitive to the fact that it is sometimes the quiet child, the well-behaved child who is living in a situation that is traumatic and unstable for them.

Summary of the Inquiry

Today educators are working exceptionally hard to teach students who are not all able to be available to learn for a multitude of reasons. It is a critical time to reach all these children while we maintain our own sense of efficacy. The teachers who were interviewed for this study shared some key insights into their teaching career as it is currently happening in the SVSU. One of the common themes was that the teachers seemed to feel the need to explain and justify every minute of their school day. There was also a common response to the question of “Where do you see your career going from here?” in the responses they all included a plan to leave the classroom in the near future and moving into an interventionist role.

An assumption that the researcher made regarding this commonality would be that interventionists have the flexibility of coaching adults, working with students in small groups and regular training and support. As a classroom teacher with students who are displaying behaviors that could make it a challenge to teach effectively, the change to a position as an interventionist may seem desirable.

Some of the teachers spoke about the needs of students in their classrooms and how they doubted their ability to serve the students within the classroom setting. Some spoke about how they took their work home both in the academic work such as grading papers and planning lessons, but also in being concerned about students and trying to think of new ways to keep everyone safe while delivering the curriculum to all the students.

The analysis of the interviews highlighted the need for an increase in training for classroom teachers in the coping skills available through trauma informed practice. Several teachers also mentioned the interest in restorative practices for themselves and their students.

Personal Learning Shifts and Transformations related to the focus of practice

Throughout this journey, there are three main areas that I have found impactfully related to the scholarship. The theme that has emerged is transformation leading to leadership through an appreciative stance.

My worldview is Advocacy and Participatory (Creswell, 2013). My interest has consistently been one that emphasizes those who have been marginalized along with issues related to societal justice. Throughout this process, my worldview has not changed; if anything, it has intensified. I find myself drawn to accounts of individuals and groups of people who have been underrepresented or victimized, most notably children in such circumstances.

I may have had assumptions about what socially just leadership was that is changing and evolving as I dig into the scholarship surrounding the concepts of leadership and sociocultural perspectives. Assumptions about who I am as a leader, including my strengths and challenges, have shifted.

Personal Learning Shifts and Transformations as an Educational Leader

As a doctoral student, I have undergone amazing personal growth. It has been said that insecurity in one's formative years stays with a person. I would agree with this statement. I have always projected a confident front that has fooled many. This is not to say that I am not sure of what I am capable of, only that I may view rejection differently than others.

I became an administrator in a neighboring district in 2012. It was an interesting experience as I had recently received my director's license and was recruited into the position. I can see now that I wasn't ready to do that job. I knew all about special education policy and procedures, I knew about the financial spreadsheets and grants that needed to be written, what I

didn't know was how to be a leader without sacrificing myself. I took everything personally. I would talk a situation to death in hopes of "fixing" a misunderstanding or worse- a perceived misunderstanding. My attempts to fix situations made them significantly worse. Every time.

I struggled through this position for 3 years until it became apparent that this job was not going to be healthy for me and not productive for the district. Thankfully, I was able to resign from that position and return to my prior district as a special education teacher. I spent the next 5 years as a special educator and healing.

When the opportunity for the doctoral program came about, I was sure that I wasn't going to get accepted into the program. Then I was sure I wasn't going to do well in the classes, pass comps, defend my proposal... on and on. Through the work with positive psychology and the general support offered through the cohort model, I have realized that I am worthy of earning my doctorate, I am intelligent enough to learn the material and I am able to learn what I need to as I work to complete the dissertation process.

My journey as an emerging leader has centered around self-reflection and forgiveness. With this study of self, I have come to realize that I have not been prepared for formal leadership roles in the past. Through honest introspection, strengths have emerged that will propel me onward in my journey as a leader.

As an educational leader, I recall the struggles I experienced as a child when I could not change my circumstances. I use those memories to guide me as I both refrain from taking disappointments personally while maintaining a caring relationship with those I encounter daily.

Personal Learning, Shifts and Transformations as a scholar

As a scholar, the dissertation process has been professionally challenging. I have found myself rescued by the positive thinking infused within the doctoral program. Prior to the DiP process within the cohort model, I would have never believed that I would be able to complete assignments with the appropriate rigor and competence to complete a dissertation.

Using the building blocks of setting the table with positivity and introducing all the components of the DiP through coursework, I emerged after all the academic courses were finished with a keen understanding of both that I had learned and how I needed to demonstrate that knowledge. I have a new appreciation for the work that I have done for over two decades as well as what I endeavor to do in the future. As a scholar, through this process I now have the confidence that I did not before.

Implications for the Future

In examining my assumptions, I find my area of growth to be in prescriptive assumptions. Looking at assumptions about how things should happen has been a significant factor in rectifying my inner dialogue with actual events (Brookfield, 1987). One of the themes that weave continuously through my reading and writing as I continue through this journey toward leadership has been forgiveness. Forgiveness of self as well as the forgiveness of others.

In the readings I have encountered, so much of the author's writing appeared to be written for me specifically. Lawler and others wrote that when we forgive another person for wrongdoing, we essentially break the cycle of revenge. Breaking this cycle stops the need for stress regarding interactions with others and the stress associated with the conflict (Lawler et al., 2003). The same authors also discussed the physical benefits of forgiveness. As it turns out,

forgiving others is both good for your mind and your heart(Lawler et al., 2003). Positive social interactions are also key players in our cardiovascular and immune systems(Cameron, 2012).

One way to continue to live an emotionally and physically healthy life is to seek out the positive attributes in others (Seligman, 2011). Seligman recommended flipping the usual assertion that if a person is flawed, they need to be fixed. Instead, he proposes that we highlight the person's positive attributes (2011). It is important to note that when we choose to accentuate the positive in a person, we recognize the importance of possible negativity as a catalyst to becoming something unique (Cameron, 2012).

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Appendix A

Participant Invitation Letter

Dear Elementary Teacher,

I will be conducting interviews as part of a research study to increase our understanding of how elementary teachers are experiencing working with trauma affected youth. As an elementary school teacher within the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, you are in an ideal position to give us valuable firsthand information from your own perspective.

The interview takes between 30-60 minutes and is very informal. I will be simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a teacher in the district. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of overall teacher efficacy when working with trauma affected students. . If you are willing to participate, please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll work around your availability. There is a chance that there will be the need for follow up interviews following the initial analysis of the interview data.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out at: dcampbell@svsu.org

Respectfully,

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Guidelines

This informed consent form is for the elementary teachers who I am inviting to participate in research on the lived experience of elementary teachers who work in trauma affected schools.

This informed consent has two parts:

- Information Page (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (For signature if you choose to participate)

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form at least one week before seeking your consent. Consent will be obtained by a third party who meets university approval standards. *(The questions in italics following some of the sections are there for the person taking the consent to ask of you to ensure that you understand the process and that you are aware of your choices regarding your participation.)*

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

My name is Dawn Campbell, and I am conducting research for my doctoral program at Southern New Hampshire University. I am researching how elementary teachers view their sense of efficacy when working with trauma affected students.

I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. The consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will take time to explain. If you have any questions later, you can ask them of me.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to learn how elementary teachers view their effectiveness as educators when teaching students affected by traumatic circumstances in their lives. The research will help the school system to realize possible avenues for support and further training for teachers.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve a conversation with the researcher that will take approximately 60 minutes. You will be asked to review the transcribed interviews, and you will receive a summary of the results before publication.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to participate in this research because of your experience as an elementary teacher and your story is important for others to hear. *(Do you know why we are asking you to take part in this study? Do you know what the study is about?)*

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluation or reports. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier. *(If you decide not to take part in this research study, do you know what your options are? Do you know that you do not have to take part in this research study if you do not wish to? Do you have any questions?)*

Procedures

- A. You are being asked to explain how you describe your experience as an elementary teacher and its impact on your overall feeling of self-efficacy as an educator. If you accept, you will be asked to share your experiences regarding your experiences with the researcher during an interview.
- B. During the interview, I will sit down with you in a confidential place of your choosing. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and I will move on to another question. No one else by the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else will have access to the information documented in your interview. The entire interview will be digitally recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the recording. The recording will be kept on a

password-protected computer. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else will have access to the recordings.

Duration

The research will take place over approximately 4 months in total. During that time, we will schedule one time for the researcher to interview you, that interview is expected to last for about 60 minutes. *(If you decide to take part in the study, do you know how much time the interview will take? Where will it take place? If you agree to take part, do you know if you can stop participating? Do you know that you not respond to the questions that you do not wish to respond to? Do you have any further questions?)*

Risks

Although the focus of this study is solely to discover the lived experience of elementary teachers working with trauma affected students, we recognize that it has impacts on your personal lives as well. We are asking you to share with us your own professional experience, which at times can evoke emotions, and may feel uncomfortable. You do not have to answer any questions or take part in the interview if you do not wish to do so. You do not have to give us any reason for not responding to any questions, or for refusing to take part in the interview. If you would like to debrief with the researcher after the interview, that opportunity will be offered and available to you.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation will likely help us to develop supports and trainings in the future.

Compensation

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research. The interviews will be scheduled at a convenient time and place of your choice, and you will not lose any compensation or personal time for your participation *(Can you tell me if you have correctly understood the benefits that you will have if you take part in this study? Do you have any other questions?)*

Confidentiality

The entire interview will be recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the recording. You be able to choose a pseudonym (or I can choose one for you) that will be associated with the audio file. The audio file will be kept on my password-protected computer. The audio file will be transcribed, but only the pseudonym will be used to identify it. You will be asked to review a copy of the transcript for accuracy. The audio file and transcript may also be reviewed by members of the research analysis team, consisting of other members of my doctoral cohort, committee members, and on rare occasions, by officials of the institution or other appropriate government agencies in the event of an investigation.

Sharing the Results

Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside the research team, and nothing will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you before it is made widely available to the public. Each participant will receive a summary of the results, and the results will be shared with members of the administration. I will publish the results to that other interested people may learn from the research.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so and choosing to participate will not affect your job or job-related evaluations in any way. You may stop participating at any time that you wish without your job being affected. I will allow you at the end of the interview/discussion to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly *(Do you know that you do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to? You can say no if you wish to. Do you know that you can ask me questions later if you wish to? Do you know that I have given the contact details of the person who can give you more information about this study?)*

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact any of the following:

Dawn Campbell
35 East Street
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 733-6617
Email: dawn.campbell2@snhu.edu

Or

Matthew R. Moehle, Ph.D.
Director of Doctoral Studies & Program Development
Division of Advanced Study & Special Programs
Office of Academic Affairs- University College
Southern New Hampshire University
(802) 489-5080
Email: m.moehle@snhu.edu

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the SNHU IRB, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact: irb@snhu.edu or (603) 645-9695.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in research about how elementary teachers working in trauma affected schools view their lived experience.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked to have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____
Day/Month/Year

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Can you tell me about a day in your job?

How do you feel at the beginning of the day? At the end?

Can you tell me about a time when you felt successful in your career?

What does a good day at work look and feel like?

Describe what a student affected by trauma looks like in your classroom.

How prepared do you feel to help students affected by trauma?

What are the differences in the adults who work in your classroom?

Describe how you remove yourself mentally at the end of your workday.

What does a rough day at work look like?

How did you see your career in education unfolding?

Appendix D

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