

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS
RESPONDING TO COVID-19

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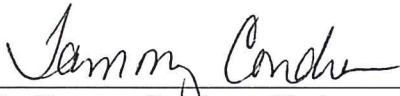
Austin R. Houp

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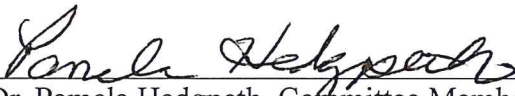
The undersigned, approved by the Department Chair of Graduate Studies in Education,
have examined a dissertation entitled:

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS
RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Presented by Austin R. Houp a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Science in
Educational Leadership and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance.



Dr. Tammy Condren, Chair
Professor, Southwest Baptist University



Dr. Pamela Hedgpeth, Committee Member
Professor, Southwest Baptist University



Dr. Benny Fong, Committee Member
Assistant Professor, Southwest Baptist University

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS
RESPONDING TO COVID-19

A Dissertation

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By

Austin R. Houp

Dr. Tammy Condren, Dissertation Advisor

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"May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,

Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14 (NIV)

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Abstract

The dual purpose of this qualitative narrative-phenomenological study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020, COVID-19 school shut down and how the experience shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation, and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year. The second purpose of the study was to discover how school leaders' perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape their ability to make ethical decisions and respond to Contextual Forces as the leaders created and implemented school re-entry plans during the 2020-2021 school year. The framework of this study was based on Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Change Theory and Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. With research question one, this study supported prior research on the themes of collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, and power of position within public school districts. When considering purpose two of the study, the Ethical Paradigms of Shapiro and Gross (2013) played an integral role in school leader decision-making within the COVID phenomenon during the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year. School leaders during this time utilized the Ethic of Justice, which emphasizes legal guidance, and the Ethic of Care, which emphasizes concern for individuals' welfare, when considering their ethical decisions. However, as the year progressed, the Ethics of Justice began to be challenged by school leaders by the Ethic of Profession to reconcile decisions within community codes and ethos.

Keywords: COVID-19, Ethical Decision-Making, School Leader

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical events throughout United States history over the last 40 years have had profound impacts on educational institutions and future generations. Events such as the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, and the Great Recession of 2008-09 each had lasting effects on public education (Kamenetz, 2018; Mark, 2019; Shores, Steinberg, & CEPA, 2017). The effects from the historical events on public education can be seen through changes in academics, safety, and school operations. Yet, the impingement created with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which began to spread during the spring of 2020, created a historical event which will most not likely be forgotten soon. Entire countries shuttered throughout the world in a bid to reduce the impending pandemic and its possible deadly consequences (Kantis et al., 2021; D. B. Taylor, 2020). School buildings across the U.S. were closed with school personnel having little time to prepare for an indefinite shutdown (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020). As the financial impact of nation-wide shutdowns became reality and unprecedented prospects for the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year, school leaders faced an unimaginable scenario on how to move forward (Huguelet, 2020).

Historiography of COVID-19 Throughout the World

In December 2019, a novel virus began impacting the city of Wuhan in China, causing pneumonia-like symptoms within individuals (D. B. Taylor, 2020). Though very little was known about the new virus, the virus' impact on the world outside China was only one month away (Kantis et al., 2021). By the end of January, 2020, Chinese

authorities shut down movement around the city of Wuhan to contain the spread of the virus (D. B. Taylor, 2020). Within hours of the shutdown of the city of Wuhan, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a public health emergency due to the viral issues in China (Kantis et al., 2021). The announcement made by the WHO led to countries, including the United States, restricting travel by their citizens to China (Kantis et al., 2021; D. B. Taylor, 2020). By February 11th, 2020 novel virus was officially named by the WHO Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Throughout February 2020, cases began emerging around the world, with Italy and Spain becoming two of the largest hotspots outside of China (D. B. Taylor, 2020). Italy and Spain's sheer volume of reported COVID-19 cases and nearly 600+ deaths each per day from March to the first week of April, created a level of fear and shock throughout the world (Alicandro, Remuzzi, & La Vecchia, 2020; Kantis et al., 2021; D. B. Taylor, 2020). In response to the growing spread of COVID-19 cases around the world, the WHO officially declared the virus as a pandemic, signifying the growing concern of the virus' impact on people throughout the world (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky , 2020).

By late March, countries on every continent began declaring national emergencies and calling for shut downs of all non-essential personnel and operations. The initial shutdowns and restrictions included approximately one third of the world's population (Kantis et al., 2021). World agencies, including the International Olympic Committee, delayed and ultimately suspended large events such as the Tokyo Olympics and Wimbledon for the first time since World War II (Kantis et al., 2021; D. B. Taylor, 2020). Additionally, governmental entities disbursed massive financial bail outs to their constituents and businesses to help stabilize local and international economies (Kantis et

al., 2021; D. B. Taylor, 2020; Ziady, 2020). As of December 2020, nearly \$19.5 trillion dollars had been dispersed, yet nearly all countries and the world faced an impending financial recession (Kantis et al., 2021). Many of the bail outs were initially passed during the spring of 2020, but political wrangling within governmental entities limited additional bailouts by the winter of 2020. Economists feared the early reduction in financial support had the potential to set back world economies for a decade or more (Ziady, 2020).

Educational Response to COVID-19 Throughout the World

With the sudden spread of COVID-19 throughout parts of China in January 2020, various schools were shutdown in cities around China to help mitigate the disease. (Esposito & Principi, 2020). As the calendar changed to March, other countries around the world began shutting down as well, including Spain, United Kingdom, Kenya, France, Israel, and Mexico (Kantis et al., 2021). By the end of March 2020, nearly 87% of students in the world were involved in a school shutdown, most of which remained closed through the rest of the 2019-2020 academic school year (Winthrop, 2020). A few countries slowly re-opened schools at the beginning of May 2020, only to have many of the schools close for the remainder of the academic year due to quarantines, COVID-19 positivity, and staff shortages (Kantis et al., 2021).

Despite most school closures, Sweden took a different path for the first eight months of the COVID-19 pandemic by avoiding a national and educational shutdown. Instead, Sweden sought to mitigate the pandemic by maintaining social distancing and quarantining as necessary for all school aged children below 16 years old and implementing virtual learning for students over 17 years old (Ludvigsson, 2020). The

approach was applied both inside the Swedish educational system and other areas throughout the country. Despite the eventual increase of restrictions by December 2020, no evidence the Swedish educational approach used since the pandemic's inception had increased morbidity for students, educational staff, or local community (Ludvigsson, Engerström, Nordenhäll, & Larsson, 2021).

Historiography of COVID-19 in United States of America

The U.S. response to COVID-19 depended upon regional guidelines which varied from region to region from January 2020 through December 2020 (D. B. Taylor, 2020). At the national level, early actions by Congress and the Trump administration included travel restrictions to and from select areas of the world, approval of widespread testing, invoking the Defense Production Act for personal protection equipment (PPE), passage of a \$2.2 trillion Cares Acts stimulus package, and development of a coronavirus task force for overseeing state and federal hospital and infection data points (Kantis et al., 2021; D. B. Taylor, 2020; Ziady, 2020). Many of the actions taken by the United States were reinforced by the growing numbers of viral spread and associated deaths. As of the first day of April in 2020, almost 91% of the U.S. population was under a shutdown order from their state authorities (Kantis et al., 2021). On April 5th, the U.S. daily death toll passed a grim milestone of 1,300 deaths in a single day (Fisher, 2020). Most deaths were from the state of New York, which had become the new epicenter for the pandemic. During the first 10 days of April, New York alone averaged 700 plus new deaths associated with COVID-19 per day (Fisher, 2020). Viral positivity of COVID-19 reached the largest growth early in the pandemic during the month of April, adding over 800,000 new cases nationally (Watts, 2020). At the time, the numbers were staggering, but by the

winter of 2020, the U.S. COVID-19 numbers dwarfed the number of cases in the spring. Between November and December 2020, the U.S. added an additional 7 million COVID-19 positive cases, while averaging nearly 2,500 deaths per day (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020b).

Chaggaris (2020) found much of the goodwill between political stakeholders perished as the pandemic continued into April and beyond. He stated, one contributing factor to the breakdown of collaboration between political parties and their supporters stemmed from the presidential election which was only months away. The historically contentious nature of elections was heightened by the usage of the pandemic response by political entities to further their political agenda (Ball, 2020; D. Smith, 2020).

Researchers Hartney and Finger (2020) found a correlation between communities voting for Republicans in the 2016 election were more likely to have face-to-face classrooms starting the 2020-2021 school year, as opposed to communities primarily voting for Democrats. An environment of distrust and lack of benevolence between individuals with opposing viewpoints was created in regard to an individual's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, school leaders had to balance their re-entry plans with an increasingly polarized and confrontational set of stakeholders (Frey, 2020; Ujifusa, 2020; University of Michigan-Dearborn Reporter, 2020).

U.S. Democratic Political Perspective to Federal Response on COVID

Despite the growing pandemic within the U.S., by the first week of April, President Trump criticized the shutdowns enacted in each state (Beer, 2020). Trump and his administration down-played COVID-19 as similar to the flu and declared state governments should push to reopen by Easter, April 12th, 2020. Yet statistically, a shift

internationally toward the U.S. as the new epicenter for COVID-19 in the world was present (Chaggaris, 2020; Karni & Mcneil, 2020). When most states, specifically Democrat governors, denied Trump's request for reopening at the state level, President Trump encouraged citizens to protest state restrictions (D. B. Taylor, 2020). By July 2020, President Trump sought to discredit the nation's leading infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, especially after Dr. Fauci's call for universal face-mask usage by U.S. citizens despite the White House's own encouragement to U.S. citizens to wear face-coverings in public on April 2nd, 2020 (Forgey, 2020; Kantis et al., 2021; Panetta, 2020). The disjointed approach by the Trump Administration was amplified when President Trump threatened to withhold additional federal funds from states not accepting his public policy on fully reopening (Wilkie, 2020). The lack of any central strategy or messaging from the federal government forced states to develop their own guidelines, many of which were designed along political party lines (K. Taylor, 2020).

U.S. Republican Political Perspective to Federal Response on COVID

After the early shutdowns in March 2020, the financial impact on the national and state economies was immense (Patton, 2020). At the national level, the financial impact included: U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) dropped to levels matching the 1930's Great Depression; trillion-dollar federal deficit and U.S. debt to GDP over 100% for years following 2020; large number of businesses shuttered permanently (Patton, 2020; Walmsley, Rose, & Wei, 2020). Such financial impacts and shutdowns were made on the premise of protecting communities from the negative health implications if infected by COVID-19. Yet, as of November 2020, less than 1% of individuals infected died within age groups below 60 years old (Madrigal & Moser, 2020). Following recommendations

from President Trump and CDC guidance, several states, primarily Republican, started slowly reopening their economies in May 2020 (Kantis et al., 2021). States like Missouri, sought to open with new health guidelines and with the goal of revitalizing the economy due to an anticipated \$700 million revenue shortfall from the spring 2020 shutdown (Keller, 2020a; Office of Governor Michael L. Parson, 2020b). Therefore, with financial concerns from the devastating impact of shutdowns and restrictions on businesses due to COVID-19, states had to balance between financial implications and community health.

Educational Response to COVID-19 in the United States

By mid-February 2020, the first schools in the U.S., Washington state and New York, began temporary school closures due to the sudden rise of COVID-19 cases within their school districts. On March 25, 2020, the Idaho State Department of Education became the last remaining school entity to temporarily close all schools in the United States. After the Easter holiday in April, and with no end in sight for COVID-19, school districts around the U.S. began closing for the remainder of the academic year (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020). As summer approached, school districts around the U.S. found little guidance from the federal government on how to start the 2020-2021 school year, and thus continued working on a state by state, and region by region basis (D. B. Taylor, 2020). School leaders were faced with an ever-increasing amount of scrutiny for development of a re-entry plan for the new school year, generally with relatively broad recommendations from the state level entities (Kamenetz, 2020). Additionally, the cultural and political infighting throughout the U.S. only heightened the distrust between stakeholders involved in school's reopening plans (Nazaryan, 2020). School leaders

faced critics who viewed re-entry plan decisions as political statements, as detailed in the divisions between Republican and Democratic perspectives of COVID-19, whether intended or not by district leadership (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Kamenetz, 2020; Nazaryan, 2020; North, 2020; D. B. Taylor, 2020).

School leaders throughout the U.S. found the development of their 2020-2021 re-entry plans was but a fraction of the factors creating a worst-case scenario for their leadership and decision-making (DeWitt, 2020; Rogers & Spring, 2020). Other factors faced by school leaders included: student learning loss from the spring 2020 shutdown (Barnum, 2020; Tan, 2020); teacher and staff shortage and the fear of health complications (Perez, 2020; Rogers & Spring, 2020; D. B. Taylor, 2020); teacher and staff morale at an all-time low (Greene, 2020; Lightfoot, 2020; Perez, 2020; Will, 2021); financial impacts of COVID-19 shutdowns and re-entry plans on short-term and long-term budgets (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2020; Peele & Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Varine, 2020); an exponential growth in school-choice/voucher programs from public funds due to frustration by community members toward public school re-entry plans (Butcher, 2020; Butcher & Burke, 2021; Nazaryan, 2020), to name a few factors. These factors presented school leaders with a plethora of ethical dilemmas to consider as they operated provided leadership to the schools (Rogers & Spring, 2020).

Historiography of COVID-19 in Missouri and Education

The state of Missouri recognized the first positive COVID case on March 7th, 2020 from an individual living in the St. Louis area who had recently traveled from Italy, a coronavirus hot spot during that time period (Associated Press, 2020a; Hancock, 2020).

Within days, larger school districts around St. Louis began closing school buildings to help mitigate the spread of the novel virus (Moxley & Delaney, 2020). Momentum built over the next couple weeks as positive cases were identified throughout the state and school districts chose to close schools in response (Dejak, 2020). For example, on March 16, 2020, 11 school districts surrounding and including Springfield Public Schools, the largest school district in Missouri, collectively shut down schools temporarily with the hope of reopening by April 3rd (Riley, 2020). The hope of returning back to school would not happen as Missouri Governor Mike Parsons, along with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Margie Vandeven, ordered schools to remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year (Moxley & Delaney, 2020). While schools were closed, learning was to continue and be provided by educators (Riley, 2020). Distance learning with students and educators included paper-packets and/or virtual learning from home, depending on stakeholders' accessibilities to technology at home (Moxley & Delaney, 2020; Office of Governor Michael L. Parson, 2020a; Riley, 2020).

As summer of 2020 approached, Missouri schools faced a multitude of decisions, from providing a graduation for 2020 seniors to preparing schools for a summer session of learning (Delaney, 2020). Schools historically used summer school as an opportunity to both remediate students falling behind academically and to increase adjusted daily attendance (ADA) numbers which directly impact school district finances from the state (Jordan, Lehman, & Richter, 2017; Pournazari, 2019). With DESE guidance supporting individual school mandates, some schools sought to do in-person learning during summer school (Delaney, 2020). In-person summer school provided schools with an opportunity

to begin implementing prospective re-entry plans for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year (Delaney, 2020; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020a). Most of the schools participating in face-to-face learning during summer school were located in rural areas of Missouri, and had avoided a large community spread of COVID at the time (Bernhard, 2020).

Missouri school leaders faced an incredible number of struggles in developing re-entry plans, as the political environment at the national level impacted local stakeholders' perception of re-entry plan decisions (Nazaryan, 2020; Suntrup, 2020). In June 2020, Governor Parsons announced a \$131 million-dollar cut for the 2019-2020 budget and an additional \$123 million-dollar cut from the 2020-2021 budget, to public schools due to the financial impacts of the state-wide shutdown during the spring of 2020 (Rosenbaum, 2020; Suntrup, 2020). Exasperating the financial concerns were the competing ideas between stakeholders who were nervous about exposure to COVID through school buildings and the stakeholders pushing for the reopening of face-to-face school (Delaney, 2020). The concerns were compounded by news of deaths of teachers and students involved in summer school in parts of the U.S. (Leeb et al., 2020; Wade, 2020). Additionally, research on the impact of the spring shutdown on student learning, along with inequities of virtual learning between students, forced school leaders to consider the long-term educational impact on student learning (Barnum, 2020; North, 2020; United Nations Children's Fund, 2020; Wade, 2020). Despite school leaders planning, adjustments of the re-entry plans became increasingly necessary throughout the 2020-2021 school year as DESE, CDC, and local health department guidance changed with new insight on COVID-19 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a; Missouri

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020b; Office of Governor Michael L. Parsons, 2020c).

Theoretical Framework

The qualitative narrative phenomenological study was based on Kurt Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change Theory and Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. Lewin's (1947) theory provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic upended traditional learning environments in schools from a holistic perspective. Shapiro and Gross' (2013) theory provided a framework for interpreting school leaders' perception and influences as the leaders developed and implemented school re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year.

Lewin's 3-Step of Model Change Theory

Sociological researcher Kurt Lewin (1947) developed the 3-Step Model of Change Theory during the late 1940's as a model for an organization to have a successful change initiative. The 3-Step Model of Change included the following three steps: Unfreeze, Change, and Refreeze (Burnes, 2007). Unfreezing occurs when an organization must become "unlearned" (Burnes, 2004, p. 985) from previous actions and thought process. Then the organization transitions to using the momentum of Unfreezing to consider new ideas and apply the new ideas through action research methods to develop new procedures and/or processes. Finally, once the new methods have been vetted and implemented, the organization must seek to refreeze the new ideals within the culture of the organization (Schein, 1996). The three steps identified by Lewin (1947) originally were used as a proactive step-by-step process for leaders to implement new change within their school district. In line with Lewin's (1947) work, for application

within this research, the researcher looked at how Lewin's 3-Step Model of Change Theory applied to what school districts faced with the COVID-19 phenomenon and in consideration to the unfreezing, moving, and refreezing forced upon schools by the global pandemic (Schein, 1996).

Shapiro & Gross' Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory

Shapiro and Gross (2013) identified the Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory in their book *Ethical Educational Leadership in Turbulent Times*. Multiple Ethical Paradigm refers to four lenses individuals use when making decisions and include: Ethic of Justice, Ethic of Critique, Ethic of Care, and Ethic of Profession. Each of the lenses are present in everyday ethical decisions faced by educational leaders. Ethic of Justice is defined as one which "focuses on rights, law, and policies" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 6). Through the Ethic of Justice Paradigm, individuals consider the legal ramifications and justifications within a dilemma (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Ethic of Critique instead focuses on the power structure which helped define the Ethic of Justice to determine who benefits from its current definitions and to identify who has been left without a voice. The emphasis within Ethic of Care is the implications of decisions made through Ethic of Justice; however, it focuses on what precedent decisions may have on the future. Within Ethic of Care, identification of individuals impacted, both positively and negatively, by ethical decision are made. Finally, Ethic of Profession focuses on the impact decisions have on students and any cultural standards established with professional organizations and communities (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Schools have been provided flexibility within Shapiro and Gross' Ethic of Justice based upon federal and state decisions (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Due to the United States

constitutional structure with the 10th Amendment and various courts reinforcement of reserved powers for states, schools are held to few federally mandated or interpreted legal restrictions and guidelines. The mandates dictated to schools by the federal government are generally tied to federal funding, which accounts for roughly 8% of most public schools' budgets (Spelling, 2014). Yet, federal budgets play a pivotal role in providing equitable educational opportunities through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which was passed in 1990 (M. Smith, 2020). Many of the remaining federally mandated policies for schools involve Supreme Court decisions such as racial integration (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954), no prayer in school (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962), and teacher unions (*Janus v. AFSCME*, 2019). The Supreme Court precepts can be reinterpreted by the courts over time, such as *Plessy vs. Ferguson's* (1896) support of segregations which was reversed by *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) which supported the integration of schools.

The remaining Ethic of Justice lens applicable for schools are defined at the state and local level, thus creating a patchwork of interpretations between school leaders, and sometimes conflicts between federal or state mandates and community level desires (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). For example, in 2016 President Barack Obama passed an executive order requiring public schools to designate a bathroom as gender-neutral within each student building. If schools failed to provide such a facility, the school faced the threat of lawsuits or losing federal funding (CBS Los Angeles, 2016). In response, several state and local school boards sued the federal government over the executive order or ignored the mandate, prior to the removal of the mandate in 2017 by newly elected President Donald Trump (Bauerlein, Barrett, & Frosch, 2016; Peeler, 2017;

Trotta, 2017). Therefore, school leaders must proactively work with legal counsel to interpret a decisions legality at the federal, state, and community level (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Ethic of Critique, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), on the other hand seeks to challenge the status quo of the Ethic of Justice by seeking to identify legal disparity, characterize difficult questions, and fight against inherent inequity within the legal system. The Ethic of Critique paradigm is based upon Critical Theory philosophy which developed out of the Marxian Theory and interprets struggles present in the world as a conflict between individuals with power against individuals without power (Foster, 1986). Therefore, the Ethic of Critique focuses on individuals developing the legal system and structures or laws with the intent to identify the individuals left out of the process, whether intentionally or not. Critical Theorist's uses the Ethic of Critique to not only analyze legalities, but also cultural norms present in "privilege, power, culture, and language" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013 p. 24). The analysis allows leaders to deconstruct historical norms to reconstruct a new present which provides an equitable environment for all stakeholders (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Ethic of Care is the third lens of the Multiple Ethical Paradigms and views dilemmas in contrast with Ethic of Justice, much like the Ethic of Critique (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Ethic of Care focuses on ideals and solutions which include "care, concern, and connection" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 27) when considering ethical issues. As with Ethic of Critique, the Ethic of Care highlights the thoughts and opinions of multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process, but with an emphasis on collaboration as a strategy as opposed to neglected voices themselves (Shapiro & Gross,

2013). Through collaboration, individuals receive an elevated feeling of self-worth and positive emotion. The lens of the Ethic of Care also projects into the future how moral decisions made today become the precedent for future scenarios. By involving collaboration with decisions, the future precedent will consider other individual's feelings and place in society (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

The final ethical lens within Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigms is the Ethic of Profession, which focuses on the professional moral codes of school leaders. Professional standards are exhibited in various organizations, including: American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Learning Forward Standards, and National School Boards Association (NSBA) (Learning Forward Standards, 2020; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The standards and beliefs of each organization provide a guidepost for school leaders when considering ethical decisions within the Ethic of Profession. Subsequently, by participating in professional organizations, school leaders acquiesce to the conceptual underpinning of professional standards for job-embedded decision-making (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Shapiro and Gross (2013) also introduced Turbulence Theory which classified ethical dilemmas based upon the degree of turbulence, or volatility, caused by situations involving the entire organizational unit. The classifications are Light Turbulence, Moderate Turbulence, Severe Turbulence, and Extreme Turbulence (Shapiro & Gross,

2013). Light Turbulence is a small disturbance or situation, part of the educational entities normal operation and easily handled within the entity. Moderate Turbulence is a disturbance or situation with an increased impact on all individuals within the educational entity, but can be resolved through a concerted effort by the individuals involved in the entity. Severe Turbulence impacts an entire organization and creates an environment where “normal administrative actions seem inadequate” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 8) thus, outside-of-the-box solutions or perspectives are necessary. Finally, Shapiro and Gross (2013) identified Extreme Turbulence, involving issues which seriously damage the organization beyond repair. Through the use of each of the classifications, school leaders can assess the severity of the situation to develop appropriate strategies which can provide staying power to the organization.

Within Turbulence Theory, Shapiro and Gross (2013) identified three key Contextual Forces which drive educational entities and ethical dilemmas into one of the classifications of turbulence. The Contextual Forces are identified as Cascading, Positionality, and Stability. Cascading is defined as a series of events which either heighten or lessen the level of turbulence within an organizational entity. The types of events can vary in significance or magnitude in application of Cascading within a school district so school leaders must assess the events and decisions made, regardless of significance, to project any turbulence the events and decisions will have on the organization. For example, minor inconveniences caused by technical errors in the classroom and an unrelated staff reduction decision, while extraneous, can cause a Cascading of cultural problems within a school district escalating it into higher levels of turbulence (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Positionality examines how the Contextual Factors within a Cascading event affects individuals due to position or status within the organizational entity. Shapiro and Gross (2013) identified Positionality as a perspective “to understand the relative situation of individual in the organization in *a multidimensional fashion*” (p. 45). Understanding another person’s position within the organization, and subsequent turbulence faced, can help the organization work toward stabilization (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Educators also find themselves positionally as parents, guardians, siblings, and had to consider how their position as an educator surrounded by students who could potentially infect them with COVID-19. Therefore, educators had to consider how their Positionality as an educator could have health impacts to individuals in their households and families (Borup et al., 2020; Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Hlemke, 2020). When considering the context of the COVID-19 pandemic’s effect on educational entities, it is necessary to understand how the creation and implementation of the school’s re-entry plan affects different positions within the entity and the effects on the staffs’ own households and communities. Looking through the Cascading lens, a researcher may gain a greater understanding of how Cascading events led to either stabilization or destabilization of the school culture and organization.

Finally, Stability is the application of the Contextual Forces on an organizational unit facing turbulence (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Stability specifically is the bridge between an educational organization and the “dynamic forces confronting it” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 48). Cascading and Positionality can both lead to Stability within an organization or create the factors necessary for Destabilization of an organization (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Shapiro & Gross (2013) found both Stability and

Destabilization are both temporary and rarely ever finite in their application, even within the highest performing schools. High performing schools may have developed incredible fluidity and flexibility that helped the schools avoid the negative consequences for failing to plan for Cascading and Positionality forces. However, Shapiro and Gross (2013) found even the “dynamic forces confronting” (p. 48) an organization can be too great for the entity to withstand the pressure. Yet, school leaders maintaining a pulse on the Contextual Forces facing their school district: Cascading, Positionality, and Stability, can adapt to the “dynamic forces confronting” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 48) to minimize any potential harm.

Problem Statement

During the spring 2020 semester, school districts throughout the United States grappled with the sudden closure of schools, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Kantis et al., 2021). School leaders in all fifty states struggled to abruptly provide learning opportunities for students via remote learning (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020). In Missouri specifically, school leaders were provided local control over how best to provide learning opportunities for students (Keller, 2020b). Due to local autonomy, school districts’ responses varied greatly based on various geographical, ethical, and logistical factors which challenged each school. School districts had to determine how to approach operational, procedural, and academic factors, such as: grading procedures; asynchronous or synchronous learning; technology lessons or paper packets; and student safety (Associated Press, 2020b). Such factors posed incredibly difficult ethical dilemmas for schools as schools considered the impact on the present and future educational opportunities for students and staff. The problem was public schools were

inadequately prepared for the unprecedented nationwide shutdown during the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. School leader's response to the initial shutdown in March of 2020, however, did provide an opportunity for re-assessing the leader's role during crises, as well as the responsibility which falls on schools to provide for their students, staff, and community.

Purpose of Study

Experiences learned by school leaders through the spring 2020 state-wide shutdown, along with the ever-changing guidance from governmental entities, such as Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and local county health departments, alone would have provided an unprecedented challenge for the implementation of a new school year (Keller, 2020b). Yet the politically charged environment school leaders faced due to the governmental and societal pressures at the national and local level, created an untenable background for the development of the 2020-2021 school re-entry plan (Nazaryan, 2020). As leaders in virtually every industry encountered during the year 2020, each decision made inevitably faced a vocal opposition, particularly through social media (Englmeier, 2021; J. Obiała et al., 2021; Paisana et al., 2020). School leaders were forced to determine significant legal, health, and wellness ramifications of their decisions, made or not made, due to the expansive microscope during the time period in history (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis, Steadman, & Mao, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Zhao, Zhou, Liu, B., & Liu, W., 2020). Therefore, the dual purpose of this study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020, COVID-19 school shut down

and how the experience shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation, and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year. The second purpose of the study was to discover how school leaders' perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape their ability to make ethical decisions and respond to Contextual Forces as the leaders created and implemented school re-entry plans during the 2020-2021 school year.

Research Questions

1. How did Missouri public school leaders' perceptions during the phenomena of COVID-19 inform the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
2. How did Missouri public school leaders' perception during the Turbulence (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extreme) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) caused by the phenomena of COVID-19, shape the leader's ability to make decisions and respond to Contextual Forces (Cascading, Positionality, Stability) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - a. How did the Ethic of Justice (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - b. How did the Ethic of Critique (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation,

- implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
- c. How did the Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - d. How did the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

Significance of Study

Current research on the COVID-19 phenomenon has focused on the instructional methods and tools used with students and individual's perceptions of their effectiveness (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis, Steadman, & Mao, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Zhao, Zhou, Liu, B., & Liu, W., 2020). This study's phenomenological focus expands educational research on school leaders' perception and decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic for the 2020-2021 school year. By understanding the Ethical Paradigms school leaders faced, this research can potentially identify what the refreezing of education in public schools looked like during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will capture the lived experiences of school leaders through a phenomenological research method. Heidegger's (1927) phenomenological framework provides a modified nature of understanding and interpretation which creates the constant process of renewed

projection of past events (Gardner, 2004). Research and documentation of school leaders' experiences can potentially provide researchers with a greater understanding and ability to interpret the elements which impacted school leaders' decisions in an uncertain time of history. By capturing such elements, future researchers will potentially be able to analyze the decisions and elements which impacted decision-making, and potentially determine the long-term impact of such decisions and elements. Additionally, this phenomenological research can potentially be used to improve school leadership courses to prepare future leaders for unprecedented experiences and decision-making which could occur in the future.

Definition of Key Terms

Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19). Disease caused by severe respiratory syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). A novel virus first officially reported in Wuhan, China and later termed COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (Dardas, Khalaf, Nabolsi, Nassar, & Halasa, 2020; Khan, 2021; Yi-Chong, 2020).

Ethical Paradigms. Ethical Paradigms include Ethic of Justice, Ethic of Critique, Ethic of Care, and Ethic of Profession. When faced with an ethical decision, individuals should consider each of the areas and the impact on the issue (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). While each of the paradigms will be discussed in depth within Chapters One and Two, the following are questions one asks oneself when analyzing a situation from each paradigm's perspective:

Ethic of Justice. Is there a law, policy, right, or rule which would provide a solution to the dilemma? Is it the correct law, policy, right, or rule for this particular ethical dilemma? What does implementation of the law, policy, right, or rule look like?

Should there be a new law, policy, right, or rule developed to properly handle the current dilemma? (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Ethic of Critique. Within inception, who developed the laws, policies, rights, and rules? When were they developed? Are the laws, policies, rights, and rules still appropriate? Whose voice, “class, race, gender, and other areas of difference” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 6), is silenced through the development and implementation of the laws, policies, rights, and rules?

Ethic of Care. Who is helped or hurt by the decision? What are the manifest intended and latent (unintended) functions of a decision for tomorrow, in the future, or never? What are the long-term ramifications? What type of precedent will the decision create? (Helm, 1971; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Ethic of Profession. What does the profession expect? How should someone within the profession consider the ethical dilemma? What would the professional organizations consider? What about the local community’s code of ethics? How does this impact the school leader’s own code of ethics? (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Turbulence Theory. There are four levels of turbulence or instability within educational organizations when faced with innovation or changes. The turbulence level has a different extent to which the educational organization is affected, based upon the severity. The four levels associated with Turbulence Theory include: Light, Moderate, Severe, and Extreme (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Light Turbulence. Turbulence which originates from the average daily changes and functions of schools, and can be handled with little to no effect on the educational entity (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Moderate Turbulence. Turbulence which is not part of the average day and must, be solved by a clear focus on the part of the educational entity (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Severe Turbulence. Turbulence which threatens the entire educational entity where past solutions and focus are not enough to resolve (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Extreme Turbulence. Turbulence which creates a treacherous scenario where the survival of the education entity is faced with a possible extinction (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Contextual Factors. Within the context of the Turbulence Theory, three Contextual Factors were identified in either destabilizing or stabilizing an educational entity as it worked through its level of turbulence. These factors were Positionality, Cascading, and Stability (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Positionality. Provides an understanding of how one's position within an educational entity affects ethical decision-making and experience (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Cascading. Interconnected forces which contribute to either the escalation or de-escalation and turbulence within an educational entity. While forces are inherently separate experiences, their amalgamation during turbulent conditions can become a powerful force (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Stability. The ability of an educational entity to confront the turbulence and either turn the turbulence into an opportunity to innovate or falter into higher levels of turbulence (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Blended Learning. Student learning which includes both face-to-face learning and eLearning through technology, where “some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace” (Wang, Huang, & Omar, 2021, p.174) is present.

Remote Learning. A flexible learning environment where teachers provide students with online instruction through information and communications technology (ICT). The ICT will include both asynchronous and synchronous opportunities which can allow for enhanced individualization for students’ learning needs (Al-Azzam, Elsalem, & Gombedza, 2020).

Face-To-Face Learning. Traditional learning which takes place physically between a teacher and students in a face-to-face environment within a brick-and-mortar building (Wang et al., 2021).

Asynchronous Learning. Learning between a teacher and students but separated by both space and time (Güneş, & Alagözlü, 2020).

Synchronous Learning. Learning between a teacher and students in an environment separated by space, but not by time (Güneş, & Alagözlü, 2020).

Re-Entry Plan. Plans developed by school leaders within districts, based upon guidance from governmental and health care entities, for re-entry into face-to-face learning, blended learning, virtual learning, or a combination of the three learning styles for the 2020-2021 school year (MSBA, 2020).

Limitations

In this study, the limitations were as follows:

1. Researcher and participant biases were a possibility in a qualitative study.

2. Results of the interview may be limited by participants' personal and professional bias.
3. Given the research design of interviews, a limitation on the scope of information which could be gathered from an interview is possible.
4. Participants had varying degrees of recognition and comfortability discussing components of the circumstances involved in their COVID-19 re-entry plan.
5. Only participants who accepted the request to participate were included.
6. The quality of the district's implementation of the COVID-19 fall 2020-2021 re-entry plan.
7. Research limited by the researcher's experience as an interviewer.

Delimitations

Delimitations for this study were as follows:

1. Study was delimited to the problem, participants, methodology used, and the setting of this study.
2. Study delimited to the use of in-depth interviews with school leaders, such as superintendents or assistant superintendents, who played an active role in designing and implementing COVID-19 re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year.
3. Study delimited to schools which participated in face-to-face learning at least two days-a-week for the 2020-2021 school year.
4. Study delimited to school leaders with a minimum of three years of experience in their district.

5. Quality and quantity of interview questions were delimited by the researcher.

Assumptions

Assumptions for this study were as follows:

1. It was assumed participants gave honest and open responses.
2. It was assumed school leaders offered valid responses directly related to their specific position in the school district.
3. It was assumed participants participated throughout the entirety of the study.

Design Controls

The researcher selected a qualitative narrative phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of school leaders during the COVID-19 phenomenon and the effect on school district's planning of the 2020-2021 school year (Creswell, 2007; Peoples, 2021). While the phenomenon was experienced by district's all across the state of Missouri, the school leaders lived experiences varied a great deal due to several local and national factors. Using a qualitative narrative phenomenological study allowed the researcher to answer the question "what is it like to experience a certain phenomenon?" (Peoples, 2021, p. 3). The researcher was able to analyze the varied lived experiences of school leaders and develop conceptual generalizations of the COVID-19 experience, which can provide researchers with a meaningful reality based on the experience.

In this qualitative narrative phenomenological study, nine public school leaders from districts of differing size and location were interviewed. Each of the nine regional professional development centers (RPDC) developed by the Department of Elementary

and Secondary Education in the state of Missouri were represented in the study. According to Peoples' work (2021), the study's sample size and quantity meets the criterium of eight to fifteen participants to address saturation. Additionally, the study included districts in each of the following classifications: rural, urban, and suburban. Furthermore, the RPDC's represented each section of the state, thus, a more accurate description of school leaders' state-wide response to COVID pandemic was provided. Subsequently, districts of various size and location also provided an opportunity to find similarities and differences between the shared experiences of school leaders representing different dynamics during the pandemic throughout the state of Missouri.

For this study, participants were sent a request to interview with the researcher and each participant willingly accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Each participant was interviewed via the online video program Google Meet. Each interview with school leaders included participants with varying experiences in the development, adjustment, and implementation of the district's COVID-19 fall re-entry plan. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed to identify common themes among the school leaders' experiences. The transcriptions were coded to provide confidentiality of participants, as well to identify consistent themes between lived experiences. The researcher participated in a minimum number of research interviews; therefore, inexperience of the process limited the overall efficiency of the research.

The study was delimited to school districts participating in face-to-face learning at least two days a-week for the 2020-2021 school year. The researcher interviewed nine school leaders who had served a minimum of three years in their current school district prior to the 2020-2021 school year. To provide for limitations and delimitations, the

researcher used open-ended questions about the development, implementation, and adjustment of the school district's 2020-2021 COVID-19 re-entry plan. The researcher attempted to add reliability to the study by triangulating data through the interview, re-entry plan, and plan revisions over time. If this study were to be replicated, results may differ as experiences vary with different school district environments and the number of years removed from the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the researcher sought to further strengthen reliability and validity through member checking, review of the interview sessions recordings, and concept mapping, attempting to provide a district-wide perspective. The researcher assumed participants provided honest responses which accurately described the context and processes used during the phenomenological time period. Additionally, the researcher assumed participants volunteered for the study and would participate throughout the entirety of the research even though volunteers had the opportunity to stop participation at any point.

Summary

This qualitative narrative phenomenological study was based upon Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change, as well as Shapiro and Gross's (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. The research documented the experiences of school leaders and their perceptions during the COVID-19 phenomenon. By understanding the Contextual Forces and perceptions of school leaders leading up to and during the 2020-2021 school year, future researchers may be able to analyze the long-term impact on education. This research was also needed to capture school leaders process for decision-making during a world-wide pandemic, to better understand the thought process of school leaders during turbulent situations.

This study is arranged in five chapters, bibliography, and appendixes. Chapter Two consists of the review of literature organized thematically as follows: theoretical framework of Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change and Shapiro and Gross (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory; schools prior to the COVID-19 spring 2020 shutdown; schools amidst COVID-19 spring 2020 shutdown; school's re-entry to the 2020-2021 school year. Additional themes within the three phases of schools' experiences with COVID-19 include: effective schools; change in schools; barriers to effective schools, and barriers to change in schools. In Chapter Three, the researcher provided the methodology of the qualitative narrative phenomenological study, including the design, statistical analysis. In Chapter Four, the researcher provided the findings and experiences of school leaders through the interviews. Finally, in Chapter Five, the researcher detailed the conclusions, recommendations, and application for future researchers.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

School leaders provide guidance to educational entities in a constant field of Light Turbulence, interrupted occasionally by a few moderate turbulent events over the course of a school year. Periodically leaders face severe or Extreme Turbulence which no prior training could prepare them for nor help a leader fully understand the impact such turbulence could have on the educational entity's future (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Decades of research have been used to help school leaders create and guide their educational entities into learning organizations which deliver high levels of academic and societal growth for all students. Much research centers on the key tenets of change leadership, operational structures, procedural best practices, and academic success (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Lewin, 1947; Noumair & Shani, 2018; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Yet, the emergence of COVID-19 in East Asia and Europe from December 2019 through February 2020, provided an unparalleled set of circumstances for leaders of all careers and fields, especially school leadership (Ludvigsson, 2020; Ordway, 2020; Pragholapati, 2020). As governments around the world began shutting down economies and schools, United States school leaders were provided an early look into school operations during a shutdown. The potential consequences on the implementation of past research for the unexpected shutdowns were evident on the following key tenets of school leadership: culture of collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social-emotional health, and the power of position (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Lewin, 1947; Noumair & Shani, 2018; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Fraught with uncertainty and division

throughout their communities' stakeholders, school leaders faced an unenviable set of ethical dilemmas in their decision-making (Cheng, 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Mulenga & Marbán, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The qualitative narrative phenomenological study was based on Kurt Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change Theory and Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. Lewin's 3-Step (1947) 3-Step Model of Change provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic, with the shutdown in the spring of 2020 along with the continued impact into the re-entry of school during the 2020-2021 school year, impacted the future of public education from a holistic view. Shapiro and Gross's (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigms and Turbulence Theory provided a framework for interpreting school leaders' perception and influences on day-to-day practices implemented by schools throughout COVID-19 in the development, implementation, and adjustment of school re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year.

Lewin's Change Theory

Kurt Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change Theory stemmed from several individual writings published through Lewin's research on gestalt psychology and group dynamics (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016). Lewin's research developed from his belief that "participative leadership was more effective than authoritarian leadership" (Roşca, 2020, p. 618). The key to creating participative leadership was open communication or a feedback loop, which would naturally lead organizational and individual change from a state of Unfreezing, experiencing Change, and into a new Refreezing of the change (Burnes, 2004, Schein, 1996). Group dynamics play a vital role

in change as both a pull towards and away from any change in what researcher Schein (1996) attributes to Lewin as a “quasi-stationary equilibrium.” (Burnes, 2004; Lewin, 1943, 1947; Schein, 1996, p. 28). Despite criticism from some researchers of Lewin’s theoretical framework being too linear and stationary, Lewin’s (1943, 1947) work consistently discussed the continuous nature of change within organizations (Cummings et al., 2016). As researchers Schein (1996) and Senge (2006) discuss, change is a necessity for learning organizations as they seek to build the capacity within their organization (Akram, Lei, Haider, Hussain, & Puig, 2017). For the Unfreezing state to commence, the desire for change must be stronger than the desire for consistency and Stability (Burnes, 2004; Roşca, 2020). Yet, external forces can coerce an organization or individuals to create an environment which rapidly breaks down the equilibrium, and potentially cause new patterns and new equilibrium to emerge (Burnes, 2004; Kippenberger, 1998).

Lewin’s (1947) 3-Step Model of Change happens at both the individual and organizational level and contains discomfort throughout each of the three steps (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996). Part of the discomfort stems from a breakdown of routines and Stability for individuals involved, as the transformation can potentially have a profound, dynamic impact on one’s self-efficacy (Burnes, 2004; Roşca, 2020; Schein, 1996). While discomfort, dissatisfaction, or frustration are useful for beginning a transformation, leaders must understand the learning anxiety faced by individuals and organizations during the Unfrozen stage of change. As change is implemented through trial and error, role models or leaders are needed to help direct organizations through the process (Burnes, 2004; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996). Due to the powerful

nature of group dynamics, big alterations have a large cultural and subcultural implication which must be understood and acknowledged as organizations begin to Refreeze their change (Burnes, 2004; Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996). Researcher Kotter (2014) defined Lewin's Refreeze of the Change as the culturalization of new beliefs, procedures, or strategies (Lewin, 1947). When individual's in an organization develop their own solutions, the adjustments have a higher probability of being culturized in the Refrozen phase (Burnes, 2004; Kotter, 2014; Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996). For the Refrozen phase to materialize, time is needed for the organization to implement the change through trial and error as part of the group dynamic to cultivate the transformation (Lewin, 1947; Roşca, 2020).

Shapiro & Gross' Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory

As detailed in Chapter One, Shapiro and Gross (2013) identified four Ethical Paradigms, which are: Ethic of Justice, Ethic of Critique, Ethic of Care, and Ethic of Profession. Shapiro and Gross (2013) also established the Turbulence Theory as a means to associate the effect turbulent issues produce within organizations. The Turbulence Theory is classified into four into four categories: Light, Moderate, Severe, and Extreme. Furthermore, Contextual Factors contribute to increasing or decreasing turbulence within the entity, including Cascading, Positionality, and Stability.

When considering Ethic of Justice, leaders must understand a social contract of individual rights and supports should be recognized as opposed to focusing on the whole or specific groups (Eyal et al., 2011). The application of current policies and procedures are part of the Democratic tradition based upon the social contract and applied to all involved (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Ethic of Critique on the other hand is based upon

research by critical theorists viewing public schools as having a vital role in providing students an opportunity to achieve the American dream while simultaneously reinforcing social norms which perpetuate inequity (Stefkovich & Shapiro, 2016). Therefore, school leaders must use the Ethic of Critique to inspect their own procedures, policies, structures, pedagogy, or curriculum to identify inequitable norms (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). As drivers of local cultures and norms, schools can become pivotal in the implementation of critical pedagogy, and embrace the transformational power needed to address injustices (Eyal et al., 2011). Through more careful inspection and appropriate changes, schools will “refuse to accept needless human suffering and exploitation” (Stefkovich & Shapiro, 2016, p. 14). Additionally, educators and school leaders using Ethic of Critique can be more intentional in listening to the voice of students, who have traditionally been ignored when changes in schools have been considered. By viewing through the students’ lens, school leaders can provide the optimal learning environment for all their students by recognizing the diversity and needs which vary with social class, race, gender, and religion (Eyal et al., 2011; Nasreen, 2019). Subsequently, however, research has shown a negative correlation by educational staff with the application of the Ethic of Justice and the Ethic of Critique (Eyal et al., 2011). This correlation centers on each individuals’ mental models, perspective on life, and how individual’s interpret public good (Eyal et al., 2011; Senge, 2006).

Researchers emphasized the impact of Ethic of Care which has the largest determinant of student success, the teacher (Cherkowski et al., 2015). Thus, the treatment of teachers as educated professionals, can impact a teacher’s approach to students in their classroom. School leaders that create a culture of collaboration enable a

sense of belonging and empowerment among staff, as opposed to the traditional top-down hierarchy. Once decisions involving an individual's care and concern are embedded within the school culture, teachers' then potentially model a similar approach within their individual classrooms (Clearly, Morgan, & Marzano, 2018). Additionally, school leaders and teachers implementing the Ethic of Care as part of the culture when faced with dilemmas, can develop the same perspective of seeking to understand a decision's impact on others outside of one's locus of control as well (Covey, 2004). Therefore, educators' usage of the Ethic of Care can help develop the whole student, as one who considers their place in the community as opposed to just their own self-interest (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Researcher Covey (2004) identified the Circle of Influence as a framework centered on an individual's own personal core values. Through the Circle of Influence, Senge (2006) identified Mental Models as the way individuals view the world and their place in it. Individuals can be focused on a number of less ideal objects, such as spouse-centered, family-centered, money-centered, self-centered and while many of the objects are not inherently destructive in nature, such as spouse or family, the inclusion as the center places oneself in a reactive, as opposed proactive approach (Covey, 2004). Covey's (2004) research therefore advocates school leaders should become principle-centered. A principled-centered approach helps individuals to approach dilemmas through a detachment from emotion, and therefore individuals are able to make decisions "consciously and knowledgeably" (Covey, 2004, p. 135). Yet, the set of self-conscious moral center developed by school leaders may conflict with a school leaders professional and community ethical codes (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Therefore, school leaders must

balance their own ethical perspectives with their profession and community (Dawson & Napper, 2020; Nasreen, 2019; Shapiro & Gross, 2013)

School leaders play a pivotal role in the development of an ethical culture through the implementation of one's words, actions, and deeds (Cherkowski et al., 2015; Eyal et al., 2011; Nasreen, 2019). As leaders, one must have a capacity to think quick and clearly when faced with turbulence (Gross & Shapiro, 2004). The Multiple Ethical Paradigms can help school leaders to understand current turbulence and how each decision can be affected and perceived by stakeholders. School leaders can then make the best decision based upon their perception of current evidence (Gross & Shapiro, 2004; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). It is important to examine the ethical implications of each decision, or indecision, to be cognizant of the ethical dilemmas involved (Morris, 2019). Many Contextual Forces create different forms of turbulence so school leaders have to consider all Ethical Paradigms and ultimately prioritize the ones which fits within each context appropriately (Eyal et al., 2011; Gross & Shapiro, 2004).

Researcher Burleigh (2020) found self-preservation plays a strong role in decision-making, even if individuals know their choice is unethical. Burleigh's (2020) research found several other several other factors including fellow staff members, classroom setting, and parents can provide a struggle for school staff. As teachers transition to new administrators, barriers for applying and understanding ethical situations are often created (Burleigh, 2020). Thus, the Positionality change often creates a communication link and perceptual change in relationships which can delay the communication of ethical dilemmas (Burleigh, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). The delay ultimately reduces a school leader's ability to respond in a timely fashion to the situation

(Burleigh, 2020; Senge, 2006; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Therefore, more emphasis should be placed on pre-service training focusing on ethical decision-making to help shape experiences, as most pre-service programs have very little ethical dilemma as part of new teacher development programs (Argyropoulou, 2015).

Moral Agency is understanding one's role in leadership by making ethical decisions on someone's behalf and acknowledging the consequences of such decisions (Cherkowski et al., 2015). Greater education and years of experience bring about a higher sense of moral responsibility, and collaboration with other school leaders provides an invaluable dynamic (Dawson & Napper, 2020; Nasreen, 2019). Less experienced school leaders tend to be idealistic in decision-making which is possibly due to lacking an explicit moral leadership framework to use during ethical dilemmas (Dawson & Napper, 2020; Eyal et al., 2011). School Leaders using previous experience to learn and adapt increase their self-efficacy (Eyal et al., 2011). Through increasing self-efficacy, more experienced leaders tend to be more pragmatic during ethical dilemmas than their less experienced counterparts (Eyal et al., 2011; Nasreen, 2019). Years of experience help school leaders work through the delicate balance of creating a collaborative culture while maintaining privacy throughout ethical or turbulent situations (Cherkowski et al., 2015). School leaders must have diagnostic and analytical skills for evaluating each ethical dilemma as well as the appropriate approach to navigate such dilemmas (Nasreen, 2019). School leaders who distinguish situations from low importance to high, can more quickly and effectively navigate the Turbulence Forces involved, as defined by researchers Shapiro and Gross (2013). Turbulent Forces are caused by various relative factors such as: local, state, national governments, economic, and political (Nasreen, 2019).

Ethical leaders in effective schools focus on creating a culture centered on collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and their own power of position (Aas et al., 2020; DuFour et al., 2018; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006). Culture of collaboration is a key for schools to transition into learning organizations for all stakeholders (Aas et al., 2020; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006). The health of the culture of collaboration depends on the level of communication present among the school leader and various stakeholders (DuFour et al., 2018; Hattie & Zierer, 2018). When stakeholders are provided the opportunity in the decision-making process, guiding coalitions can be developed to implement the shared vision (Aas et al., 2020; DuFour et al., 2018; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Senge, 2006). As communications are increased, relationships between the school and stakeholders can be fostered based upon trust (Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014). Trust is the foundation for the continuation of a collaboration of culture where communication and relationships can thrive (Aas et al., 2020; DuFour et al., 2018; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Senge, 2006). Furthermore, student achievement can be increased through collaboration with stakeholders, focus on clearly identified goals, implementation of research-based instructional strategies, and the use of continuous improvement as a learning organization (Barkman, 2015; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Jensen, Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull, & Hunter, 2016; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Sun & Gao, 2019). Additionally, ethical school leaders using the Ethic of Care, which focuses on the well-being of stakeholders, plan ways to address the social emotional health of staff and students (Bahri et al., 2021; Collier et al., 2019; Park & Shea, 2020; Quinn et al., 2021;

Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Therefore, school leaders who understand the power of their position are able to lead their school districts in both the unpredictable and controlled change experiences, with a focus on the impact of all stakeholders involved (Aas et al., 2020; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009).

Schools Prior to COVID-19

School leaders prior to COVID-19 had to consider best-practices, as defined in the section Theoretical Framework, for the following topics: Effective schools, Change Process in Schools, Barriers to Effective Schools, and Barriers to Change (Aas et al., 2020; DuFour et al., 2018; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006). Using Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change, this time period would be classified as the time before the Unfreeze (Schein, 1996). Prior to the spring of 2020 varying levels of turbulence occurred, such as infusion of information technology communication (ICT), state and federally mandated testing, and school safety. School leaders throughout turbulent circumstances had time to research and consider Ethical Paradigms to help direct the next steps for an organization (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic research supported six areas which describe effective school culture: collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and power of position (Aas et al., 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006).

Culture of Collaboration

School leaders play an instrumental role in the fostering a school's culture and must construct learning organizations which include leadership, collaborative culture, structure, and opportunities for learning (Aas et al., 2020; Gil et al., 2019; Hesbol, 2019).

Staff and students need to be involved in the learning, with high expectations for student achievement as the priority (Gil et al., 2019; Hattie & Zierer, 2018). When the educational entity is designed around organic structures, such as decentralized collaboration and delegated decision-making, a culture of student achievement can be realized. Organic structures are unrealized without school leaders who lead with ethical leadership (Gil et al., 2019). Leaders using Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigms, demonstrate an ability to view ethical decisions through four paradigms: Ethic of Justice, Ethic of Critique, Ethic of Care and Ethic of Profession. School leaders need to consider the laws, policies, and development of their organization using the Ethic of Justice, while seeking to develop a culture of collaboration which considers all stakeholders as well. Culture of collaboration can be used to identify individuals marginalized with the Ethic of Critique, while the Ethic of Profession will help guide the code of ethic as a leader (Gil et al., 2019; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). A leader's use of ethical leadership can reinforce a culture of collaboration, which is a key factor when an educational entity faces times of turbulence, as identified by Shapiro and Gross (2013). Turbulence has the power to change an organization, with varying degrees of severity (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). School leaders can collaboratively evaluate and adjust school priorities to develop strategies for addressing the turbulence (Bryant et al., 2018; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Subsequently, the collaborative evaluation must include feedback loops of communication which reflect "on action, in action, and for action" (Aas et al., 2020, p. 525). Feedback loops within collaboration provide opportunities to strengthen stakeholder relationships and create new solutions (Bryant et al., 2018; Gil et al., 2019;

Haim & Chen, 2019; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Karagiorgi et al., 2018; Kotter, 2014; Lewin, 1947; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Sun & Gao, 2019).

Communication

Shaping of a school's collaborative culture is based on a leader's communication and modeling of the behavior with various stakeholders involved in schools (Lasater, 2016). Listening and communicating is vital in building trust, and is fundamental to collaboration (Barkman, 2015; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009). Healthy communication between school leaders and stakeholders is cultivated when leaders understand what the educational entity needs from the leader (Quinn et al., 2021). Role clarity provides a clear framework for leaders to acknowledge the diversity of stakeholders and the school's purpose in each stakeholder's own life (Aas et al., 2020; Quinn et al., 2021). Each relationship with each stakeholder is different and requires different skillsets. Lasater (2016) found effective leaders are adept at balancing communication between the diverse interests of stakeholders. Communication and trust are built and maintained when leaders allow stakeholders to be heard through open-ended questions and invite the stakeholder to be part of the decision-making process (Aas et al., 2020; Karagiorgi et al., 2018; Kotter, 2014; Lasater, 2016; Reeves, 2009). Leadership prioritizing the Ethic of Critique and Ethic of Care might meet disenfranchised stakeholders needs through communication and collaboration, especially true when school leaders are "directly and emotionally expressive" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 13) in their communication (Ciotti et al., 2019).

Relationships

The use of collaboration and communication in a school context is important to the relationship between school leaders their school board. School leaders and their school boards are the driving force for the direction, achievement, and health of the school (Blissett & Alsbury, 2018; Ford & Ihrke, 2017; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Person, De Jong, Robinson, Chesnut, & Messick, 2021). Both school leaders and school boards operate within an American democratic structure balancing between the common good and individuals' rights (Blissett, & Alsbury, 2018). Interplay between school leaders and school board members often creates tension when considering the definition and implementation of ideals such as liberty, equality, or equity (Blissett, & Alsbury, 2018; Bridges, Plancher, & Toledo, 2019). Research on school leaders' perception shows the "school board is one of the most influential aspects" (Williams et al., 2019, p. 8) in a leader's and school's overall success. Bell (2019) found 80% of school leaders felt positively about their relationship with their school board. School leaders who can articulate what the school stands for and understand how the community views the significance of the school, have the ability to predict unintended consequences of leadership decisions (Gurr & Drysdale, 2020). School leaders can use predictions to minimize board conflict as such conflict can have a negative impact on academics within the school district (Ford & Ihrke, 2017; Håkansson Lindqvist, 2019; Suematsu & Tsujino, 2018). Minimalized conflict can be achieved by the school leader developing working relationships with board members through constant communication (Bridges et al., 2019). When communication is used appropriately, school leaders can avoid surprising board members with issues and policies, and reduce the risk of increased tension. Leaders must

also understand and develop a culture with their school board which includes receiving and processing critical feedback from stakeholders to help foster equitable decisions for students (Bridges et al., 2019). However, the more intertwined the school board is in the community and school, maintaining privacy and avoiding miscommunication can be more difficult (Curry, Kinder, Benoiton, & Noonan, 2018). Ultimately, school leaders need to use Ethical Decision-Making which encompasses safety, budget, and staff issues (Cherkowski et al., 2015). Ethical Decisions-Making must consider Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigms. Not only do school leaders have to deliberate the legal ramifications of the Ethic of Justice, but also recognize the Ethic of Critique, which identifies individuals left out of legal or structural developments (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Similarly, leaders need to reflect on the long-term effect of their decisions through the Ethic of Care, as many decisions are expectations of their leadership role encompassed within the framework of the Ethic of Profession. A school leader's use of ethical decision-making through the lens of each of the four paradigms can define a school's success and failures, especially in regard to working with the school board and district personnel (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Ultimately, the biggest indicator of success for schools and school leaders is based upon student achievement of the school district (Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Williams et al., 2019).

Student Achievement

Student achievement is the cornerstone of successful schools and effective leaders understand success as a learning organization is achieved through collaboration, focus on clearly identified goals, research-based instructional strategies, and the use of continuous improvement (Barkman, 2015; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Jensen et al., 2016; Kotter, 2014;

Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Sun & Gao, 2019). Barkman (2015) stated effective school leaders track student success through data and the use of professional learning communities (PLC's). Consistent application and focus on the PLC model by schools over multiple years demonstrates a high level of improvement when compared to schools not focusing on the PLC model (DuFour et al., 2018). The use of PLC's and focus on data allows school leaders to identify which strategies play a role in student achievement (Jensen et al., 2016; Reeves, 2020). When data demonstrates weaknesses, whether instructionally, organizationally, or demographically, effective school leaders can provide funds and time for making improvement (Barkman, 2015; Reeves, 2020). Such improvement can be achieved through the use of the Ethic of Profession, which calls for school leaders to be reflective of their practice, and the Ethic of Care, which pushes school leaders to consider the long-term effect decisions can have on stakeholders. Through the Ethic of Profession and Ethic of Care, school leaders can identify and evaluate their own weaknesses and find solutions based upon their research for any inadequacies (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). The most effective means for improving weaknesses is the use of targeted and research-based professional development for educators (Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Jensen et al., 2016; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2020; Senge, 2006; Sun & Gao, 2019).

Student achievement can also be positively impacted by technology when used appropriately within face-to-face, blended, and remote learning in either asynchronous or synchronous methods (Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Lowenthal et al., 2020; Yao, Rao, Jiang, & Xiong, 2020). Asynchronous, learning between a teacher and students where each are separated by both space and time, and synchronous, learning between a teacher and

students where each are separated by space, not by time, serve different educational purposes (Güneş, & Alagözlü, 2020). Ethical leaders must process the Ethic of Critique with technology's impact on learning for individuals, specifically for individual's equitable access to technology hardware and internet access (Lowenthal et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Similarly, an ethical leaders' duty is to consider the Ethic of Care and how individuals are impacted long-term by any inequitable situations. Subsequently, when leaders use the Ethic of Critique and Ethic of Care, the equity access to technology creates an important discussion piece (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Asynchronous learning is one of the most equitable and flexible learning method which provides more time for students to reflect on their own learning and needs (Güneş, & Alagözlü, 2020). Asynchronous learning can be a very effective tool in both blended and remote learning situations as a means for participants to learn. However, asynchronous learning does not prove helpful in all situations as asynchronous learning is not comparable to face-to-face learning in a traditional classroom (Kent & Rechavi, 2018; Lowenthal et al., 2020). Synchronous learning's greatest benefit, on the other hand, is the ability to develop a face-to-face feedback loop between teachers and students (Yao et al., 2020). Synchronous learning also encompasses a more efficient means for instructors to provide students with direct instruction with minimal integration of video (Güneş, & Alagözlü, 2020; Kent & Rechavi, 2018; Lowenthal et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2020).

Researchers Yao et al. (2020) found synchronous learning through video platforms produced higher student performance due to the timely feedback provided during direct instruction. Synchronous learning provided teachers the role of being an instructional mentor so students could process the information within an active feedback loop

(Lowenthal et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2020). Subsequently, asynchronous learning can still provide benefits to students, especially students within an inequitable situation, but deeper learning was found to occur more through synchronous learning (Yao et al., 2020).

While implementing blended learning techniques, the development and application of feedback loops embedded within instruction is vital (Huber & Helm, 2020; Senge, 2006; Taguchi, 2020). When feedback loops are used as a consistent routine and structure, providing a human connection, student success increases, especially in traumatic or chaotic life situations students may currently be experiencing (Crosby et al., 2020). Not only can a consistent feedback loop provide formative data to educators on students' understanding of learning targets, but it can also provide students with an opportunity to communicate through their experiences as well (Crosby et al., 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020). Teachers focusing on the amount of time students are on task saw greater student achievement, specifically when the task was aligned to the learning goal when compared to others not implementing consistent feedback loop practices. Not only does the feedback loop tie learning to the end objective and content, but it also reduces behavior management problems which can negatively affect the learning environment (Ratcliff et al., 2014). Educators must also view learners as thinkers who can create meaning through meaningful discussion of the learning goals with fellow students and their teachers (Henriksen, Creely, & Henderson, 2020).

Social Emotional Health

While student achievement is the primary goal of schools, changes in the American society's expectations have challenged schools to also help students develop self-regulation and an understanding of their social emotional health (Quinn et al., 2021).

The change in expectations centers on Shapiro and Gross' (2013) research on the importance of leaders focusing on the "best interests of the student" (p. 36). Therefore, as part of the Ethic of Profession, school leaders have sought to include self-regulation and social emotional health as a focus, as the "best interest of the student" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 36). Collier et al. (2019) described "support-oriented approaches to school safety" (p. 708) in regard to student emotional health as a collaboration between school leaders, educators, medical professionals, and counselors. The goal of the support-oriented approaches was to identify the underlying issues faced by students, as opposed to just an individual's outward expression. By focusing on underlying issues, students have the ability to develop self-regulation skills, which are vital for student achievement (Bahri et al., 2021; Collier et al., 2019; Park & Shea, 2020; Quinn et al., 2021). One major factor contributing to a student's social emotional health is the student's participation in face-to-face classrooms, which provide stability and support (Dridi et al., 2020; Paker & Balci, 2020). Additionally, face-to-face classrooms allow school staff members an opportunity to identify and apply appropriate interventions, whether academically or social emotional, for students and their needs (Park & Shea, 2020). For example, the welcoming nature of educators greeting students everyday has proven to contribute to student's overall well-being (Quinn et al., 2021).

Power of Position

Even the most attuned school leader can falter during a crisis if the leader does not understand how to navigate the power of their position within the school effectively (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ira & Bulut, 2018; Senge, 2006). School leaders must understand the Positionality of their power, along with the effect of turbulence on other

positions within the school district (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Understanding how Positionality can impact one's self-efficacy, can directly influence a school leader's ability to problem solve (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Leaders having a high level of self-efficacy and belief their organization is capable of withstanding turbulent circumstances, help build psychological capital (Hesbol, 2019; Ira & Bulut, 2018; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). School leadership is the second most significant factor impacting school success falling just behind the impact of teachers (Miller, 2018; Sun & Gao, 2019). Furthermore, the development of a school leaders' self-efficacy and psychological capital increase with more years of experience (Hesbol, 2019). Psychological capital built by school leaders is based on the development of the following cultural tenets: hope, endurance, optimism, and self-sufficiency. The cultural tenets provide a psychological durability which can guide individuals through difficult circumstances, and trickle down to teacher-student relationships (Ira & Bulut, 2018). School staff must believe they are capable of achieving their goals both individually and as an educational entity (Hesbol, 2019; Senge, 2006). School leaders must be prepared for various circumstances/turbulence to occur, as researchers Henriksen et al. (2020) stated, "change, especially when sudden and externally driven, can make educators apprehensive" (p. 206). Therefore, cultural tenets, focusing on Positionality, must be established by the school leader prior to crises but continually renewed throughout the crisis when a crisis does occur (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ira & Bulut, 2018; Senge, 2006).

In summary of effective schools prior to COVID-19, school leaders had to identify the key tenets of collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and the power of their position (Aas et al., 2020;

DuFour et al., 2018; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Senge, 2006). While other factors played a role in the success of students in school districts as well, the six identified tenets in this section were important with the onset of COVID-19. The research following in the sections School Amidst COVID-19 School Shutdown and Schools' Re-Entry to 2020-2021 School Year address collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and power of position.

Barriers to Effective Schools.

Even the most effective schools in the world faced barriers prior to COVID-19, both internal and external barriers which can potentially cause turbulence for school success (Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). As soon as school leaders encounter turbulence, the relational nature of leadership must rely on trust between the school leaders and school staff (Lasater, 2016). Trust plays a vital role in a culture of collaboration, communication, and the position of power for the school leader as leader's face the turbulence within their school district (Lasater, 2016; Reeves, 2009; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). When faced with Moderate to Extreme Turbulence, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), school leadership either builds trust within the organization or the leader is eventually removed from their position of power (Jun-jie, Yongkang, & Yang, 2012). School leaders who perceive turbulence as insurmountable, reduce their self-efficacy and ability to build trust within organization (Hesbol, 2019; Lasater, 2016). Communication, or lack thereof, from the district level can be a barrier to the development of school level trust in school leaders and the school's development as a learning organization (Hesbol, 2019; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

School leaders failing to develop collaborative cultures, through PLC's for example, exasperate trust and communication issues (Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2020; Senge, 2006). The collegial learning, or team learning developed through collaborative cultures, plays a vital role in data-driven decision making and sense of connectedness among school officials (Håkansson Lindqvist & Pettersson, 2019; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2020; Senge, 2006). Leaders using the Ethic of Care, place an emphasis on the well-being and development of staff through team learning opportunities (Senge, 2006; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Yet, when trust is lacking, teacher self-efficacy decreases, thus, leading to a deficiency in a leader's collective responsibility toward student achievement (Hattie & Zierer, 2018). Without a collective responsibility for student learning by the teaching staff as a result of the Ethic of Care, student achievement will drop (Ciftgug, & Cdtinkanat, 2021; Gil et al., 2019; Ira & Bulut, 2018; Sæbø, & Midtsundstad, 2018; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Additionally, a lack of appropriate planning and maintenance of school facilities by school leaders can contribute to poor experiences and shelter space for students and thus reduce the social emotional health of students, leading to a reduction in student academic achievement (Atolagbe, 2019).

School leaders continually seek to find new leverage points to increase student learning despite decreasing federal, state, and local revenues (Miller, 2018). National and community context and crises continually impact school decision-making and finances. School leaders have to predict and adjust to changing contexts and crises which create turbulence on their organization with most crises of outside of a leader's control (Miller, 2018; Pollock, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Despite university training programs for

administrators to effectively train future leaders with entrepreneurial skills, crisis management, and budgeting skills, prediction and adjustment still happen (Johnson, 2016). Various contexts and crises have increased the complexity faced by school leaders and include elements such as demands of success on high-stakes state assessments, increased power of school-choice advocates, tax or budget reductions at the state and local level, and rise in informational communication technology and digitalization (Chan & Morris, 2018; Håkansson Lindqvist & Pettersson, 2019; Miller, 2018). As school-choice advocates have increased their political power within state and federal government entities, so have calls for public school funding to be instead used toward voucher or tax credits for private/parochial schools. Challenges of parent-student school-choice have forced school leaders to operate within an entrepreneurial school leadership model. As school-choice advocates increase, so does the financial and accountability disparity between public and private education (Miller, 2018).

When the Great Recession of 2008 hit the U.S., school leaders were faced with unprecedented financial limitations (Chan & Morris, 2019; Shores & Steinberg, & Center for Education Policy Analysis, (CEPA) at Stanford University, 2017). Researchers Chan and Morris (2018) analyzed school leaders' financial decisions during the ensuing years from the recession to identify school leader's decisions which positively impacted student learning. The common denominator among successful schools were leaders who sought to avoid financial cuts to teachers or instructional materials, despite staff representing nearly 80% most schools' budgets (Shores & Steinberg, & Center for Education Policy Analysis, (CEPA) at Stanford University, 2017). Schools with a larger student to teacher ratio, caused by staff reductions, were less likely to meet recommended instructional time

and assess student progress appropriately (Shores & Steinberg, & Center for Education Policy Analysis, (CEPA) at Stanford University, 2017; Turner et al., 2017). Subsequently, Chan and Morris (2018) suggested the following: schools should create a minimum one-month financial cushion in the budget annually; develop close contacts with tax commissioners in planning and recovering funds; freeze spending during a crisis of all non-instructional expenses; and require purchases and spending to have the school leader's approval. Ultimately, schools impacted more negatively financially during crises tend to produce poor results (Shores et al., 2017). Thus, factors such as increased accountability, increased political demands by school-choice advocates, and reduced governmental financial support have led to a drop of 15% in job satisfaction by school leaders between 2009 and 2019 (Bell, 2019).

Change Process in Schools.

When schools begin to lack effectiveness, or must adapt to new circumstances, then change is necessary (Gil et al., 2019). Schools are organizations which are constantly seeking to adapt to their changing environment resulting from both internal and external forces. The change process is part of a systematic approach by schools, to match the competitive nature of providing an increasingly better learning experience for students and staff (Reeves, 2020). Change theorists, such as Lewin (1947), Reeves, (2009), Kotter (2014), Senge (2006), and Fullan (2015), each describe effective steps for leaders to utilize to discover areas for improvement, develop steps for improvement, implement new solutions, and culturize changes. "When in the course of human events" (Jefferson, 1776 et al., para. 1), change is forced upon entities from outside of its locus of

control, thus, leaders must implement pieces from each change theorists to provide a map for the next best step (Porter-O'Grady & Malloch, 2003).

Leadership opportunities can provide leaders with a wholistic view of a context which can help leaders develop both orthodox or unorthodox strategies with an understanding of latent and manifest functions (Shaked & Schechter, 2019). One specific step in Kotter's (2014) eight-step process for leading change involves the development of a guiding coalition, which allows educators to have a voice in organizational change, which is a key tenet of the Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). When school leaders involve teachers in the development of the vision and mission of a school involved in change, staff morale is increased. Involvement in the vision and mission process by staff also cultivates professional collaboration with peers which is vitally important in Senge's (2006) Team Learning (Baroudi, 2019). When a culture of team learning and collaboration is present, teacher turnover tends to decrease over time. Kraft, Marinell, and Shen-Wei Yee (2016) found low teacher turnover increases student achievement over time. Subsequently, when such strategies are developed, implemented, and adjusted, a school leader can shape the school's understanding and expectations as opposed to being purely reactionary to turbulent forces (Bryant et al., 2018). Furthermore, effective school leaders actually shape policies from external entities, such as governmental agencies, into their own vision and culture (Bryant et al., 2018; Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996).

Barriers to Change

Without a clear vision or guidance from school leaders, individuals within the educational entity will most likely avoid improvement and most likely become content in their current habits, status, and experience due to the knowns of their current situations

(Kotter, 2014). Even though discomfort may be part of the status-quo, the unknowns of change are often mysterious for staff (Kotter, 2014). Without the development of a guiding coalition of staff who are motivated by the same purpose as the leader, a wholesale implementation and integration of the change will not occur within the culture (Fullan, 2015; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2020; Senge, 2006). Even when implementation is created within a guiding coalition with a clear vision from school leadership, change can be prematurely abandoned when faced with what Fullan (2015) described as the Implementation Dip. Not only does the guiding coalition struggle with barriers when faced within the Implementation Dip, a lack of communication throughout the process can also reduce staff's willingness to persevere and potentially cause Cascading as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), which leads to the end of the change process (Fullan, 2015; Kotter, 2014; Reeves, 2020; Senge, 2006).

Understanding the importance of the guiding coalition within the change process is evident in the dynamic structure between school leaders and their school boards (Bell, 2019). Within the guiding coalition of the change process, it is vital for school leaders to understand the school board members and the constituents as the board members' objectives are often focused on the constituents' goals as opposed to the common good (Bell, 2019; Bridges et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2019). The role of school boards tend to change over time with community interests and concerns, as community strife inherently effects schools (Williams et al., 2019). School leaders failing to understand community and board dynamics can amplify community problems in the school environment (Suematsu & Tsujino, 2018; Williams et al., 2019). While most board members use the school board association website as a resource for guidance on decision-making, the

second most common resource for information comes from social media (Kay & Carruthers, 2017). Recent research found inaccurate information shared on social media was more likely to be shared than factual information (Ardèvol-Abreu, Delponti, & Rodríguez-Wangüemert, 2020; Paisana, Pinto-Martinho, & Cardoso, 2020). Incorrect information poses a growing problem for school leaders as leaders have to combat school board members' inaccurate perceptions based upon social media learning, along with mistrust which can ensue as well (Ardèvol-Abreu, Delponti, & Rodríguez-Wangüemert, 2020; Chambers, 2021; Obiała, J. et al., 2021; Paisana, Pinto-Martinho, & Cardoso, 2020). Schools with more Stability, or the ability to “withstand the dynamic forces confronting it” (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 48), are able to endure more turbulence caused by misinformation or inaccurate perceptions (Suematsu & Tsujino, 2018; Williams et al., 2019).

When considering student achievement, technology implementation as part of blended learning in a classroom setting whether in face-to-face or remote learning, poses a set of barriers for educators (Kusuma et al., 2020). Technical issues, such as connectivity, device availability, and classroom management strategies, can greatly affect student learning outcomes. Even when such technical issues are no longer barriers, the constant changing and updating of technology from third-party vendors, can create issues on consistent use in classrooms. Ultimately, if technology is an issue, then blended learning is nearly impossible to implement (McGee & Poojary, 2020). Blended learning, when used synchronously on-site and off-site with students, can be overwhelming for both groups. Discussions and interactions between students within different locations reduce the positive effects of face-to-face discussion. Blended learning is also reliant on

students' self-regulation, which over time can decrease a student's motivation (Angelone et al., 2020; Herayanti et al., 2020). When using new tools while learning without an opportunity to explore the strategy or product, the result is a reduced learning experience for students and teachers (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020). Well-structured and efficient schools have high levels of student engagement, which contributes to increased student achievement (Atolagbe, 2019).

School Amidst COVID-19 Spring Shutdown

When COVID-19 forced schools to shut down during the spring of 2020, school leaders were forced into a Severe Turbulence situation lacking prior research to guide their ethical decision-making (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Using Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change, the spring shutdown of 2020 was classified as the first step in change, Unfreezing of prior perspectives and actions (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996) as school leaders still needed to lead effective schools and use the change process during the spring shutdown. As a result of the shutdown, educators involuntarily lived in a period of real-time experimentation of emergency remote learning. As discussed in the section Schools Prior to COVID-19, the following topics became increasingly important with the onset of COVID-19: cultures of collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and power of position (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis, Steadman, & Mao, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Zhao, Zhou et al. 2020).

Culture of Collaboration

The COVID-19 experience during the spring of 2020 became one of the largest collaborative efforts in world history as people of all walks of life became part of the public health effort to reduce in the impact of COVID-19 on the world (Pollock, 2020). As school leaders faced the initial shutdown during spring 2020 due to COVID-19, schools and stakeholders found themselves in uncharted territory (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020). Many school leaders quickly applied the Ethic of Care, as they focused on involving others in the decision-making process, and also the Ethic of Profession, as students' well-being was the center of most decisions made. Effective leaders enacted these two ethics by developing collaborative networks with regional and local leaders to alleviate the ethical dilemmas they faced (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). During the shutdown, teachers also reached out to fellow educators, locally and internationally, via social media to prepare for the sudden change transitioning to emergency remote learning pedagogy (Borup et al., 2020; Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Trust, Carpenter, Krutka, & Kimmons, 2020). At the local level, many administrators and instructional coaches sought out technology-savvy educators within their schools, to help fellow educators, adapt to an emergency remote learning environment (Borup et al., 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020). The biggest change in a culture of collaboration was found in merging school life with home life, which resulted from the reduction of face-to-face learning. During the transition to online learning, schools developed new levels of collaboration with the families of the students as families bore the responsibility of managing student engagement of learning material (Morgan, 2020; Zhao et al., 2020).

Furthermore, school districts applied the Ethic of Critique to consider individuals lacking equitable access and sought to provide appropriate resources, ideas, and guidance (Borup et al., 2020; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Zhao et al., 2020).

Communication

During the shutdown of the 2020 school year, new levels of communication and team development stemmed from new collaborative networks which were implemented to carry the overwhelming load of student success and planning the next steps for the educational entity (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Flaxman, Hancock, & Weiner, 2020). For school leaders, daily communication and collaboration with newly developed networks of other regional school leaders were prevalent for schools and individual school communities. During the shutdown, school leaders became more effective using school websites and social media for communication with all stakeholders (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). Subsequently, student's family or household members became the driver of implementing students' education due to the shutdown of face-to-face learning (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). As families took the lead role in their child's learning, many school leaders focused on the well-being of families and students through the Ethic of Care, while also considering individuals were facing inequitable circumstances through the Ethic of Critique, to identify and communicate the most effective operational methods of learning for families at home (Morgan, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Such support included help with online programs utilized, expectations for student activities and learning, and access to the schools' curriculum and supplemental material (Morgan, 2020). When student

participation was lacking, many school officials contacted families through phone or email make families aware. However, phone and email communication had varying levels of success in increasing student engagement (Borup et al., 2020).

Relationships

School shutdowns altered normal forms of communication between educational and community stakeholders, but it did not change the significance of developing and maintaining inter-connected relationships (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Morgan, 2020). During the shutdown, relationships were developed and maintained through various online modes, including: email, phone calls, social media, and online videos which were comprised of both synchronous and asynchronous learning formats (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020). Through the transition to online learning, teachers and administrators focused on maintaining relationships and interactions between the school, families, and students (Borup et al., 2020). Schools considered the well-being of students and staff through the Ethic of Care and sought to evaluate individuals who were disadvantaged through the Ethic of Critique in order to meet the needs of the stakeholders who struggled through the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Many school districts expanded their influence and relationships to communities of stakeholders by providing non-educational resources, such as food and child-care (Decker et al., 2020). Additionally, schools used the Ethic of Justice to identify laws and policies, like the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service grant (USDA FNS, 2020) provided by passage of the CARES Act (2020), to meet food insecurity needs of community members for free and without financial requirements from families.

Additionally, while school doors were closed to academics in a face-to-face environment, many schools opened up their facilities to be used as child-care options and for medical and other fundamental personnel (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Morgan, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Student Achievement

With the rapid transition to emergency remote learning, student achievement became a secondary concern to many stakeholders, leading to a reduction of student participation in learning (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Families, specifically women in many households, took on the role of lead learner, motivator, and determinant of student participation in learning. Even though many schools provided supplemental material for families to process together, either online or via paper-based material, participation or returning of completed work to educators rarely happened (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Christensen & Alexander, 2020). Student engagement, as measured by returned student work, was only around 30% (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Clausen, Bunte, & Robertson, 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Additionally, when measuring student engagement based around time on task it was found to be lower in quantity of time when compared to a normal face-to-face learning environment (Christensen & Alexander, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Many school leaders used their understanding of laws through implementation of the Ethic of Justice and their role as advocate for education through the Ethic of Profession to encourage state leaders to remove traditional administration of state assessments for the 2019-2020 school year as required by the Every Student Succeeds Education Act (Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Skinner & Library of Congress, 2019). All previously required statewide assessments were waived in the U.S.

public education system, due to the inability to manage the testing environment and with schools' definition of student achievement varying greatly (Moxley, & Delaney, 2020). Identifying issues with inequitable access to learning and the inability to provide effective grading to students, in regard to the implementation of the Ethic of Critique, most schools changed their grading practices or completely removed traditional grading practices during the spring 2020 shutdown out of concern for equity and student well-being. During the transition to online learning, numerous teachers provided non-evaluative feedback as opposed to traditional grades or assessments (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Social Emotional Health

During the 2020 shutdown, numerous educators considered what was best for students in the unpredictable nature of the school shutdown through the Ethic of Care (Groen, Ghani, Germain-Rutherford, & Taylor, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Ethic of Care was used by many teachers to implement non-evaluative feedback to students to help students develop self-regulation with an emphasis on self-care. The transition to online learning thus created opportunities for a new set of feedback loops between educators, students and families. The benefit toward focusing on self-care was increased when educators included video check-ins, which allowed students opportunities to reflect on their own social emotional health during the COVID-19 shutdown through remote learning (Henriksen et al., 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Additionally, the implementation of a feedback loop can help students develop self-regulatory skills, which are vital for blended and remote learning scenarios (Bahri et al., 2021; Huber & Helm, 2020; Park & Shea, 2020). Researchers

Groen et al. (2020) found the perceptions of students and staff in regard to remote learning tended to be positive when the feedback loop was personal provided both synchronous and asynchronously. Not only did the feedback loops provide students with opportunities for improvement, but also offered individuals an opportunity to socialize, which is a key ingredient for self-care during remote learning (Groen et al., 2020; Martín-Martínez, Sainz, & Rodríguez-Legendre, 2020; McKenna et al., 2020).

Power of Position

Numerous school leaders found themselves in a quandary at the onset and throughout the duration of the worldwide shutdown of 2020 (Bailey, Schurz, & American Enterprise Institute (AEI), 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). The school leaders who considered the Ethic of Care for all stakeholders often realized their major role was being a leader who provided clarity and Stability for the school community, despite the appearance of the world crashing around them (Ellis et al., 2020; Flaxman et al., 2020; Pollock, 2020). Throughout the shutdown, school leaders sought to focus on stakeholders' well-being, as leaders worked to turn the complexity of the time period into simpler, next steps (Bailey et al., 2020; Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). The shutdown also provided a great deal of autonomy to school leaders as governmental obligations, such as attendance, evaluations, and state testing, were removed. Therefore, school leaders had the opportunity during the shutdown to define their own success criteria, as leaders sought to do the best they could with the information available at the time (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Olcott, 2020).

In summary, school leaders and the districts they led, were ill-prepared for the pandemic which forced the closure of schools around the world (Bailey et al., 2020; Ellis

et al., 2020; Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). The implementation of a culture of collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and power of position, took on new meanings due to the shutdown (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Zhao et al., 2020). The experience of the 2020 shutdown became a real-time experiment on emergency remote learning, and as defined by Lewin (1947) and Schein (1996), it Unfroze traditional methods of instruction and school procedures (Borup et al., 2020). As schools struggled to cope and continue providing educational opportunities for students, barriers continually presented themselves and increasingly provided turbulence to school districts (Haverback, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Trust & Whalen, 2020).

Barriers to Effective Schools

COVID-19 caused a rapid change in educators' instructional practices, but professional development addressing such rapid change by many schools was not present. For most schools, specialized professional development was not available during the closure, nor had many schools adequately invested in remote learning pedagogy opportunities prior to the closure taking place (Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Haverback, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Researchers Trikoilis and Papanastasiou's (2020) work on teachers facing isolation prior to the spring of 2020 demonstrated much work was and is necessary in providing educators with the professional development tools needed to improve student learning during a shutdown. Research consistently discusses the strong tie between teacher self-efficacy as a solid indicator of student success (Clearly et al., 2018; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Haverback, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020). Yet, COVID-19

instigated a Cascading effect of unpreparedness and feelings of inadequacy, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), on school districts across the world due to the unpredictable nature of both the closure during the spring of 2020 and re-entry of the fall 2020 (Trust & Whalen, 2020). The Cascading effect of unpreparedness and feelings of inadequacy rattled many of even the highest quality educators. Most teachers felt inadequately prepared for the changes caused by COVID-19 (Eisenbach, Greathouse, & Acquaviva, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Subsequently, in response to the rapid change many school leaders quickly utilized the Ethic of Care to consider the long-term impact on the teacher due to the sudden changes posed to teachers' schemas with instruction being forced online within days or hours in some cases (Eisenbach, Greathouse, & Acquaviva, 2020; Haverback, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Consequently, abrupt school closure caused by COVID-19 created a significant demand in educator professional development. One avenue used by educators to satiate the demand was through the use of social media, such as Twitter. Social media became a wealth of resources for educators needing training on the sudden transition to remote learning (Trust et al., 2020).

As schools began shutting down during the spring of 2020, school leaders and teachers quickly realized the lack of appropriate training needed to engage in remote learning with students (Canese & Amarilla, 2020). In addition to the abrupt shutdown, historical research has demonstrated the reduction in a year of schooling has a larger impact on boys than girls (Frenette, Frank, & Deng, 2020). Thus, any significant change in the learning environment can create a Cascading Effect which leads to turbulence in a school district and can potentially have negative impacts on student learning for years to come (Ichsan et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). In spite of the shortfall, most school

officials quickly sought to develop new sets of technical skills (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). By the end of the spring semester of 2020, with little time remaining in the school year, most teachers began teaching new content to their students (Hodges et al., 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020). Teachers confronting the uncertainty of shutdowns encountered the turbulence with their Positionality by trying to consider how learning should appear in the new COVID environment (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Numerous educators throughout the world initially tried to replicate face-to-face instructional strategies in a remote learning environment and many did so with minimal success (Cao, et al., 2020; Henriksen et al., 2020). Although classroom management plays an important role in student achievement, many teachers struggled with what classroom management looked like remotely, and having guardians at home with the students as well (Huber & Helm, 2020). Only 44% of school districts actively monitored student learning during the spring 2020 shutdown (C. Hodges et al., 2020).

Additionally, COVID's Cascading of uncertainty and change on schools increased turbulence as schools shifted the burden of instruction and student support onto families (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). The implementation of new technical pedagogy strategies due to remote learning at home were a barrier for many students and families as many struggled with technical problems such as inadequate devices and internet capabilities (Surani & Hamidah, 2020). The uncertainty and quick pace of the transition to remote learning created a patchwork response between and within school leaders, educators, and student households. The patchwork response by school leaders created a situation where educational resources were lacking at times, specifically within student households (Eisenbach et al., 2020). Research by McGuinness (2020) found disparity between

perceptions of difficulty between male and female adults who supported student learning at home. Additionally, Chennamsetti (2020) identified a decline in women working outside of the home due to the lack of child-care available during remote learning. Considering the Ethic of Critique, the reduction in the workforce by women had a large impact on the economic recovery as states slowly began reopening after the 2020 shutdowns (Goldhaber et al., 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Yet, a majority of female adults reported little difficulty in supporting remote learning at home, while a majority of male adults reported high difficulty. Both female and males reported motivation of their children as the biggest challenge of online learning, along with time-constraints, finding educational content, and technology issues as challenges as well (Chennamsetti, 2020; McGuinness, 2020).

With children at home during the shutdown, remote learning strategies during the spring increased student boredom and worry, and decreased student motivation (Cao, et al., 2020). Families, students, and school staff dealt with fear for themselves and others during the shutdown and into the school re-entry in the fall as well (Crosby et al., 2020). Students and school leaders surveyed had the highest level of perceived stress regarding the spring 2020 shutdown and the 2020-2021 fall re-entry plans (Huber & Helm, 2020). The Positionality of many students throughout the COVID turbulence caused an ever-present fear and reduction in human interaction, which had a detrimental effect on student mental and well-being (Cao, et al., 2020; Liu, X., Liu, J. & Zhong, 2020; Praghlapati, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Subsequently, one of the greatest challenges for teachers was providing students with a sense of connectedness, wellbeing, and reduced stress during the shutdown (Yoder et al., 2020).

Even when internet and device access were not a limiting factor, many parents and guardians found themselves ill-prepared to provide an optimal learning environment for their children (Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Sá, & Serpa, 2020). With nearly 90% of the world's students learning from home, inadequate access and a lack of educator confidence contributed to the supplemental nature provided by educators (Cao, et al., 2020). As an ethical response to provide optimal learning environments for students through the integration of the Ethic of Critique, most learning opportunities provided by schools during the spring closure were supplemental in nature as opposed to new content learning, due to fears of inequities faced by students (C. Hodges et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Additionally, researchers found the human interaction between all stakeholders was vital to the social-emotional health of all involved, especially students (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020). Nonetheless, virtual education was adequate considering the quick need for the implementation due to COVID, but multiple barriers were presented by the technology usage. Rampant technological issues present for students and staff reduced both physical and socialization needs, while introducing new stressors. Additionally, discussions and presentations worked in an online setting but limited interactions as a result of online learning lacked the normal depth and communication which is provided in a face-to-face setting (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Baber, 2020; Gintrowicz, Pawloy, Richter, & Degel, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

Throughout the 2020 shutdown experience, the significance of the human connection for all of humanity, especially for students was reinforced by parents, educators, and school leaders (Baber, 2020; Eisenbach et al., 2020). Overall, many parents wanted more student socialization and teacher direct instruction for the remote

learning during the spring 2020 shutdown. McGuinness (2020) found direct instruction conducted within a face-to-face environment provided teachers a gamut of formative information which helps guide future instruction with students. However, the transition to remote learning during the initial spring 2020 shutdown and subsequent months following, included a greatly reduced percentage of direct instruction from educators to students (McGuinness, 2020). Many teachers sought to use media which met parental and student needs, but socioeconomic barriers often detrimentally affected the learning experience. Consequently, one third of students struggling to learn at home increasingly lost motivation to continue to learn throughout the spring 2020 shutdown (McGuinness, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Surani & Hamidah, 2020). During the turbulence caused by COVID in the spring 2020 shutdown, teachers and families from their Positionality, felt powerless and struggled to give and get desired feedback (Dridi, Radhakrishnan, Moser-Mercer, & DeBoer, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Change Process in Schools

Within numerous schools, the development and implementation of distributive leadership, through the Ethic of Care, sought to provide a voice to all stakeholders, as well as the Ethic of Critique, which sought to identify inequities, with a focus on stakeholders' well-being and a sense of a guiding coalition for constantly shifting situations (Ellis et al., 2020; Elmore & Albert Shanker Institute (2000); Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Kotter, 2014; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Collaborative networks, between school districts have been a positive by-product of COVID-19 and school shutdowns (Azorín, 2020). Furthermore, leaders also had to expand their financial literacy as it had greater importance with the economic constriction due to the shutdown (Flaxman et al.,

2020; O'Connell & Clarke, 2020). As uncertainty prevailed during the time period of the shutdown, school leaders had to constantly balance legal policies at the state and federal level, using the Ethic of Justice, as well as manage staff for optimal learning, emotional-physical well-being, and physical safety through the Ethic of Care (Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Pollock, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). While school leaders were concerned with maintaining instruction for students, many schools increasingly applied the Ethic of Critique and Ethic of Care when recognizing families who were in need and working to find solutions for their woes (Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Finding solutions for families included many schools having to re-center the focus from buildings and resources to support for their local community instead. With changes in U.S. federal laws and regulations, many school leaders used the Ethic of Justice to help fight food insecurity by using USDA funds to supply food to members of their community (Chennamsetti, 2020). Similarly, numerous U.S. schools sought to also provide devices and hotspots to students and families as a result of financial stimulus programs such as the CARES Act passed by the federal government at the end of March 2020 (Chennamsetti, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Over the years, technology has increasingly played a pivotal role in remote learning which was implemented as a result of natural disasters (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Connectedness through video conferencing has proved to be vital for students and staff while confined to learning from home (Chennamsetti, 2020). Many educators provided support during the COVID-19 shutdown to students through learning management systems (LMS) and video conferencing products such as Zoom and Google Meet (Sá, & Serpa, 2020). Remote learning allowed the greatest degree of flexibility for students as

schools adjusted to the various challenges provided during the initial school closures during the spring of 2020 (Crosby et al., 2020). Remote learning opportunities provided by schools were designed to reduce the negative impact of non-face-to-face educational learning (Sá, & Serpa, 2020). During the transition to online learning, teachers used their Positionality within the turbulence, along with the Ethic of Critique, to address the difficulty remote learning posed for learners (Haverback, 2020). Specifically, educators struggled to know how individuals were doing throughout the remote learning experience due to factors such as digital inequity and household support (Haverback, 2020; Sá, & Serpa, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Life and school served an unpredictable and unprecedented set of Cascading Turbulence and experiences to schools and stakeholders during the transition to online learning. For many teachers, the sudden change to online learning forced a reevaluation of their pedagogy schema, regardless of an individual's years of experience prior to the pandemic, thus, leveling the playing field with teachers of varying experiences (Haverback, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Yao et al., 2020). The difficulty of transitioning to online learning was rooted in multiple components, including district/school guidance, lack of professional development with remote learning, and even fear involving the uncertainty of one's own personal and community health due to COVID-19 (Cao, et al., 2020; Crosby et al., 2020; Eisenbach et al., 2020; Haverback, 2020).

Barriers to Change

Francis Bacon stated, "A sudden, bold, and unexpected question doth many times surprise a man, and lay him open" (Bacon & Reynolds, 1890, p.105). School closures in the spring of 2020, due to COVID-19, laid schools' ethical and inequitable education

opportunities open to critique as school leaders and teachers struggled to adapt to the sudden change in instruction (Beardsley et al., 2019; Ifenthaler & Tracey, 2016; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Swartz et al., 2018). Researchers Swartz et al. (2018) specifically highlighted the difficult ethical issues faced by schools when turbulence, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), was caused by sudden school closures for students and educators based upon experiences in South Africa's 2016 closures due to political unrest. The experience of educators and students in South Africa in 2016 mirrored many of the same struggles U.S. schools experienced in 2020 when applying Shapiro and Gross' (2013) the Ethic of Critique: digital access is unequitable and "those who are traditionally disadvantaged in our system of education face the same disadvantage when confronted with the online world," (Swartz et al., 2018, p. 60) thus, amplifying the educational divide (Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Swartz et al., 2018). Armitage and Nellums (2020) found the same amplification of inequity and inequalities in the 2014-2016 Ebola shutdowns in parts of Africa as well. The disadvantages of the 2014-2016 Ebola shutdown led to two key Cascading Factors between the historical events and the spring shut down of 2020 including: increased student dropout rates, decreased graduation rates, and decreased student motivation toward academics (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Swartz et al., 2018).

Assuming equitable internet access and support was provided to all students, additional legal concerns through the Ethic of Justice were raised based upon educator preparedness and the use of digital resources which collect student data (Beardsley et al., 2019; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Swartz et al., 2018). Prior to the shutdown, only one million students in the U.S. used remote learning, but with the spring 2020 shutdown,

nearly 55 million U.S. students were forced into remote learning (Crosby et al., 2020; T. Hodges et al., 2020). Educator professional development, prior to 2020, provided inconsistent support for blended, remote, and asynchronous versus synchronous learning lesson development and implementation (Beardsley et al., 2019; Swartz et al., 2018). Beardsley et al. (2019) discovered if professional development was administered to educators, little emphasis was provided on how to “responsibly share and manage (student) data” (p. 1022) despite federal regulations as a result of Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Consequently, student data was difficult to ascertain during remote learning as normal mechanisms for assessments by teachers was highly inaccurate for multiple reasons: student motivation, parental help, and possible cheating (Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

The Ethic of Critique highlighted the increased effect of the learning loss for minority and low-income students due to the transition to remote learning during the spring 2020 school shutdown (Goldhaber et al., 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Additional research may help to determine the impact the 2020 shutdown had on minority and low-income students' achievement, but the Great Recession of 2008 provided a glimpse of what to potentially expect. According to Shores and Steinberg (2017), the Great Recession of 2008, negatively affected student achievement in math and ELA across all grade levels and demographics, with math having the greatest drop in achievement. Students classified as minority or lower income were nearly twice as likely to be negatively affected than other demographics (Shores & Steinberg, 2017.). Projections from research by Kuhfeld et al. (2020) released during May of 2020, found similar results regarding school-aged students involved in the spring 2020 shutdown.

Using 2020 year-end data and comparing the data to prior years, current school-aged students were negatively affected in math and reading, with math dropping more significantly. Specifically, Kuhfeld et al. (2020) projected students would return to school with only 63-68% of the recommended ELA learning and 37-50% of the math recommended learning of a typical year. Interestingly, Goldhaber et al. (2021) and Kuhfeld, et al. (2020) found the top one-third of students in reading achieved gains during the school shutdown of 2020, thus, increasing the discrepancy between the high and low achieving students in a classroom. When reflecting on the Cascading Effects on specific grade levels, similar to the learning loss during the Great Recession of 2008, the spring 2020 shutdown affected students across all demographics with the largest learning loss in grades six through eight (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Considering the Positionality of students during the shutdown and their perception of the turbulence caused by COVID, school closures reinforced the inequity present in available technology and internet at home when remote learning became the only mode of instruction (Hall, Roman, Jovel-Arias, & Young, 2020; Haverback, 2020; Owen, White, Palekahelu, Sumakul, & Sekiyono, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Young & Noonoo, 2020). The transition to a complete online environment became an eye-opening experience of the true digital divide present within communities (Hall et al., 2020). Many students lacked the ability to participate in live online instruction on a regular schedule while outside the walls of a traditional school, thus many students produced less work remotely when compared to work produced during face-to-face learning (Eisenbach et al., 2020; McGuinness, 2020). Consequently, inequity can be especially prevalent in the lowest income households when considering device access and internet quality.

Along with the prevalence of technology inequality, students were also less likely to have a parent or guardian providing support at home (Frenette et al., 2020; C. Hodges et al., 2020; Sullivan, Hillaire, Larke, & Reich, 2020). Furthermore, areas with lower availability to devices or quality internet access struggled with technology inclusion into curriculum (Owen et al., 2020). Moreover, inequity was not only a U.S. school problem, as researchers in European and Asian countries around the world found 25% of students had intermittent internet and device access at home as well during the spring 2020 shutdown (Sá, & Serpa, 2020).

Schools' Re-Entry to 2020-2021 School Year

Throughout the summer of 2020, many school leaders used personal experience and real-time experimentation to help shape the school re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year. As research began being published, locally and globally, school leaders had to consider a set of factors in their ethical decision-making which impacted stakeholders. Similarly, many of the decision-making situations were fraught with opportunities to impact an educational organization in a moderate or extreme turbulent experience, with untold negative consequences (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Subsequently, the public-school system in the U.S. was in Lewin's second stage, Change prior to Refreeze, of his 3-Step Model of Change, in regard to the development of re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996). Every action and decision, or inaction and indecision, potentially had long-term ethical considerations which could potentially Refreeze the public school system in the U.S. as no prior situation ever had before (Haverback, 2020; Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Following are areas based on research discussed in the sections Schools Prior to COVID-19 and School

Amidst COVID-19 Spring Shutdown which became major themes in studies initially released about the re-entry of schools at the beginning of 2021. Early research from the 2020-2021 school year, used in this literature review, described effective schools as districts focused on cultures of collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, social emotional health, and power of position (Aas et al., 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006). This current study used the research in this section to compare Missouri public school leaders' experiences with experiences of others in other states and countries, while filling a gap in current literature. Additionally, the research in this section, along with the results of this study, helped the researcher determine if schools were ready for the Refreeze, as identified as Lewin (1947) and Schein (1996) as school leaders prepared for the new normal of schooling.

Culture of Collaboration

Professional learning committees (PLC's) are a powerful collaborative tool in schools achieving sustained success, even during a pandemic. The development of a professional learning community was still possible during the pandemic and able to help improve pedagogy practices in remote, blended, and face-to-face learning (C. Hodges et al., 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). During the transition to online learning, school districts had to expand teachers' toolboxes of instructional strategies in remote, blended, and face-to-face learning during an unpredictable time in the world (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Across the United States, school leaders and educators sought to avoid isolation and find partners to co-plan and develop policies, procedures, and strategies to teach, assess, and adjust to the ever-changing circumstances prevalent from COVID-19

(Haverback, 2020). Yet, according to Tucker & Quintero-Ares (2021), PLC's also provided a sense of community for school leaders and educators, especially during the turbulence caused by COVID on school organizations. Many professional learning communities offered school leaders an opportunity to improve instructional practices and simultaneously use the Ethic of Care to develop a sense of community for their staff's well-being. The sense of community which was developed from many PLC's, allowed individuals an opportunity to explore their Positionality within the turbulence caused by COVID and share successes and challenges with one another (Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Tucker & Quintero-Ares, 2021). Supportive and collaborative school cultures adjusted to the challenges caused by school closure and the ever-changing state guidance more quickly than schools with non-supportive or collaborative culture, thus supporting the importance of quality PLC's within schools (Huber & Helm, 2020). Through the sharing of experiences, especially through PLC's, communication was a powerful role for educators during the 2020 shutdown and transition to online learning (Tucker & Quintero-Ares, 2021).

Communication

As the 2020-201 school year began, communication by school leaders to stakeholders often mirrored strategies learned during the initial school shutdown during the spring of 2020. Using electronic forms of communication, school districts communicated new procedures, policies, and expectations which would be present when students returned to school for the 2020-2021 school year (Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). However, communication often proved difficult for school leaders as leaders balanced the Ethic of Profession by providing consistency and transparency,

while protecting the privacy laws of stakeholders as part of the Ethic of Justice (Hauseman, Darazsi, & Kent, 2020). Additionally, many educators also used the Ethic of Critique and learned the limits of electronic forms of communication during the spring shutdown as well as the digital inequities faced by many stakeholders (Bozkurt & Sharma., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Moreover, the shutdown highlighted the significance of face-to-face communication and the positive impact face-to-face communication has on relationship development (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

Relationships

While healthy communication between school leaders and school boards was vital to the success of schools, the COVID-19 pandemic stretched the limits of the relationship between them (Azizah et al., 2020). The political environment from the onset of the pandemic to the presidential election created an environment of mistrust among stakeholders (Goldhaber et al., 2021). Researchers Shao and Hao (2020) found discrepancies between rural, generally conservatives, and urban, generally liberal, areas of the U.S. and implementation of social distancing measures. Rural areas tended to show lower concerns for COVID-19 and the implementation of social distancing measures when compared to more liberal and urban centers. The discrepancies between the geographical regions led to urban settings more likely opening the 2020-2021 school year with remote learning, as opposed to suburban and rural settings opening the school year with face-to-face learning (Shao & Hao, 2020). The lone exception to between the different regions where school leaders applied Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Ethic of Care and Ethic of Critique was found in how kindergarten through second grade students and students with disabilities were treated. School leaders' use of the Ethic of Care helped

many school leaders and educators identify the well-being and long-term effects of learning of the most vulnerable students for which most schools still offered face-to-face learning through the implementation of the ‘Ethic of Critique (Gross, Opalka, Gundapaneni, & Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), 2020). Ellis et al. (2020) also found school leaders who understood the school board members’ perception on political leaders were at a greater advantage. Such understanding provided school leaders with insights as to how their community might react to changes in school procedures and organization due to health and educational official guidance. Despite the struggles by school boards and school leaders over procedural and organizational changes, student achievement was still a significant priority for schools (Ellis et al., 2020).

Student Achievement

Educational experiences from the COVID-19 spring closure of 2020 created ethical and logistical problems for the re-entry plans for many schools for the fall of 2020 across the United States. Re-entry plans had the potential to serve as a transformational learning piece for schools to implement technology as a tool for personalized learning as the spring transition and experience to online learning had created a paradigm shift (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). For re-entry plans into the 2020-2021 school year, many educators and school leaders had to clarify to students and parents the difference between the emergency remote learning during the spring and the implementation of distance learning for the new school year (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). In establishing a re-entry plan, numerous school personnel were forced to consider the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) as

personnel sought to provide students with the optimal learning environment, and become more comfortable with the technology (Reich, 2021). Taguchi (2020) found teachers are essential contributors to the success of technology usage during remote learning.

Effective teachers can use technology to greatly improve when feedback on learning when the feedback is provided to students in face-to-face, synchronous, or asynchronous settings is effective (Huber & Helm, 2020). Surani and Hamidah (2020) found tools, such as Google Classroom, provided a consistent technological framework for students and increased student engagement. Remote learning is most effective when interactions occur between the teacher and students, thus, interaction was vital in reducing the impact of the pandemic on the health of the community, while ensuring students' comprehensive learning (Ichsan et al., 2020).

Baber (2020) found students perceived remote learning and face-to-face as having pros and cons when implemented separately. Students had a more positive perception of blended learning when used in tandem with face-to-face opportunities as opposed to just implementing remote learning alone (Alam & Agarwal, 2020; Asif et al., 2020; McGuinness, 2020). Part of the success of blended learning was the feedback loop was quicker and more timely for implementing adjustments when necessary for students (Asif et al., 2020). Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Ethic of Care emphasizes team and individual development, for both personal and professional purposes for students and staff, which is not provided by asynchronous learning (Asif et al., 2020). Consequently, face-to-face instruction, on the other hand, emphasizes a deeper level of the Ethic of Care by providing direct feedback and the opportunity for physical socialization among students and staff (Dridi et al., 2020; Paker & Balci, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Through the

technological implementation of blended learning, instructional videos provide an asynchronous learning opportunity for student and families with YouTube often utilized as a supplemental video tool (Mulenga & Marban, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Yet, asynchronous learning itself produced very little student achievement (Güneş, & Alagözlü, 2020). McGuinness (2020), however, found synchronous video instruction for third grade through twelfth grade increased student achievement and for Pre-Kindergarten to second grade, asynchronous and coaching for parents provided the optimal learning environment. Thus, parent coaching can potentially be the key to student motivation with school at home.

Social Emotional Health

Educational experiences can be especially important in transforming a schools' emphasis on trauma-informed and social-emotional learning (T. Hodges et al., 2020). School leaders' use of transformational leadership, a focus on positive growth for all stakeholders, was valued by both school staff and students (Azizah et al., 2020). The focus on positive growth of all stakeholders helps many school leaders process the Ethic of Care, as the leaders acknowledge the well-being of the stakeholders (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Leaders providing both students and staff with opportunities and resources to implement self-care was an ethical imperative due to the traumatic experiences of COVID-19 throughout 2020 (Crosby et al., 2020; Hlemke, 2020). Students and school staff faced real and unpredictable fears due to COVID-19 and the impending U.S. presidential election's impact on their lives as well (Crosby et al., 2020; Shao & Hao, 2020). Thus, positive professional relationships between students and staff increased student motivation, and potentially led to higher levels of student achievement (Güneş, &

Alagözülü, 2020). Teachers throughout the spring 2020 shutdown and 2020-2021 school year were at the fore-front in helping students and educators cope with difficult circumstances (Crosby et al., 2020). As leaders in a position of power, numerous school leaders sought to provide teachers with the resources necessary to help students and educators cope (Harris, 2020; C. Hodges et al., 2020).

Power of Position

Re-entry to the 2020-2021 school year shifted school leader Positionality, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), due to the high-level of uncertainty, as leaders navigated uncharted, and increasingly difficult circumstances during the new school year. A school leader's Positionality places the leader in a position of power which provides a culture of learning through decision-making and leadership (Ellis et al., 2020; Harris, 2020). The COVID pandemic caused many leaders to try to make decisions to avoid cascading into more turbulence, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), but these resulted in a "messy, trial-and-error, butterflies-in-the-stomach leadership" (Harris, 2020, p. 324). The leaders who successfully navigated the challenging times did so by using the ability to see a way through when all appeared lost (Gurr & Drysdale, 2020). Due to the power of position, school leaders needed to provide teachers with guidance on the decision-making process along with the opportunity to welcome input from the teacher's own Positionality (Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Tran, Hardie, & Cunningham, 2020). Therefore, school leaders should consider modeling the importance of utilizing peer-reviewed research to reinforce or improve strategies for learning as strong professional development is often tied to increased student learning (Trikoilis & Papanastasiou, 2020).

Shifting of pedagogies can be difficult, so the use of action research as a guide is vital in the change of instructional practices (Henriksen et al., 2020).

In summary, many school leaders continued to face incredibly difficult ethical dilemmas and turbulence, around the U.S. and the world, with the creation and initial implementation of school re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year (Ettman et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al.,). While the spring shut down provided experiences with remote learning, new Cascading circumstances enhanced the concerns for school district's decisions' in regard to the impact such decisions had on both long-term and short-term effects for public schools (Quinn et al., 2021). Subsequently, the Cascading circumstances included both internal and external barriers many school leaders faced in their ethical dilemmas (Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Barriers to Effective Schools

One of the biggest barriers for effective schools, beginning with the spring shutdown of 2020 through the 2020-2021 school year, was the constant uncertainty and lack of guidance from governmental health and educational entities (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020). Many school district leaders had to work with regional school leaders to determine when to shut down as governmental entities sought to avoid excessive entanglement within school politics (Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). The lack of clarity from government entities created concerns among numerous school leaders for future ethical dilemmas based upon the necessity to make decisions quickly to meet short-term needs. The lack of clarity was a constant state of worries for school leaders as leaders considered the Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross,

2013), which emphasizes consideration be made in regard to short-term and long-term implications of dilemmas (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). Therefore, many school leaders had to solve problems within the same day with only current information to utilize and thus, worry about long-term implications of decisions in the future (Argyropoulou et al., 2021). Factors which greatly impacted the decision-making included: projected budget short-falls, lack of consistent governmental guidance, political fighting at all levels, safety of stakeholders, student achievement, and long-term learning loss (Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Olcott, 2020; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020).

Emotional welfare had an increasingly negative impact on students and staff from the onset of the shutdown through the turmoil of the 2020-2021 school year (Erduran, 2020). The constant state of the unknown drained stakeholders of energy. Many stakeholders, personally and professionally, were forced to make high stress decisions with a short-term focus which was based on the Ethic of Care, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), concerning the well-being of others (Ellis et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Consequently, without relational support, student stress levels could elevate during exposure to “pro-longed and unpredictable stressors” (Quinn et al., 2021, p. 26). Moreover, depression symptoms were three times higher during the pandemic than before COVID-19 and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was four times more likely in individuals who were quarantined in home confinement when compared to cases prior to COVID-19. Lower income, minority groups, and jobless individuals experienced the largest increase in depression symptoms. The increases of depression symptoms were present in all three categories: mild, moderate, and severe (Ettman et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Prior research on natural disasters by Harris and Larsen

(2019) found similar patterns when events which created trauma and anxiety disproportionately affected lower socioeconomic and minority groups.

As schools developed re-entry plans, it was necessary to understand the undercurrent of digital fatigue which was increased due to the implementation of emergency remote education during the spring 2020 shutdown (Harris & Larsen, 2019; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) identified a connection between digital fatigue and the increase in depression symptoms, especially by disadvantaged socio-economic groups. Socio-emotional health problems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to an ever-increasing rate of student dropouts and lack of student motivation within the context of academics (Azorín, 2020). Furthermore, the trauma was not faced by students alone as a projection of nearly one-fifth of U.S. school staff members did not plan on returning to school for the 2020-2021 school year, due in part to the COVID-19 experience during the previous school year (McGuinness, 2020).

Change Process in Schools

Occupational professions share common norms which are shaped through training, experiences, and collaboration, and are part of the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). The spring 2020 shutdown posed new challenges for school leaders serving in the educational profession as leaders sought to develop and create re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year. The new 2020-2021 school year unveiled ethical dilemmas such as equity and access for all students and staff in an ever-changing environment (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). School leaders could no longer avoid these ethical dilemmas, which were amplified by COVID-19, and previous common occupational professional norms failed

to provide a clear solution for addressing such dilemmas (Harris, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Working through newly developed networks and distributive leadership, school leaders sought to prepare their school for continuous change in a post-COVID-19 era (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Canese & Amarilla, 2020; Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Olcott, 2020; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). Yet, strategies and preparation proposed for the 2020-2021 year school, led to calls by educational leaders and state officials to use the COVID-19 experience as an opportunity to reimagine the possibilities of public education (O'Connell & Clarke, 2020; Shah & Shaker, 2020; Tran et al., 2020).

Barriers to Change

Despite the opportunity to reimagine the possibilities of education, students and staff still preferred face-to-face learning as opposed to blended or remote learning. The face-to-face preference is true even though social distancing guidelines made face-to-face more difficult to attain (Paker & Balci, 2020). Due to the spring 2020 shutdown, according to Dridi et al. (2020), many educators worked to best understand which technology would serve to provide the most educational learning with the uncertainty of the 2020-2021 school year. Yet, persistent financial restrictions and the availability of technological products was a continual barrier for public schools and lower socio-economic groups (Dridi et al., 2020). Within the implementation of blended learning by many educators, technical errors greatly reduced the effectiveness and student preference for blended learning (Paker & Balci, 2020). Technical errors, along with the continual change of guidance from leadership at the local, state, and federal level, caused many teachers to struggle with trust during the 2020-2021 school year (Tran et al., 2020). With the absence of trust among numerous stakeholders across school district's, turbulence

against the school could potentially Cascade to higher levels (Ahlström, Leo, Norqvist, & Isling, 2020; O’Connell & Clarke, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Furthermore, Helmke (2020) found issues with trust were amplified by school leaders who did not properly manage expectations within their community of stakeholders, and thus, struggled to apply the Ethic of Care, which focuses on the well-being their community. While ambitious leaders sought to display their school as a beacon for innovation and hope during turbulent times, the emotional and physical capabilities of stakeholders were hampered due to personal or professional stressors during the pandemic (Helmke, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Summary

The COVID-19 phenomenon increased an already turbulent cultural environment in the U.S during the spring of 2020 through the new 2020-2021 school year. School leaders across the United States faced challenges at a degree which had not been faced in over a half-century in U.S. history (Cheng, 2020; Ludvigsson, 2020; Ordway, 2020; Pragholapati, 2020). Prior to COVID-19’s march across the world at the beginning of 2020, many school leaders focused on providing the optimum setting for schools to help students succeed on state assessments and as future citizens of the world (Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Yao et al., 2020). Yet, past strategies and procedures which had previously contributed to student success were challenged with the shutdown during the spring of 2020 (Kusuma et al., 2020). During the shutdown of 2020, school leaders had to discover how to create and maintain feedback loops between stakeholders such as staff members, students, families, and the community as a whole (Crosby et al, 2020). Additionally, school leaders were tasked to provide educators,

students, and families with the resources needed to participate in remote learning for the first time (Crosby et al., 2020; Henriksen et al., 2020; Hesbol, 2019; Taguchi, 2020).

The shutdown during the spring of 2020 heightened the awareness of stakeholders on the inequitable access to technology devices and the internet for members of their schools and communities (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Kavrayıcı & Kesim, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Inequitable access to technology had devastating effects on the learning of lower income and minority students within the U.S. school system (Chennamsetti, 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Ichsan et al., 2020; McGuinness, 2020). Furthermore, as the 2020-2021 school year began to occur, numerous school leaders had to develop and maintain self-efficacy for themselves and their staff while simultaneously providing staff, students, and families with the skills and resources necessary to participate in face-to-face, blended, and remote learning environments (Haverback, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020; Trust et al., 2020). Moreover, at the same time, many school leaders had to juggle the politicization and divisive nature of 2020. Thus, the 2020 U.S. presidential election and the election's impact on stakeholders' view of COVID-19 preventative measures by school districts, exponentially increased the difficulty of creating a guiding coalition for re-entry plans and adjustment for the 2020-2021 school year (Azizah et al., 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Shao & Hao, 2020).

This research fills a gap in current literature through the examination of school leaders' perception regarding the macro-perspective impact of the COVID-19 experience on public educational entities and the future of each entity as well (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996). Additionally, this research examined the ethical dilemmas school leaders faced throughout the phenomenon during the spring of 2020 and the 2020-2021 school year

(Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Not only can future researchers potentially examine school leadership decision-making during Severe Turbulence, but such an examination can also provide a historical record of school leaders' lived experiences, which is a core goal of qualitative phenomenological studies (Peoples, 2021).

In Chapter three, the researcher provided the methodology of the qualitative narrative phenomenological study, including the design, statistical analysis, and a summary. In Chapter Four, the researcher provided the findings and experiences of school leaders through the interviews. Finally, in Chapter Five, the researcher detailed the conclusions, recommendations, and application for future researchers.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION

Through most regular school years, most school leaders experience ethical dilemmas and adjust to a constant state of change from internal and external forces. The onset of COVID-19 challenged many school leaders to the brink as leaders had to redefine collaboration, communication, achievement, and culture of their schools (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis, Steadman, & Mao, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Zhao, Zhou et al. 2020). With the sudden shift to the implementation of emergency remote education during the spring of 2020, to the partisan political and cultural environment leading to the re-entry of the 2020-2021 school year, school leaders had to navigate forces of change which had long-term implications (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Shao & Hao, 2020; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). By exploring the lived experiences of school leaders during the spring shutdown and subsequent school year, researchers can evaluate the turbulence levels faced by public educators and how leaders approached the ethical dilemmas during that time (Peoples, 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Chapter Three details the research methodology used capturing school leaders' experiences during the COVID-19 phenomenon and how the experience shaped their lived experiences. The chapter includes a discussion on the purpose of study, research questions, participants, selection and sampling, research settings, research design, instrumentation, and data analysis.

Purpose of Study

Experiences learned by school leaders through the spring 2020 Missouri-wide shut down, along with ever-changing guidance from governmental entities, such as Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and local county health departments, alone would have provided an unprecedented challenge for the implementation of the new school year (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Borup et al., 2020; Haverback, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Yet, the politically charged environment many school leaders faced due to the governmental and societal pressures at the national, state, and local levels, created an additional untenable background for the development of the 2020-2021 school re-entry plan (Ellis et al., 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021). As a multitude of leaders in virtually every industry encountered during the year 2020, each decision made inevitably faced a vocal opposition, particularly through social media (Englmeier, 2021; J. Obiała et al., 2021; Paisana et al., 2020). Many school leaders were forced to determine significant legal, health, and wellness ramifications of their decisions due to the expansive microscope of that time period in history (Bailey et al., 2020; Eisenbach et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Haverback, 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020). Therefore, the dual purpose of this study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020, COVID-19 school shut down and how the experience shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation, and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year. The second purpose of the study was to discover how school leaders' perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape their ability to make ethical decisions and respond to the

Contextual Forces as the leaders created and implemented school re-entry plans during the 2020-2021 school year.

Research Questions

1. How did Missouri public school leaders' perceptions during the phenomena of COVID-19 inform the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
2. How did Missouri public school leaders' perception during the Turbulence (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extreme) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) caused by the phenomena of COVID-19, shape the leader's ability to make decisions and respond to Contextual Forces (Cascading, Positionality, Stability) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - a. How did the Ethic of Justice (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - b. How did the Ethic of Critique (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - c. How did the Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation,

implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

- d. How did the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

Participants

Participants for this qualitative narrative phenomenological study were selected based upon the following criteria for school leaders working in public schools in the state of Missouri. School leaders from nine school districts across the state of Missouri were selected to participate in the study. The nine school districts included one school district from each of the nine regional professional development centers (RPDC's) across the state. The structure followed the guidelines for conducting phenomenological studies by Peoples (2021), which stipulates the number of participants must be between eight and 15. Since the nine RPDC's participants were located across the entire state, and nine participants were within the recommended guidelines, one participant from each RPDC was purposively selected. The use of RPDC's as a delineating factor was used to examine the school leaders' lived experience throughout the state of Missouri during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school districts were selected to include districts classified by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and DESE as urban, suburban, and rural, with a minimum of two from each of the three classifications (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020c; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). School leaders varied in years of experience, both at their current school and prior

school experiences. Demographic features of school leaders, such as gender, race, and age were not delineating factors for the participation of this study.

Selection and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study based upon a clear criterion established by the researcher (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The researcher selected school leaders from school districts which participated in a minimum of two days of face-to-face learning as part of their re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year. As detailed in Table 1 of the 557 public school districts in the state of Missouri, only 11.1% of districts did not provide a blended or onsite option for learning for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Table 2 also demonstrates the school districts eligible to participate in this study included 74.3% of students in Missouri public schools. Therefore, 495 school districts were eligible to participate in the study. Three RPDC’s had an urban school district eligible for the study and each of the nine RPDC’s had suburban and rural school districts meeting the criteria of face-to-face learning. For school leaders from eligible school districts to participate, leaders needed to have been in a leadership position at the current school during the spring 2020 shutdown and actively involved in the schools’ creation, implementation, and adjustment of the 2020-2021 school re-entry plan.

Table 1

Number of Local Education Agency’s (LEA’s) and K-12 Students in Patterns of Instruction

Patterns of Instruction	Number of LEA’s	Number of 2020-21 K-12 students in LEA’s
Onsite	178	92,519
Onsite with distanced option	259	323,587
	58	236,392
Blended onsite/distanced	62	226,129
Distanced	0	0

Closed

Note. Numbers provided by Missouri DESE for schools as of September 14, 2020.

Additionally, participants included one school leader in each of the nine Missouri RPDC's (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021b). School leaders in Missouri public schools meeting the criteria of the qualitative narrative phenomenological study were requested to participate by the researcher via email and phone requests, which were available from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary website. After receiving a participant's initial approval to participate, a follow-up email with dates and times for interviews, along with confidentiality and pertinent research information was shared with each participant. The total number of participants for this study include nine individuals.

Demographic information for each of the nine participants from Missouri public schools participating in the study is found in Table 2. The average years of experience as a school leader was 9.3, and the average number of years at their current school was 12.1. Based upon the NCES (2021) and DESE (2021) classification system, five rural, three suburban, and one urban school leaders were involved in the study. The state of Missouri uses the Annual Performance Report (APR) to identify school districts needing additional support and school districts earning recognition as models of distinction (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021a). Though not used as a delineating factor in selecting school leaders, the average APR for the nine schools for the 2018-2019 school year was 115.5 out of 120, with a high of 119.5 and a low of 111 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021c). The 2017-2018 school year APR was selected because the data included the last set of APR released by

the state prior to the onset of COVID-19. Starting with the 2018-2019 school year, DESE began providing a growth model for categories as opposed to an overall number.

Additionally, during the spring of 2020, no APR scores were released by the state of Missouri due to the loss of state data as a result of school closures during the pandemic.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Study Participants

Participant Data	Experience as School Leader	Experience at Current School	Gender	Ethnicity	School District Classification
Participant 1	19	6	Male	White	Suburban
Participant 2	2	24	Female	White	Rural
Participant 3	13	7	Male	White	Urban
Participant 4	13	5	Male	White	Rural
Participant 5	13	4	Male	White	Suburban
Participant 6	3	3	Female	White	Rural
Participant 7	4	15	Female	White	Rural
Participant 8	9	17	Male	White	Suburban
Participant 9	8	28	Male	White	Rural

Ethical considerations of school leaders were provided to protect the confidentiality of participants and included Research Review Board approval from the Southwest Baptist University research ethics board. Participants remaining throughout the study were assigned participant codes to omit any personally identifiable information. Interviews were completed via video-conferencing tool Google Meet. Participants were asked to provide approval for recording the conversation at the beginning of the

interview. If approval for recording the interview was denied by the participant, typed notes were kept by the researcher in a journal for data analysis. Data collection and storage was maintained by the researcher in a cloud-based service, and only the researcher had access to retrieve any information. Per recommended guidelines, at the conclusion of the research process, all data was kept on a password protected device and destroyed after five years of the conclusion of the study.

Research Setting

Participants were sent a request via email to interview and each participant willingly accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Included in the email was a letter with the purpose of the study, participant selection process, and general topics for the interview. School leaders participating in the study were interviewed one time, and then follow-up communication was completed through email after the meeting for any clarification questions if needed. Each participant was interviewed via the on-line video program Google Meet. Each interview included participants who had varying experiences in the development, adjustment, and implementation of the district's COVID-19 fall re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Interviews were recorded with participant's approval and then transcribed to identify common themes among the school leaders' experiences. The transcriptions were coded to provide confidentiality of participants, as well to identify consistent themes between lived experiences. The researcher conducted a minimum number of research interviews; therefore, inexperience of the process potentially limited the overall efficiency of the research.

School leaders meeting the criteria for this study had a shared experience in Missouri public schools during the spring 2020 school shutdown and through the re-entry

process of the 2020-2021 school year. Each school leader participating in the study was hired by a school board comprised of members which were elected by the local community. While school leaders have authority to make decisions on the day-to-day operation of schools, leaders are held accountable by the local school board's decision and oversight. As COVID-19 began to impact schools during the spring of 2020, many school leaders received guidance from DESE and varying amounts of support from local health departments (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a; Delaney, 2020; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020b; Office of Governor Michael L. Parsons, 2020c; Riley, 2020). Financial impacts of state and national shutdowns during March through April 2020, caused many school districts to deal with cuts in funding for June and July of 2020 (Rosenbaum, 2020; Suntrup, 2020). However, many of the financial cuts were counteracted by the passage of federal stimulus money through three Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I, II, & III) funds (Cruz, 2021).

Research Design

The researcher selected a qualitative narrative phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of school leaders during the COVID-19 phenomenon and the effect on school district's planning for the 2020-2021 school year (Creswell, 2007; Peoples, 2021). Qualitative studies seek to create an understanding of the perception of the research participants through the identification of meaning through "person-to-person interactions" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 14). Narrative studies are a form of qualitative methods which develop meaning through the verbalization of stories by participants and can be used to develop central themes of participants' experiences,

generally through just one participant's experience (Adams & Lawrence, 2019; Creswell, 2007; Gay et al., 2009). Phenomenological studies are another form of qualitative methods which help researchers discover themes in thought or experience which can be tested by future researchers, and include eight to 15 individuals who have experienced a similar phenomenon as opposed to the single narrative method (Peoples, 2021). While the phenomenon in the current study was experienced by district's all across the state of Missouri, the lived experiences of each participant varied a great deal due to several local and national factors. The qualitative narrative phenomenological study allowed the researcher to answer the question "what is it like to experience a certain phenomenon?" (Peoples, 2021, p. 3). While other methods such as ethnography can help categorize shared patterns of a cultural group and a case study examines a single case, neither method can capture the immense scope of school leaders' experiences during the spring of 2020 through the 2020-2021 school year (Gay et al., 2009; Goolaup, S., & Solér, 2018; Peoples, 2021). The depth of the COVID-19 experience by school leaders required a broader investigation and analysis, through which a qualitative narrative phenomenological study offers (Peoples, 2021).

An interview was used to capture the lived experiences of the school leaders in the study. Interviews provided an opportunity for school leaders to reflect on their experiences and as Thompson (1997) found, "a reflection on one event triggers a reflection on another event holding a similar meaning" (p. 444). The qualitative narrative phenomenological method and use of interviews allowed the participants of the study to reflect on their experiences through the COVID-19 experience (Creswell, 2007; Peoples, 2021). Qualitative narrative phenomenological studies seek to not only understand the

experience of participants through the phenomenon, but also their feelings during the experiences as perceived through their consciousness (Peoples, 2021). Upon the completion of each of the interviews, the researcher then conceptualized and coded the experiences and feelings of the participants' generated from each interview into a series of themes. The researcher was able to analyze the lived experiences of school leaders and develop conceptual generalizations of the COVID-19 experience. The data provided the researcher with a meaningful reality based on the experiences shared by each participant.

Instrumentation

The researcher attempted to increase reliability of the study by triangulating data through the interview, individual school's re-entry plan, federal/state/local governmental guidance, and re-entry plan revisions over time. If the study were to be replicated, results may differ as experiences vary within different school district environments and the number of years removed from the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the researcher sought to further strengthen reliability and validity through member checking, review of the interview sessions recordings, and concept mapping, in an attempt to encompass a whole-district perspective (Creswell, 2007). The researcher assumed participants provided honest responses which accurately described the context and processes used during the phenomenological time period (Peoples, 2021). The researcher also assumed participants volunteering for the study would participate throughout the entirety of the research. However, participants did have the opportunity to remove themselves at any point throughout the completion of the study. Following the data analysis, results of each

individual interview was shared with that school leader to provide an opportunity for feedback or clarification of results from that specific leader's perspective.

Interview Process

Interviews were conducted in a single, online synchronous video format with each participant representing a school leader of a Missouri public school district. The researcher used pre-determined questions, as noted in Appendix A, and additional follow-up questions were used to provide more insight from each individual interviewee as needed (Thompson, 1997). The interview questions were designed as open-ended questions to provide the interviewees with an opportunity to reflect upon their leadership experience, as well as provide a perspective on their lived experience during the 2020-2021 school year. Each interview was intended to take 30-60 minutes, depending on each participant's answers. At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer thanked the participant and discussed how the data would be analyzed. Additionally, the researcher included the opportunity for each interviewee to see their own results prior to the steps completed as part of the final data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, which seeks to break apart meanings, does not accurately describe a phenomenological inquiry, which seeks to understand the experience as a whole (Peoples, 2021; Polkinghorne, 1983). Despite the historical perspective on the term data analysis, the researcher focused on the phenomenon's impact on school leaders in the context of the whole experience of the COVID-19 pandemic (Peoples, 2021). The process of developing an understanding of school leaders experience during the COVID-19 pandemic through a phenomenological lens can be completed through two major

perspectives: Husserl Transcendental Phenomenology and Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004; Lavery, 2003; Peoples, 2021; Polkinghorne, 1983). Husserl Transcendental Phenomenology utilizes a process called Bracketing to reduce the “researcher’s personal views or preconceptions” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 50) from influencing the interpretations of the participants’ experiences. Through the Transcendental Processes, any meanings or data can stand by itself due to the objectivity of the Bracketing Process (Lavery, 2003). Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology instead seeks to have the researcher embed their own bias and assumptions through the Hermeneutic Circle, as opposed to the Bracketing Process embedded within Transcendental Phenomenology (Lavery, 2003; Peoples, 2021). Researchers using the Hermeneutic Circle consistently reflect and modify their understanding of the phenomenon. Lavery (2003) describes the Hermeneutic Circle as a process where the researcher “moves from the parts of experience, to the whole of experience and back” (p. 24) as a means of developing a “sensible meaning” (p. 24) of the phenomenon. This research utilized the Hermeneutic Phenomenology due to the researchers own set of experiences during the COVID-19 phenomenon (Lavery, 2003; Peoples, 2021).

The results of the study were derived from responses from an initial email sent by the researcher, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews of the participants, and additional notes taken during the interview sessions (Creswell, 2007). Transcriptions of the video recorded interviews were generated using the online transcription service Otter.ai, which produced a detailed breakdown of each interview. During the first step in the data analysis process the researcher was reading each of the interview transcripts in their entirety to begin understanding the experiences of each participant. During the reading of

each of the interview transcripts for each participant, any redundant words, such as “um” were removed from the transcript (Peoples, 2021). While reading each transcript, the researcher sought to perceive the meaning of the interviewees word choices and descriptions, especially comments highlighting ethical dilemmas, changes to public education, and levels of turbulence (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The second step the researcher implemented for the data analysis process was the development of preliminary meaning units, which encompassed a piece of data which provided the researcher with specific descriptions of the phenomenon which was explored (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Peoples, 2021; Polkinghorne, 1983). As the researcher was developing preliminary meaning units, the researcher journaled from his own experiences and biases to facilitate the Hermeneutic Circle process. (Peoples, 2021; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Once all nine interviews were completed, transcribed, read, initial observations documented, and units of meaning identified, the researcher re-read all nine transcriptions together and completed additional note taking in a journal (Polkinghorne, 1983). With units, or common themes, identified between the nine interviews, a spreadsheet was created to track the number of times each meaning unit was evident in the interviews (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the spreadsheet also provided documentation of the number of times each unit was referenced for comparative purposes between the urban, suburban, rural schools, years of experience as a school leader, and years of service at the current school (Creswell, 2007). During the next steps of the data analysis process, the researcher took the preliminary meaning units discovered during step two and began developing themes. Throughout the process of establishing emerging

themes, the researcher journaled any revisions of his own preconceptions and experiences through the lens of the interviewees descriptions. By reflecting with the journal, from understanding the individual meaning units to the whole experience, the researcher used the Hermeneutic Circle to solidify the newly developed themes (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003; Peoples, 2021).

As the researcher moved through the data analysis process, the fourth step was the Situated Narrative step, as defined by Peoples (2021), which seeks to organize the learning units and themes discovered during steps two and three in each interviewee's own story. The Situated Narrative step involved highlighting each theme's presence in the transcript, along with identifying any direct quotes describing the perceived themes (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout the process of organizing the learning units and themes, the researcher completed follow-up interviews with ___ participants to help provide clarity or context to specific answers provided in the initial interview. Additionally, the transcript with the identification of themes and the Situated Narrative notes, were shared with the interviewee for personal reflections on the research's findings (Creswell, 2007). Continuing to move through the data analysis process, the researcher then took the situated narrative and processed the general narratives of the nine interview transcripts. During this step, the researcher determined the prevalence of each theme occurring in the interview transcript and developed a quantitative expression of the theme's presence (Groenewald, 2004; Laverty, 2003; Peoples, 2021). Once the themes were expressed in the transcript extensively, at an occurrence of six participants or more, then the transcript was classified as most. If the themes were only expressed at an occurrence of five to three participants, then the

transcript was classified as many. Finally, when the themes occurring were low in volume, but still relevant, then the transcript was classified as some. The classifications of the transcripts allowed the researcher to develop a general description of the phenomenon and each participant's lived experience, which was the final step. The development of the general description of the phenomenon was used to unite the themes into a consistent description which were classified as 'most' and 'many' from the occurrences of the transcripts. Furthermore, the 'some' transcripts provided the researcher with the opportunity to demonstrate differences of experiences which were not consistent enough to be their own set of themes (Peoples, 2021).

Summary

From a historiographical and educational research perspective, COVID-19 presented both unique experiences and difficulties to school leaders from the spring of 2020 to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Shao & Hao, 2020; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). The confluence of factors, at the global level down to the local level, provided several contextual factors which increased turbulence in school districts across the United States (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Shao & Hao, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). The data collected through the phenomenological study was used to explore each individual's phenomenon as the individual experienced the phenomenon during the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year. Specifically, this study filled a gap in the current research regarding how school leaders in Missouri Public schools perceived the ethical dilemmas presented by COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study based on methodology of Chapter Three. Chapter Five interprets the findings as well as provides a summary of the entire study. Also included in Chapter Five are recommendations for future study and implications.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

INTRODUCTION

The onset of COVID-19 during the spring of 2020 ushered in an unparalleled experience for school leaders as leaders sought to provide leadership through their decision-making within their school districts (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis, Steadman, & Mao, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Zhao, et al. 2020). This qualitative narrative phenomenological study explored lived experiences of Missouri public school leaders during the spring shutdown of public schools due to COVID-19 and the 2020-2021 school year. This study provided an opportunity to examine the turbulence levels faced by public school educators and how leaders approached the ethical dilemmas during the pandemic (Peoples, 2021; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Chapter Four includes the findings of this qualitative narrative phenomenological study of school leaders' perceptions and ethical decision-making throughout the COVID-19 phenomenon from the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, the dual purpose of this study was to first understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020 school year with the COVID-19 school shut down and how the experience shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation, and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year. The second purpose of the study was to discover how school leaders' perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape the ability to make ethical decisions and respond to Contextual Forces as school re-entry plans were created and implemented

during the 2020-2021 school year (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Additionally, this qualitative narrative phenomenological study sought to capture school leaders' perceptions using the framework of Shapiro and Gross's (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigms with the Turbulence and Cascading Factors educators encountered, along with Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Change Theory regarding the long-term impact of COVID-19 on public education. This study filled a gap in the current research regarding how school leaders in Missouri Public schools perceived the ethical dilemmas presented by COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher conducted interviews with nine Missouri public school leaders. After the interviews, transcripts and interview notes were used to identify themes and compare each to components of effective schools which were found through the literature review, and include: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) relationships, (d) student achievement, and (e) power of position. These six components, along with the theoretical frameworks of Shapiro and Gross (2013) and Lewin (1947), formed the basis of the interview questions. Comparisons with effective school components gleaned from themes present within the literature review and interview notes were completed regarding the time period prior to the spring of 2020, as well as throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

Chapter Four is organized by participants and settings, data analysis, and addresses the overarching research questions:

1. How did Missouri public school leaders' perceptions during the phenomena of COVID-19 inform the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

2. How did Missouri public school leaders' perception during the Turbulence (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extreme) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) caused by the phenomena of COVID-19, shape the leader's ability to make decisions and respond to Contextual Forces (Cascading, Positionality, Stability) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - a. How did the Ethic of Justice (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - b. How did the Ethic of Critique (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - c. How did the Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
 - d. How did the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

Participants

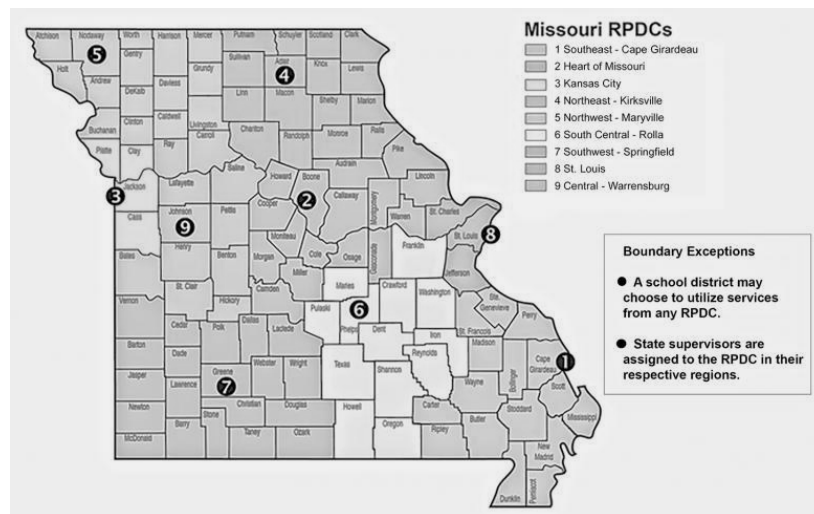
Purposive sampling was used in this study and was based upon a clear criterion established by the researcher (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The participants included eight superintendents and one assistant superintendent, from each of the nine Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC's) school districts which had participated in a minimum of two days of face-to-face learning as part of the re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the researcher sought to include school leaders from urban, suburban, and rural sized districts. Three RPDC's had an urban school district eligible for the study and each of the nine RPDC's had both suburban and rural school districts which met the criteria of the study for face-to-face learning. For school leaders from eligible school districts to participate, leaders must have been in a leadership position at the current school during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools and actively involved in the schools' creation, implementation, and adjustment of the 2020-2021 school re-entry plan.

The nine school districts used for the study included one school district from each of the nine RPDC's across the state, as demonstrated by Figure 1. Participants from the nine RPDC's were located across the entire state, and nine participants were within the recommended guidelines, one participant from each RPDC was purposively selected (Peoples, 2021). The use of RPDC's as a delineating factor was used to examine the school leaders' lived experience across the state of Missouri during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school districts were selected to include districts classified by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as urban, suburban, and rural. The researcher sought to

have a minimum of two school districts per classification, but with only five eligible urban schools, only one urban school willingly participated in the study. The remaining eight school leaders included three suburban and five rural school districts (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020c; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

Figure 1

Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC)



Note: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Missouri RPDCs (<https://dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-development/regional-professional-development-centers>).

School leaders participating in the study varied in years of experience, both at their current school and prior school experiences. Demographic features of school leaders, such as gender, race, and age were not delineating factors for participation in this study. To protect confidentiality, each participant was labeled based upon their Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) classification, as designated by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9 (Table 3). Demographic information, such as school district student

population size, was left out of the study to protect confidentiality of participants. Each school leader participating in the study was interviewed between mid-May 2021 through the beginning of June 2021 via Google Meet, and each interview lasted an average of 55 minutes. The researcher provided the interview protocol and questions prior to the interview through the calendar invite, which also included the link to the pre-scheduled Google Meet as well.

Table 3

Demographic Information of Study Participants

Participant Data	Role	Experience as School Leader	Experience at Current School	Gender	School District Classification
Participant 1 (P1)	Superintendent	19	6	Male	Suburban
Participant 2 (P2)	Superintendent	2	24	Female	Rural
Participant 3 (P3)	Superintendent	13	7	Male	Urban
Participant 4 (P4)	Superintendent	13	5	Male	Rural
Participant 5 (P5)	Superintendent	13	4	Male	Suburban
Participant 6 (P6)	Superintendent	3	3	Female	Rural
Participant 7 (P7)	Superintendent	4	15	Female	Rural
Participant 8 (P8)	Assistant Superintendent	9	17	Male	Suburban
Participant 9 (P9)	Superintendent	8	28	Male	Rural

Data Analysis

Transcriptions of the video recorded interviews were generated using the online transcription service Otter.ai, which produced a detailed breakdown of each interview. During the initial reading of each of the interview transcripts for each participant, any redundant words, such as ‘um’ were removed from the transcript as part of the data cleaning process (Peoples, 2021). While reading each transcript, the researcher sought to perceive the meaning of each participants’ word choices and descriptions, especially comments which highlighted ethical dilemmas, changes to public education, and levels of turbulence (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The second step the researcher implemented during the data analysis process was the development of preliminary meaning units encompassing pieces of data that provided the researcher with specific descriptions of the phenomenon which was explored (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Peoples, 2021; Polkinghorne, 1983). As the researcher developed preliminary meaning units, the researcher also journaled from his own experiences and biases to facilitate the Hermeneutic Circle process. (Peoples, 2021; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Next, themes were generated from the grouping of the preliminary meaning units which were identified through the coding of transcripts. Following the coding of themes, the researcher quantified the presence of each theme in each interview transcript with the following description: themes expressed by all nine participants in the transcript were classified as *all*; themes expressed in the transcript at an occurrence of six to eight participants were classified as *most*; themes expressed at an occurrence of three to five participants were classified as *many*; and themes occurring with one or two participants

but still relevant were classified as *some*. Finally, the classifications of the transcripts allowed the researcher to develop a general description of the phenomenon as well as each participant's lived experience, which was the final step. The development of the general description of the phenomenon was used to unite the themes into a consistent description which were classified as *most* and *many* from the occurrences within the transcripts. Furthermore, the *some* classification provided the researcher with the opportunity to demonstrate differences of experiences which were not consistent enough to be their own set of themes, such as building usage, protests, and different learning modes (Peoples, 2021). Moreover, the low volume terms are discussed later in the chapter.

For triangulation, the researcher used the following data sources: interviews, archival data (CDC, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS), Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), local news reports), and school's reentry plans. To ensure participants confidentiality, local news reports and re-entry plans were titled by RPDC number. Each interview transcript was individually coded electronically with general themes and then shared with each specific interviewee for clarifications. Next, the researcher collected and reviewed the following documents: archival data (CDC guidance, MDHSS guidance, DESE guidance, and local news reports on news-worthy decisions) regarding each school's individual re-entry plan. Any discrepancies between the interview transcript and triangulation data sources were noted in the individual post-interview correspondence, to allow the interviewee to provide clarification.

Coding

With units, or common themes, identified between the nine interviews, a spreadsheet was created to track the number of times each meaning unit was evident, as shown in Table 4 (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The online transcription program used by the researcher, Otter.ai, provided the top twenty terms used during the interview transcript. The most common terms identified by Otter.ai included variations of the word, such as kid, kids, and kiddos and terms were replicated within multiple interviews. The twenty-one terms used for coding the transcripts of the nine interviews are included in Table 4. Additionally, the spreadsheet provided documentation of the number of times each unit was referenced for comparative purposes between the urban, suburban, rural schools, years of experience as a school leader, and years of service at the current school (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, other terms not included by Otter.ai but evident in the review of literature were also examined by the researcher and included blended learning, hybrid learning, and face-to-face learning.

Table 4

Code Terms Usage per Participant in Interview Transcript

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
<u>Code Terms</u>									
Mask	23	9	12	16	29	47	29	15	32
Local Health Department	4	13	26	10	8	13	29	15	25
Face to Face (In Person, Seated, In School)	7	3	16	4	16	4	11	8	9
Re-Entry	3	10	8	5	6	7	22	7	6
Conversation (Talk, Communicate)	26	4	29	14	28	28	33	25	17
Teachers (Staff)	29	26	22	37	34	28	56	17	46
Students (Kids)	60	53	28	71	111	62	47	55	62
Quarantine	10	17	3	17	20	17	5	9	13
Community	8	12	20	19	12	5	25	10	13
Guidance	0	7	21	13	8	8	2	2	4
Classroom	2	42	10	8	34	5	1	9	3

Virtual	19	16	17	7	13	12	9	10	20
Blended	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Hybrid	0	0	3	0	2	17	0	3	2
People	26	10	35	31	12	22	44	51	18
School Board	20	23	42	8	21	10	14	14	23
Decision (Decide)	11	19	16	20	15	12	2	13	13
Learning (Educate, Teach)	25	16	42	15	31	16	20	12	18
Meetings	5	6	5	7	13	7	24	13	12
School	65	61	54	66	60	101	79	64	83
County	6	14	14	19	17	7	22	35	32

Note: Participants in the study were identified as P number based upon their RPDC location. For example, P1 was the participant from RPDC 1. Additionally, the Code Terms and subsequently numbers represent the number of times that term, or idea, was discussing during the interview with each participant. For example, P1 used the term ‘mask’ 23 times during the interview.

Following the coding of themes and demographic data, responses of terms in interview transcripts were categorized by averages, high number, and low number as displayed in Table 5. The highest average occurrence of terms in the nine interviews were: School (70.3 times), Students-Kids (61.0 times), Teachers-Staff (32.8 times), People (27.7 times), Mask (23.6 times), Conversation-Talk (22.7 times), and Learning-Educate (21.7). When comparing the twenty-one most common occurring terms identified from the interview transcripts, students and school personnel were in the top set of terms. The researcher was surprised to find the term ‘mask’ as the seventh most occurring theme as all nine participants referenced the impact ‘masks’ had made in each district, however research found the term ‘mask’ had a limited occurrence in the literature review as well. The terms occurring the least amount of times during the nine interviews were: Face to Face-In Person (8.7 times), Re-Entry (8.2 times), Guidance (7.2 times), Hybrid (3.0 times), and Blended (0.3 times). When comparing the twenty-one terms which were identified from the interview transcripts with what was revealed in the literature review, it was unexpected for all five least common terms to be so rarely spoken

about during the interview as the researcher found each term occurred often in the literature review.

Table 5

Code Terms Average Usage in Interview Transcript, Including High and Low Number of Usage.

	Average	Most Number of Times Used	Least Number of Times Used
<u>Code Terms</u>			
School	70.3	101	54
Students (Kids)	61.0	111	28
Teachers (Staff)	32.8	56	17
People	27.7	51	10
Mask	23.6	47	9
Conversation (Talk)	22.7	33	4
Learning (Education, Teach)	21.7	42	12
School Board	19.4	42	8
County	18.4	35	6
Health Department	15.9	29	4
Community	13.8	25	5
Virtual	13.7	20	7
Decision (Decide)	13.4	20	2
Classroom	12.7	42	1
Quarantine	12.3	20	3
Meetings	10.2	24	5

Face To Face (In Person, Seat, In School)	8.7	16	3
Re-Entry	8.2	22	3
Guidance	7.2	21	0
Hybrid	3.0	17	0
Blended	0.3	3	0

Notes: The most and least number of times was identified from Table Four, based upon participants' interview transcripts.

Specific responses from each participant demonstrated variance between the different participants. When considering which participants had the highest quantity of term usage during the interviews, P7 (rural) and P3 (urban), were the top two with six (P7) and five (P3) coded terms. The quantity difference was expected by the researcher because P3 was the only Urban participating in the study. However, P7's variance was unexpected when compared to other rural school districts throughout Missouri, as the other rural districts only were a top term usage once each for the remaining ten coded terms.

Additional term differences were found between various participants in the study. The term 'learning', which was used an average of 21.7 times, was most used by P3 (42) and P5 (31). The term 'meeting', was used an average of 10.2 times and was used by P7 (24) who discussed organizing multiple meetings with regional school leaders and stakeholders. Moreover, two terms which were counted separately, but many times were used together, were county, used an average of 18.4 times, and health department, used an average of 15.9 times. When comparing the term 'county', the two participants referencing the term most often were P8 (35) and P9 (32). Subsequently, for the term

‘health department’, the three participants referencing the term most often were P3 (26), P7 (29), and P9 (25). However, the only participant who consistently used both ‘county’ and ‘health department’ was P9, and P9 also discussed political issues with the local health board elections surrounding the county mask requirement as well. Furthermore, the term with a high degree of usage difference was ‘school board’, as the term was used an average of 19.4 times with the most frequent reference made by P3 (42) and the least frequent by P4 (8).

Themes

During the next steps of the data analysis process, the researcher took the preliminary meaning units discovered during step two and developed themes. The themes for research question one aligned with the themes developed by the researcher independently and was then corroborated using what was found through the completion of the review of literature. The themes for research question two were based upon the Multiple Ethical Paradigm from Shapiro and Gross (2013) which was utilized as a foundational framework for this study.

Research Question 1

The following overarching research question was the basis for this study: How did Missouri public school leaders’ perceptions during the phenomena of COVID-19 inform the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year? The researcher asked open-ended questions to capture school leader’s perceptions through their lived experiences. The interview protocol and pre-established questions were based on components of effective schools, before the spring of 2020 public school shutdown and throughout the 2020-2021 school year and also

generated from the review of literature, including: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) relationships, (d) student achievement, and (e) power of position. Participants of this study highlighted similar themes from their personal experiences during the COVID-19 phenomenon during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools and throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

Table 6
Coding Terms by Theme for Research Question 1

Collaboration	Communication	Relationships	Student Achievement	Power of Position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Students (Kids) • Teachers (Staff) • People • Conversation (Talk) • County • Health Department • Guidance • Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Students (Kids) • Teachers (Staff) • People • County • Health Department • Community • Conversation (Talk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Students (Kids) • Teachers (Staff) • People • Community • Health Department • Face-To-Face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Students (Kids) • Teachers (Staff) • Learning (Educate, Teach) • School Board • Virtual • Classroom • Quarantine • Face-To-Face • Hybrid • Blended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Students (Kids) • Teachers (Staff) • People • Mask • Community • Health Department • Conversation (Talk) • Decision (Decide) • Re-Entry • Guidance

Note: Coding terms from interview transcripts, as identified in Table 5, and separated into themes.

Collaboration

All Participants of this study highlighted various collaborations they participated in from the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools and throughout the 2020-2021 school year. All school leaders in this study had a minimum two of the following three types of collaborations: meetings with local health department leaders and legal advisors; meetings with regional school leaders; and meetings with local stakeholders. Most of the meetings with the local health department, legal advisors, and regional school leaders

took place via video conferencing using tools such as Google Meet and Zoom, primarily during spring 2020 through the winter of 2020. The collaborative meetings with local health department leaders, legal advisors, and regional school leaders were used to discuss dilemmas faced by each leader, and included conversations of possibilities, as well solutions. All school leaders revealed the collaborative meetings with local health department leaders or legal advisors were conducted weekly, with nearly daily communication, starting during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools throughout the summer of 2020. As stated by P1, “We work(ed) closely with our local county health department.” Reinforcing the close relationship with the county health director, P7 stated “If we weren’t on the phone, we emailed a lot.” Following the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, all participants stated the quantity of meetings with state or legal counsel were reduced as the school year progressed.

All participants described the meetings with regional state leaders were conducted in both face-to-face and video conferencing, and many of the meetings included the local health department or legal advisors, during the spring 2020 shutdown to the start of the 2020-2021 school year. This sentiment was echoed by P6, who stated “Everybody was constantly talking.” Local news reports in RPDC 2 and RPDC 7, reviewed by the researcher, confirmed meetings of school leaders throughout the state at different points during the COVID-19 phenomenon. As the school year progressed, many school leaders (P1, P4, P5, P6, P7) described the continuation of the the regional school leader meetings, but with less frequency as well as reduced attendance by legal advisors. Many of the school leaders during the interview session discussed their appreciation for the regional

school leaders' meetings and their hope such meetings would continue in the years to come.

Most school leaders (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9) discussed seeking out collaboration opportunities with local stakeholders, specifically while developing the re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Although meetings with local stakeholders varied in frequency and design between the nine schools participating in this study, according to the reflections shared by each participant, the meetings were similar in purpose. Most school leaders discussed the meetings with local stakeholders as an opportunity to problem-solve and receive feedback on their prospective re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year. The quantity of meetings varied among schools, with some stating they were meeting only a couple times before the 2020-2021 school year began, to others that met four to five times, along with a couple meetings throughout the school year. Individuals involved in the meetings generally followed a pattern which included: local medical experts, school administrators, teachers, and other respected community members. The local medical experts within each meeting included anyone respected for their medical knowledge within the community, and participant responses mentioning medical individuals varied from the school nurse, a national recognized epidemiologist and a nationally-recognized school of medicine. Additionally, the reflection of the inclusion of the respected community member mentioned by participants varied from school board members, local business members, or local government officials (such as mayor). Two participants (P8, P2) mentioned involving their support staff, such as janitors or food service, in these meetings but the inclusion of such members were the minority among the participants in this study.

One additional mention of collaboration by the school leaders was the collaboration among staff members throughout the 2020-2021 school year. While possibly present in most schools, only one participant (P2) mentioned teachers actively collaborating at a higher frequency when compared with the collaboration opportunities during previous school years. Of the participants who mentioned heightened teacher to teacher collaboration, much of the collaboration mentioned revolved around quarantine circumstances which removed teachers from the classroom, many times at the last minute. When quarantine situations happened, P2 described how fellow teachers, still in the school building, were “out there making lesson plans for” quarantined colleagues. As described by P2, teachers were asked to “multitask in the classroom” as the teachers worked with their quarantined colleague to write lesson plans, acclimate a substitute teacher to the classroom, or cover class assignments.

Communication

A common theme among the responses of the participants was the vital role communication played during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools through the fall of the 2020-2021 school year. One of the biggest changes in communication each participant detailed was the use of video conferencing tools, such as Google Meet or Zoom which were used for collaborative meetings. Additionally, all participants described the constant communication between themselves and the local county health department, or departments for the schools between counties. The collaboration was highlighted by P8 stating the leader was given the personal cell phone number of the local health county director from the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools throughout the 2020-2021 school year “and (the director) would answer every time.”

All participants in the study described an increasing desire to be available for communication with stakeholders, specifically parents and guardians, throughout the COVID-19 experience. The communication with stakeholders most commonly included traditional communication methods such as phone calls and emails. However, one innovative strategy mentioned by P3, confirmed by the researcher via RPDC #3 reentry plan and local news reports, included setting up a new parent portal for parents and guardians to submit questions to the school via the school website. Once the question was submitted via the school website, an automated email with the inquiry was sent to the appropriate department or school building, with the expectation the appropriate school official would answer within 24 hours. As stated by P3, the parent portal was “probably our biggest communication channel in terms of getting people responses to their questions.” Furthermore, some participants (P3, P8) also described creating short videos which were shared via normal school communication methods, detailing upcoming changes or updates, specifically during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools through the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. However, no further discussion of the continuation of the short videos during the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year was shared during the interview sessions.

During the first interview completed for the study, the researcher immediately recognized the rise of “misinformation” generated from a small-vocal minority in the community, as stated by P2, and the difficulty such “misinformation” posed to the school’s communication of COVID-19 mitigation strategies. As a result of the emphasis placed on combating misinformation, which the researcher gathered from the first interview, the researcher included the following question to be answered by the

remaining eight participants in the study: “Did you find the national conversation around COVID-19, specifically from October through the election season and ending by late January, had any impact on your district specifically? If so, describe the election season and the election’s impact on your community and stakeholders.” In response to the questions, all participants in the study discussed the difficulty in reducing inaccurate information stakeholders discussed, especially information discussed via social media. As stated by P8, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially during the election season, “a lot of different pieces of information [were] out there, and no one could claim that well, you know, my science is tried and true, because it was all new.” The new set of experiences, caused by the novel coronavirus, as stated by P4, allowed “people to lose so much trust and confidence in some of our institutions,” such as school, government, and medical personnel. An experience by P3, highlighted the difficulty school officials when trying to correct statements from stakeholders, especially when considering the federal restriction from the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The federal restrictions, as discussed by P3, hampered the “messaging that you are allowed to communicate, and what you're not allowed to communicate.” At the time of the interviews, P2 acknowledged, “there’s still a lot of misinformation” in the community during the summer of 2021 which will pose problems for the 2021-2022 school year.

Relationships

All participants in this study described COVID-19’s impact on relationships with stakeholders, in both positive and negative terms. As detailed earlier, all school leaders had increased opportunities for relationship development through the collaborative

meetings with the local health department, regional school leaders, and local stakeholders. Some school leaders (P4, P7, P9) highlighted how the spring 2020 shutdown and eventually return of staff members to school for the 2020-2021 school year reinforced the relational nature of their job. One participant (P7) found the spring 2020 shutdown displayed how vital in person environments with others is for relationships, “that camaraderie between our teachers and spending time together,” including being part of school activities with students is much needed. As all school leaders discussed, and mentioned explicitly by P9, “we just want to be in-person” as each leader believed the ability to have face-to-face learning with most of their students provided both the school and staff members the opportunity to have a positive-daily impact on students. Additionally, the desire for face-to-face learning was also evident in each participant’s local reentry plans and from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) guidance released before the start of the 2020-2021 school year, which highlighted the importance of face-to-face learning while providing a safe and secure environment for stakeholders (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, (2020b).

While ample opportunities for increased relationships through collaboration were available, most school leaders detailed negative impacts on their relationships with local stakeholders. All participants discussed how each faced increasing tensions among portions of their stakeholders, and described the tensions as politically driven by both conservative and liberal constituents. Some individual stakeholders, as stated by P3, “were on the fringes, pretty extreme” with their accusations and “it show(ed) up on both [the] conservative and liberal side.” Specifically, school leaders requiring masks for

students and working in conservative districts of the Missouri Legislature per the 2020 election, described high levels of tensions from vocal dissenters toward the school district and the school leader personally. An example of such tension was given by P1 regarding how local stakeholders utilized social media and local county health meetings and called the school leader “everything from child abuser to murderer.” However, tensions with stakeholders throughout the COVID-19 phenomenon did not come from conservative districts in Missouri alone. Both P3 and P8, with liberal district members in the Missouri Legislature per the 2020 election, faced some vocal opposition to their face-to-face implementation plans from staff and community members as well. Many participants (P1, P3, P6, P7, P9) explicitly stated COVID-19 and the national political environment had a divisive effect on the community, both within individual and school relationships. Moreover, the divisive nature of the decisions within communities were supported by a local news report from RPDC 6.

Politicization of COVID-19 and masking, though the most talked about turbulence for school leaders and their relationships with stakeholders due to the divisive political environment, were not the only negative influence on relationships. Some school leaders (P2, P6) spent more time during the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year in the separate buildings within their school district, to avoid causing any large-scale quarantines if individuals personally tested positive with the COVID-19 virus. For example, P2 had been a school leader for only a few years, the shortest length among the participants in the study, and was still working on relationship development among staff members. The inability to spend time in classrooms with teachers, resulted in “relationships not built or sustained nearly as strong” and reduced the school leader’s

self-efficacy in developing a guiding coalition (Kotter, 2014). Furthermore, many school leaders (P1, P6, P7, P9) also described how personal attacks and critiques to their decisions and their 2020-2021 re-entry plans from staff members deteriorated relationships with staff members which had previously been friendly prior to COVID-19.

All participants in the study stated the spring 2020 shutdown reinforced the importance of face-to-face learning and relationships for students' social emotional health and not just the students' academic achievement. All participants indicated each had fear the spring 2020 shutdown and quarantines throughout the 2020-2021 school year would have long-term effects on students' ability to develop socialization skills. For example, P6 and P7 discussed "missing the camaraderie" which was lost during the spring 2020 shutdown was expressed by both students and staff. The same thought was echoed by P2, who acknowledged the loss of camaraderie during the spring 2020 shutdown and with the mitigation protocols throughout the fall of 2020, it was more difficult for students and staff to connect in traditional professional relationships. Yet, P7 stated once teachers and students were provided the opportunity to be face-to-face during the 2020-2021, along with the easing of mitigation protocols during the spring 2021 semester, as noted by the CDC guidance during the spring of 2021, camaraderie between students and staff began to develop once again (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b). All participants in this study praised the adaptability of their staff to meet and exceed challenges such as quarantines, with each acknowledging quarantines came at the detriment of all stakeholders' social emotional health.

Student Achievement

While COVID-19 impacted relationships at all levels within a school district, all school leaders in this study discussed a common goal of still providing the optimal learning environment for their students. The provision of optimal learning environments was mentioned in all participants' local reentry plan. With the shutdown of Missouri schools during the spring of 2020, school districts were faced with an unprecedented moment of learning and experimenting with emergency remote education. Experiences during the spring 2020 shutdown greatly affected most participants' definition and implementation of student achievement. All participants in the study mentioned they were unprepared with the initial shutdown to move immediately to a full-virtual learning mode due to several issues: lack of technology devices for both students and staff, insufficient internet access at home for students and staff, and lack of equitable home environments for students to learn. School leaders' decision-making process for the issues prevalent due to the immediate transition to virtual learning is addressed later in Chapter Four in the Ethic of Critique and Ethic of Care sections.

All participants provided students with both digital and paper-based learning experiences during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools. Additionally, all participants discussed the initiation of a "do no harm" grading method as stated by P6. A "do no harm" grading method, noted by P6, stipulated a student's grading method stipulates that student's grade percentages could only be increased which allowed students not to drop below their grade at the time of shutdown. Local news reports in RPDC's 2, 3, 6, and 7 described the use of the "do no harm" grading and the common use of such a method of grading throughout the state of Missouri. By providing this

allowance of a “do no harm” grading approach, along with the unprepared nature created from the immediate transition to virtual learning due to the shutdown of public schools, all school leaders acknowledged the problems the “do no harm” grading presented going into the new school year. The problems included: increased number of virtual students believing the workload would be easy like the previous spring, students choosing not to work during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools, and an overall opportunity for learning loss to occur. As discussed by P4, the initial high number of virtual students for the 2020-2021 school year was reduced each semester as “students failed miserably,” and were invited back to their face-to-face learning environment as a result.

The virtual experiences mentioned above became a driving force for all participants in this study as each created and implemented re-entry plans which provided the optimal learning environment for students, within the health guidance recommendations. All participants in this study included in each local reentry plan the reinforcement of utilizing the guidance of the local health department, along with CDC and DHSS, as necessary in making school decisions (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a; Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020d; Missouri Department of HSS, 2020). All school leaders reflected on the goal to provide a consistent face-to-face option for students, while providing virtual options for other students as well. All participants mentioned the spring 2020 shutdown had heightened their perception regarding face-to-face learning as the best for most students to achieve academic goals. Each participant echoed the statement made by P5 who stated, “the number of kids that can be successful on virtual is a very small percentage.” Additionally, P5 also described having two of their own kids participate in virtual

learning, with one who “loved it” and for the other “it was difficult.” The overall feedback each leader received from their own staff about their students returning from virtual learning throughout the 2020-2021 school year was that the majority of virtual students experienced learning loss. Subsequently, however, all participants in this study shared the learning loss from the spring 2020 shutdown was minimal for the students who had returned to face-to-face learning, based upon their local benchmark data.

A common trend mentioned by all participants included having the goal of being face-to-face, which actually helped each school leader develop the mitigation strategies in the re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year. All participants discussed their personal perception of the lackluster student learning from the emergency remote education, and this perception helped motivate each leader to develop strategies minimizing the mass quarantines due to school activities. As explicitly stated by P1 and P8, as well as discussed by all other participants, quarantines had the largest negative impact on students’ achievement in the face-to-face learning environment. Local news reports from RPDC’s 2 and 8 discussed the disruption school staff and students faced due to quarantines. Overall, the quality of the learning environment caused by quarantines, resulting in the sudden loss of students or staff in the classroom, created inconsistency for stakeholders throughout the learning process. While each of the participants acknowledged quarantines happened with students and staff, especially during the winter months of the 2020-2021 school year, all school leaders mentioned with excitement their district’s ability to avoid a district-wide shut down during the 2020-2021 school year, which allowed non-quarantined students stay in a face-to-face learning environment.

Power of Position

When considering the power of position, eight superintendents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9) and one assistant superintendent (P8) participated in this study. All nine participants described the pressure felt and the gravity of their decisions along with the fear of not making, as stated by P7, “the right decision.” While desiring “the right decision,” all participants acknowledged the constant changing guidance from the CDC, DESE, and local health departments, along with experiences during the summer, which forced the leaders to make plans in terms of months, as opposed to years, due to the inability to plan ahead in a post-COVID-19 world. The changes made by the CDC, DESE, and local health departments consisted regularly of minor tweaks, such as the implementation of masking to reduce the number of individuals forced to quarantine (MDHSS, 2020). However, such minor tweaks often caused friction for school leaders, as P5, who’s previous decisions of masking was required for only fifth through twelfth grade was expanded “after the quarantine guidance set change[d]... [where] you don’t have to quarantine kids” wearing masks, to include all grades through kindergarten, to be consistent with the updated guidance (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020b; Missouri Department of Human and Senior Services, 2020). The constant changing guidance led to short-term planning, as described by P1, which forced school leadership and school boards to only plan “about a month out” ahead, due to fear of unpredictable circumstances. The fear of unpredictable circumstances and planning too far ahead was described by P3 and resulted in the development of “scenario planning.” The type of planning encompassed by “scenario planning’ was the result of

high-levels of uncertainty, and forced P3 to project out to scenario one, scenario two, or scenario three for all the decisions made throughout the COVID-19 experience.

Most participants (P1, P2, P7, P6, P8, P9) described specific connections or personal experiences which helped shape both fears and decisiveness around COVID-19 and school mitigation strategies. As detailed by P6, a situation early in summer 2020 which resulted in a table of first grade students involved with a positive case of COVID-19, highlighted the participant's fear of how quickly COVID-19 could infect and affect students and the community. As stated by P6, the situation "brought home to me the weight of the responsibility of keeping our students safe." Additionally, P9 noted a close acquaintance currently working in a local hospital, described the negative effects COVID-19 was having on their patients, and reinforced the danger COVID-19 presented to stakeholders. Furthermore, P1 and P2 mentioned individuals close to them were personally infected with COVID-19 and faced either a near-death experience or died from COVID-19. Both P1 and P2 also described high-levels of discontent from a vocal-minority within their communities who viewed COVID-19 as a hoax and were against any, or in some cases all, mitigation strategies the school leader implemented, especially the implementation of wearing masks. The dichotomy, the school leader's own personal experiences of the effects COVID-19's on stakeholders, and stakeholders who viewed COVID-19 as a hoax, reinforced the necessity of having a clear vision and implementing the vision in the face of opposition. Moreover, all participants referenced having a clear vision/plan was actually beneficial for all stakeholders.

The battle with constant availability was also mentioned by all school leaders. Each participant indicated, as stated by P5, the constant "on call" duty which due to their

power of position, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), resulted in high-levels of stress and negative effect on their social emotional health. Overall, the constant unknowns caused by COVID-19 and the divisive nature of communities connected to the 2020 presidential election, as P6 discussed, created an emotionally draining experience. Specifically, P1 recalled the personal attacks the individual's family members faced, "my [child] got treated pretty bad at times because of decisions that I [school leader] had made" due to the COVID-19 mitigation protocols. Additionally, P1 acknowledged pressure on one's family is the most common burden in regard to one's power of position a leader must face. Specifically, P1 reflected on how the COVID-19 experience from the spring 2020 shutdown to the end of the 2020-2021 school year was the worst year in the individual's 25 plus years in education. The same sentiment was also echoed by P9, as the individual described the political strife which was faced from both conservative and liberal constituents in their community.

Research Question 2

The second overarching research question which was the basis for this study was: How did Missouri public school leaders' perception during the Turbulence (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extreme) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013), caused by the phenomena of COVID-19, shape the leader's ability to make decisions and respond to Contextual Forces (Cascading, Positionality, Stability) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

Table 7

Coding Terms of Themes for Research Question 2

Ethic of Justice	Ethic of Critique	Ethic of Care	Ethic of Profession
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• Mask• People• Guidance• County• Health Department• School Board• Guidance• Re-Entry• Decision (Decide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Community• Conversation (Talk)• Virtual• Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Learning (Educate, Teach)• Community• County• Health Department• Face-To-Face• Virtual• Meetings• Classroom• Quarantine• Blended• Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• Mask• Learning (Educate, Teach)• School Board• Virtual• Decision (Decide)• Classroom• Quarantine• Face-To-Face• Hybrid• Blended

Note: Coding terms from interview transcripts, as identified in Table 5, and separated into themes.

Ethic of Justice

All participants placed a high value on the Ethic of Justice when responding to the turbulence and decisions which were made as a result of the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools through the 2020-2021 school year. Each participant described the importance placed on receiving guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), local county (or counties) health department(s), and legal counsel from most district hired attorneys. Most participants (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9) mentioned the school board specifically determined the school district would follow local health department guidance. More specifically, P4 noted the individual’s school board policy required the school to follow local health

department guidance and stated schools were “taking a risk if you don’t follow the guidance of your local health department.” A similar thought process was supported by P3 as the individual mentioned specific concerns in regard to possible lawsuits should the school fail to follow guidance, thus the district sought to make the county health department guidance “the foundational policy piece.” Although various districts relied and acted on the guidance of the county health department, two of the school districts resided in two different counties and thus collaborated with two different health departments. The disadvantage of communicating with two different health departments, as mentioned by P3, was a challenge due to receiving contradictory guidance at times. Similarly, two participants, P9 and P7, also described facing issues when staff members or students lived in different counties outside the school district where challenges arose from the other counties enforcing quarantines differently. In each of the examples, however, the school leaders described following as stated by P3, “the most restrictive guidance” throughout the fall and early spring semesters of the 2020-2021 school year. Subsequently, a local news report from RPDC 3 provided an example of the a contradictory decision between counties by describing how P3’s school reentry plan was actually thwarted several days after the district’s release when the “most restrictive” county directly contradicted the district’s plan by declaring school would not start until a later date, after Labor Day.

When describing the initial discussion and development of the 2020-2021 school year, all participants mentioned involving the local county health director(s) in the process. All participants in their interviews and through their local reentry plans, indicated approval for the local re-entry plans had been granted from each local county

health department(s). Some school leaders (P2, P4, P7) shared their re-entry plans did not require wearing masks initially, nor ultimately throughout the entire 2020-2021 school year. Of the three participants, each of their local county health directors disagreed with the lack of masking of students in the re-entry plan. However, the same participants also stated county health directors still approved the re-entry plan due to the remaining mitigation strategies implemented and the hope the strategies would suffice in reducing positive COVID-19 cases in the school. Moreover, even when the CDC changed the guidance during the spring of 2021 (CDC Newsroom, 2020), which reduced quarantines if individuals were masked, school leaders did not change their own mask requirements to match the guidance. Furthermore, one outlier, P5 only required masks for upper elementary through high school at the start of the new school year, but “after the quarantine guidance changed... we went masks K-12” for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021a; Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, 2020).

Ethic of Critique

Overall, the Ethic of Critique had the lowest volume of discussion among the participants when compared to the other Ethics as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013). Most participants sought to identify two situations which needed to be addressed to provide an equitable solution: involvement of many stakeholders in the development of the re-entry plan and providing students with support for technological deficiencies. Most participants sought out multiple stakeholders via meetings of various quantities, so individuals developed a clearer understanding of the school re-entry plan and the plan’s impact on stakeholders. A few participants even provided surveys to capture

stakeholders' opinions on items such as wearing masks, face-to-face learning, and virtual education options which were included within the re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Most participants mentioned having face-to-face or video conference meetings with stakeholders such as staff, local healthcare leaders, local governmental leaders, and school board members to help establish the best school re-entry plan of action. One school leader, P8, mentioned the individual actually sought to include local business leaders in the development of the re-entry plan since the school's re-entry would have a direct impact on the workers of each business. As school re-entry plans were developed, to combat the technology deficiency of students, all participants in this study purchased hotspots and most used Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funds to purchase some devices for their students (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2020). A few did not begin the school year with one-to-one devices for every student, but most indicated the school district was able to procure enough devices to be classified as one-to-one with technology for students.

Throughout the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools, every school leader discussed the concern for adequate food opportunities for students and families. As P6 stated, "we worried about food from an equity standpoint." Therefore, all participants mentioned utilizing the federal change in food services to provide food to their community. Participant P8 highlighted, the individual's district "provided curbside food for every student" or through bus transportations (USDA FNS, 2020). Such community support was supported by P2, who stated "our first thing that we had to figure out... (was) providing meals for our families." Additionally, all participants in this study also highlighted the fears the leaders had for students staying "in a bad home," as stated by

P6, where “domestic abuse has increased” during the shutdown. One method to combat the fears regarding student health and safety, noted by P9, was the requirement for “teachers to make contact... with our families.” Subsequently, all participants required a type of teacher contact with families throughout the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools, due to the powerful impact the leaders perceived came from personal contact with individuals.

Ethic of Care

Among the Ethics identified by Shapiro and Gross (2013), Ethic of Care was a prominent piece for all participants as each leader articulated the biggest goal was ensuring the health of stakeholders, while providing their students with the optimal learning environment. During the spring 2020 shutdown, every participant discussed the usage of “do no harm” grading, as described by P3. Additionally, all stakeholders indicated staff members were paid throughout the shutdown, despite budget cuts at the end of the 2019-2020 and the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year (Huguelet, 2020). To accommodate individuals unable or unwilling to attend face-to-face learning opportunities for the 2020-2021 school year, all participants in this study provided students with the ability to sign-up for virtual education, either directly through the school or through a third-party virtual school. According to interviews and local reentry plans, most virtual education required a semester long commitment from students completing virtual education. However, as stated by P2 “we did not uphold our contract with them,” if students decided to return to face-to-face learning before completing their full semester requirement students were granted permission to do so. Overall the belief face-to-face learning was the best option for most students was shared by each

participant, and anyone student wanting to return back to face-to-face learning platform would be returning to the optimal learning experience for most students. As P7 stated “face-to-face learning is what is best for about 97% of our kids.” Furthermore, not only did all participants indicate face-to-face was the best learning platform for most students, each participant also discussed the importance face-to-face provided in regard to instruction and overall well-being of students. Face-to-face learning also provides a relational piece and support for students as well, as stated by P7 the students need to know staff “are loving on them and caring about them” for their social emotional health.

The policy and procedures developed by each of the school leaders for their staff members, provided the staff with the flexibility needed to carry out duties in the uncertainty of the COVID-19 experience. Two major opportunities most participants provided their staff and students included support for missing work and sick leave as well as providing food for stakeholders. All participants in this study used the provisions from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) which provided Care for two segments of their stakeholders: staff sick leave due to COVID-19 positivity or quarantines and providing students’ families with free food through the USDA National School Lunch Program (USDA FNS, 2020). The sick leave for staff due to COVID-19 positivity or quarantines was implemented through the Ethic of Justice. When the FFCRA was set to expire at the end of December 2020, P9 stated “our school board elected to go ahead and maintain that format for leave for the remainder of the school year,” thus, becoming part of the Ethic of Care for all staff. Additionally, all participants in this study sought and received approval from school boards to continue providing sick leave throughout the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, despite the expiration of

the FFCRA provision. In regard to the food program, from the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year, all participants in the study described the desire to use the USDA National School Lunch Program to ensure students' families health and welfare were cared for regardless of the financial status. Specifically, P5 applauded the school district's food service director, who "from day one" provided food to the community and students through the program. Local news reports in RPDC 3, 5, and 7 also discussed the changes in school lunch as lunches were provided to all students for free, regardless of socio-economic status.

Ethic of Profession

All participants of this study described their greatest stressors or organizational turbulence were derived from decision-making which conflicted with the Ethic of Profession, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013). Within the Ethic of Profession, the school leader's stressors or turbulence were centered on each community's own code of ethics and how the community's code of ethics was impacted by the school leader's own code of ethics. Most participants' organizations faced moderate to severe turbulence, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), stemmed from the implementation of masking requirements. A few participants (P2, P4, P7) did not require masks during the 2020-2021 school year, as noted in their local reentry plans, and each participant stated in the interview their local stakeholders demonstrated resistance to any masking requirements. Specifically, P2 and P7 received guidance from local healthcare employees, such as nurses or doctors, who discussed concerns over the logistical benefits of the requirement of students wearing masks. The benefits did not outweigh the logistics, as P7 described student's "tug and pull and the way they handle those masks... it will be a nightmare for

teachers to enforce that and teach at the same time.” Similarly, P4 did a survey with local stakeholders and discovered that “over 90% did not want to put face masks on kids.” Thus, the three participants (P2, P4, P7) did not require masks, and indicated the local county health department disagreed with the masking portion of the re-entry but approved the re-entry due to the additional mitigation strategies.

Most participants in this study (P1, P3, P5, P6, P8, P9) required masks for most students, based upon guidance from the CDC, MHDSS, and local health departments (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020b; Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, 2020). Additionally, some participants (P3, P5, P8) described encountering light turbulence throughout the 2020-2021 school year due to the masking requirement. Moreover, the three school leaders (P3, P5, P8) encountering light turbulence were classified as urban (P3) and suburban (P5, P8), were located in areas where masking was required by local non-educational entities as well, and were identified in local news reports RPDC 5 and 8. Additionally, some participants (P1, P6, P9) described the school as facing moderate to severe turbulence for requiring masks, with two participants (P6, P9) classified as rural and one (P1) as suburban. Each of the leaders (P1, P6, P9) indicated most students and community members as stated by P6, “never put a mask on and never had their kids put on a mask” outside of school. Each of the three participants who required masking in the school but were part of communities which did not have public support of masking mandates, however, detailed personal experiences which reinforced the necessity to require masks for students, despite lacking community support. When describing their own experience, P6 stated the decision to require wearing

a mask, “brought home to me the weight of keeping students safe.” As described in the Relationships section, all three participants (P1, P6, P9) continued to face turbulence as an organization due to the masking decision at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. Moreover, most participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9) requiring staff to wear masks also indicated they personally wore masks outside of school as a symbol due to the expectation for staff and students to wear masks on the school property. Some of the leaders who wore masks outside of school indicated their own personal code of ethics did not feel like it was necessary to wear a mask, but if the argument to wear a mask in school was for stakeholder’s health, then the belief needed to extend outside of the school building. As P7 stated “I, myself, was an anti-masker,” but stated “I did always mask” outside of school because the decision was “best for our students.”

Moreover, a few terms used infrequently between participants but still included were: hybrid learning, blended learning, social emotional health, building usage, and protests. The three terms hybrid learning, blended learning, and social emotional health was discussed minimally between the participants but is discussed more in multiple sections within Chapter Five. The other two terms the researcher found important to note included, building usage (P8) and protest (P7), discussed by two participants. The usage of buildings was discussed by P8 in reference to how the school leader anticipates the way in which COVID-19 will continue to impact how school buildings will be used in the future. Furthermore, with the term protest, the researcher anticipated more school leaders would have faced, or discussed facing, protests due to mitigation strategies. The only participant who discussed a protest was P7, but the reference was unrelated to COVID-19 and instead due to a social studies teacher who was filmed by a student and

put on social media for discussing the U.S. presidential election in a manner considered by some as an inappropriate indoctrination of children toward U.S. politics. Ultimately, P7 detailed the protest did not materialize and was ultimately a non-story.

Summary

Chapter Four provided data regarding the unique experiences and difficulties school leaders faced throughout the spring of 2020, to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year (Argyropoulou et al., 2021; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis et al., 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Shao & Hao, 2020; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). This research highlighted the factors at the local level which allowed several contextual forces to increase turbulence in school districts across Missouri (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Data analyzed from the research underscored the difficulties participants faced due to the COVID-19 phenomenon. Specifically, this study filled a gap in the current research regarding how school leaders in Missouri public schools perceived the ethical dilemmas presented by COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Four included a description of the data, as well as the data analysis and demographic information for each of the nine participants in this study. The chapter also included themes identified from triangulation of the following data sources: interviews, archival data (CDC, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS), Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), local news reports), and school's reentry plans. The themes were then evaluated within the framework developed by Shapiro and Gross (2013). Analysis of the data derived from the interview transcripts were organized around the two research questions of the study. When analyzing research question one, the themes discovered in the literature review fit

naturally with the data presented through this study and included the following themes: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) relationships, (d) student achievement, and (e) power of position. The second research question revealed all four Ethics of the Multiple Ethical Paradigm from Shapiro and Gross (2013) played an instrumental role in the decision-making of each participant. The Ethic of Justice was vital for school leaders as leaders sought to avoid unnecessary litigation. However, the Ethic of Critique was the least emphasized paradigm by the school leaders of the four and was primarily used to consider inequitable situations for stakeholders. Subsequently, the Ethic of Care was the primary paradigm through which all other ethical decisions were based upon, as the main concern for each of the participant's was the health of their stakeholders. Furthermore, the Ethic of Profession proved to be the paradigm through which most turbulence was applied to each school district, as the paradigm sought to balance the community code of ethics with professional and personal code of ethics held by each participant.

Chapter Five considers the data uncovered through the interview transcripts, archival data, and reentry plans, along with application to the study's two research questions. Additionally, Chapter Five includes the researcher's professional conclusions and recommendations based upon the combination of what was found from the review of literature and the findings from the data analysis. Furthermore, Chapter Five also includes a discussion on the findings and the application of Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Change Theory on the future of public education in Missouri, based upon the experiences of each participant during the COVID-19 phenomenon from the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools through the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. Finally, Chapter

Five concludes with suggestions for future studies to understand the phenomenon and impact of COVID-19 on public education.

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCTION

School buildings across the U.S. were closed during the spring 2020 shutdown, with school personnel having little time to prepare for what appeared as an indefinite shutdown (Decker, Peele, & Riser-Kositsky, 2020). School leaders faced an unimaginable environment from spring 2020 through the 2020-2021 school year, as leaders navigated legal, medical, and political factors, all while trying to provide an optimal learning environment for students (Borup et al., 2020; Chennamsetti, 2020; Ellis, Steadman, & Mao, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Kavrayıcı, & Kesim, 2021; Morgan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Zhao, Zhou et al. 2020). At the conclusion of this study, during the summer of 2021, school leaders again faced ethical dilemmas as preparations for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year were being made. While COVID-19 numbers steadily declined from March to the beginning of June 2021 in the U.S., the Delta COVID variant began increasing during the end of June in Missouri and other U.S. states, and resulted in elevated numbers of positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations (Keller, 2021). As school leaders again faced rising COVID-19 numbers at the conclusion of this study, possible quarantines, requests for virtual learning, and overall concern for the health of all stakeholders will most likely be ongoing in the weeks and months to come. However, this study's timeliness provided school leaders research as the leaders considered plans for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond, through reflection on each school leader's perceptions when presented with ethical considerations while responding to the COVID-19 phenomenon during the spring 2020 shutdown and 2020-2021 school year.

The dual purpose of this study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020, COVID-19 school shut down and how the experience shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation, and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year. The second purpose of the study was to discover how school leaders' perceptions amidst the Turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape the leader's ability to make ethical decisions and respond to Contextual Forces as school re-entry plans were created and implemented during the 2020-2021 school year (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Participants in the study were public school leaders from the nine Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC's) throughout the state of Missouri (Figure 1), and the leaders represented one urban school, three suburban schools, and five rural schools, as referenced in Table 2 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020c; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The central research questions which guided the study included:

1. How did Missouri public school leaders' perceptions during the phenomena of COVID-19 inform the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
2. How did Missouri public school leaders' perception during the Turbulence (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extreme) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) caused by the phenomena of COVID-19, shape the leader's ability to make decisions and respond to Contextual Forces (Cascading, Positionality, Stability) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

- a. How did the Ethic of Justice (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
- b. How did the Ethic of Critique (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
- c. How did the Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?
- d. How did the Ethic of Profession (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) contribute to school leaders' decision-making during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

The framework used for this qualitative narrative phenomenological study was based on Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change and Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. Lewin's (1947) theory provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic upended traditional learning environments in schools from a holistic perspective. Additionally, Shapiro and Gross' (2013) theory provided a framework for interpreting school leaders' perceptions and influences as the leaders developed and implemented school re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year.

Moreover, Chapter Five includes conclusions of the study, recommendations moving forward, and addresses the overall significance of the study.

Summary of Findings

The researcher selected a qualitative narrative phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of school leaders during the COVID-19 phenomenon and the effect on school district's planning for the 2020-2021 school year (Creswell, 2007; Peoples, 2021). Qualitative studies seek to create an understanding of the perception of the research participants through the identification of meaning through "person-to-person interactions" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 14). While the phenomenon in the current study was experienced by school districts all across the state of Missouri, the lived experiences of each participant varied a great deal due to several local and national factors. This qualitative narrative phenomenological study allowed the researcher to answer the question "what is it like to experience a certain phenomenon?" (Peoples, 2021, p. 3). The depth of the COVID-19 experience by school leaders required a broader investigation and analysis, which a qualitative narrative phenomenological study offers (Peoples, 2021). The lived experiences were captured through interviews which used an interview protocol (See Appendix A) developed by the researcher, and was based upon the literature review completed for this study.

Each interview transcript was individually coded with general themes electronically and the transcript shared with each specific interviewee to view for clarifications. Through the reading of the interview transcripts, coding was used to develop themes which were expressed and were evident through the participants' interviews. Next, the researcher collected and reviewed the following documents:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services guidance, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance, each school's re-entry plan, and local news reports on newsworthy decisions. Any discrepancies between the interview transcript and triangulation methods were noted in the individual post-interview correspondence which allowed the interviewee to provide additional clarification if needed.

Themes were developed based upon the findings of the research for both central research questions. For research question one, the themes identified by the researcher were collaboration, communication, relationships, student achievement, and power of position. Each of the themes matched naturally with the literature review, with the only exception being the removal of social emotional health by the researcher for this current study. While social emotional health was discussed by each of the participants it was only mentioned in relation to the other themes including communication, relationships, and power of position, as opposed to a stand-alone theme. For research question two, the Multiple Ethical Paradigm by Shapiro & Gross (2013) provided the researcher a framework to help understand the ethical decisions made by school leaders during the COVID-19 phenomenon during the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools through the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year.

The researcher found themes which provided perspectives on the research questions, based on the analysis of data from interviews, archival data, local news reports, and reentry plans of school leaders who participated in this study. Analysis of data discussed in Chapter Four (Table 5) identified the following terms were the most commonly referenced in the interviews: school, students (kids), teachers (staff), and

people. The usage of each of the terms referenced by participants naturally formed the themes for both research question one and research question two, as displayed by Table 6 and Table 7. The lone exception was the removal of the term ‘people’ from the theme of ‘student achievement’ from research question one, since the people most effected by the achievement of students (kids) and teachers (staff), were already included in the theme. Subsequently, little surprise was felt towards the four terms frequently used in the interviews, as P8 stated schools are a “human business” and the influence can be felt on all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and people in the community.

Discussion

This research was guided by two research questions which focused on the initial impact of the COVID-19 phenomenon on school leaders’ decisions during the spring 2020 shutdown through the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. The first research question was examined through Lewin’s (1947) 3-Step Change Model discussing the educational processes forced into the Unfreeze Step during the spring 2020 shutdown. Subsequently, following the Unfreeze Step, the Change Step, as defined by Lewin (1947), was discussed by participants as each described the new processes and procedures used during the 2020-2021 school year due to the Unfreezing Step which occurred during the spring 2020 shutdown. The second research question was then examined through Shapiro and Gross’ (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. The second question observed school leader’s decision-making throughout the Unfreezing and Change Steps, as defined by Lewin (1947), and captured the ethical paradigms used by school leaders to better understand why the ethical paradigm was emphasized. Thus, the Discussion section focused on demonstrating Lewin’s 3-Step Change Model within the

context of COVID under the sub-section Change Due To COVID. In the Ethical Decision-Making sub-section, Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm were used to indicate the ethical paradigms implemented by school leaders and a discussion on their significance.

Limitations of the study included the selection process of the participants and the number of school districts eligible to participate based on preset delimitations. Using the current study's delimitations, rural schools and suburban schools within all nine Regional Professional Development Centers (RPCD's) were attainable. However, one specific limitation was the small quantity of urban school districts which were eligible to participate in the study. Due to the selection of requiring a minimum of students meeting face-to-face for two days in person for the 2020-2021 school year, only five eligible participants, three in RPDC #3, one in RPDC #8, and one in RPDC #7 met the criteria. Participants in RPDC #7 and #8 did not choose to participate in the study, thereby only RPDC #3 could provide an urban participant's perspective. If the study were expanded to all public schools, regardless of learning environment, more urban school districts would have been eligible to participate. Furthermore, an additional limitation included the focus of the interviews at the district-level of the COVID-19 phenomenon, thus the failure to provide the positionality impact others experienced outside the central office of school districts and decisions' impact on their experience was absent.

Change Due to COVID

One of the goals of capturing school leaders' lived experiences through this qualitative narrative phenomenological study was to identify possible long-term effects of the COVID-19 phenomenon through the Lewin (1947) 3-Step Model of Change. The 3-

Step Model of Change included the following three steps: Unfreeze, Change, and Refreeze (Burnes, 2007). The Unfreezing Step occurs when an organization must become “unlearned” (Burnes, 2004, p. 985) from previous actions and thought processes. The next step occurs when the organization then transitions to using the momentum of the Unfreezing Step and considers new ideas and applies the new ideas through action research methods with the purpose to develop new procedures and/or processes. Finally, once new methods have been vetted and implemented, an organization must seek to Refreeze the new ideas within the culture of the organization (Schein, 1996). The three steps identified by Lewin (1947) originally were used as a proactive step-by-step process for leaders to implement new change within their school district. Subsequently, in line with Lewin’s (1947) work, for application within this research, the researcher looked at how Lewin’s 3-Step Model of Change Theory applied to situations school district’s faced with the COVID-19 phenomenon and aligned the situation to the Unfreezing, Change, and Refreezing Steps forced upon schools by the global pandemic (Schein, 1996).

Within this study, characteristics of schools prior to COVID-19 were discussed in the review of literature which described many public schools around the world, with an emphasis on schools in the U.S., prior to January 2020. As COVID began spreading throughout the world, and specifically in the U.S. by February 2020, the Unfreezing Step of public education was just beginning, per Lewin’s (1947) 3-Step Change Theory (Kantis et al., 2021; Winthrop, 2020). Moreover, with the official announcement given by Missouri Governor Mike Parsons at the end of March 2020, all public schools in Missouri were officially closed for an unspecified timeline (Moxley & Delaney, 2020; Office of Governor Michael L. Parson, 2020a). Eventually this closure resulted in the

school year ending in an emergency remote learning environment, for which schools had not adequately been prepared (Riley, 2020). The closure of school buildings throughout Missouri during the spring 2020 shutdown led to the Change Step, which is the second step of Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Change Theory. Schools and school leaders navigated the Change Step, while forced to make decisions regarding concepts such as virtual learning, COVID mitigation protocols for face-to-face learning, all during changing guidance (Harris, 2020; Haverback, 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Ichsan et al., 2020; Moxley & Delaney, 2020; Office of Governor Michael L. Parson, 2020a, 2020c; Riley, 2020). Each of the circumstances, when combined with the themes discussed in Chapter Four, placed school leaders within a unique role in a world of increasing uncertainty throughout the Change Step as leaders sought to still provide high-learning opportunities for students.

Every participant of this study discussed the COVID-19 phenomenon during the individual interviews, which were completed from May 2020 to early June 2020 when COVID rates had declined consistently, as if the rates were on the verge of Lewin's (1947) Refreeze Step for public education (Nirappil, 2021). Consequently, however, during the completion of the data analysis of this study throughout the summer of 2021, COVID-19 positivity and hospitalization rates continued to rise rapidly throughout Missouri (West & Ansari, 2021; Yong, 2021). Due to the continuation of the COVID-19 phenomenon and the impact on communities, school leaders would have to once again navigate difficult ethical dilemmas and decisions posed as preparation for the 2021-2022 school year were made. Therefore, Lewin's (1947) Refreeze Step seemed like a future event, yet to come as the researcher concluded this study. Despite the continuation of the

Change Step, every participant of this study discussed some common ideas as projected Refreeze policies or procedures for Missouri public schools future implementation.

Ethical Decision-Making

Throughout Lewin's (1947) Change Step, identified by the researcher as the time period from the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools through the summer of 2021, school leaders described varying levels of Turbulence, as defined by Shapiro & Gross (2013). According to Shapiro & Gross (2013), there are four levels of Turbulence or instability present within educational organizations when such organizations are faced with innovation or change. Each Turbulence level has a different extent to which the educational organization can be affected, based upon the severity. The four levels associated with the Turbulence Theory include: Light, Moderate, Severe, and Extreme (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). According to Shapiro and Gross (2013), three questions should be considered when evaluating the context of the Turbulence faced by an organization and include:

- “What does this particular organization’s history tell us about the potential for cascading to have a serious impact on Turbulence?” (p. 50)
- “What past history exists, both constructive and combative, between these individuals that bears on this situation?” (p. 50)
- “Is the current Turbulence an exception or part of a larger pattern of disruption?” (p. 50)

When considering the questions for this study, though each question can apply, the last question’s emphasis on whether the Turbulence was “an exception or part of a larger

pattern of disruption,” has provided a focal lens through which to view the Turbulence faced by school leaders during the COVID-19 phenomenon.

Research explored during the review of literature highlighted leaders with a high level of self-efficacy and believe the organization is capable of withstanding turbulent circumstances, may help build Psychological Capital (Hesbol, 2019; Ira & Bulut, 2018; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Based upon the responses from all the participants, each had enough Psychological Capital, as termed by Ira and Bulut (2018), to start the school year in regard to the implementation of the COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Psychological Capital has an impact on the Stability, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013), and an organization’s Stability can directly affect the Cascading of Turbulence the organization encounters (Ira & Bulut, 2018). During the interview sessions, zero participants described circumstances or issues with stakeholders occurring prior to the COVID-19 phenomenon which would be classified as Moderate or Severe Turbulence (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Instead, as P6 described, COVID-19 “amplified” the weight of school leaders’ decision-making, which in turn also amplified the consequences of decisions due to the heightened politically-divisive environment during the 2020-2021 school year (Ellis et al., 2020; Goldhaber et al., 2021; Hesbol, 2019; Ira & Bulut, 2018; Nasreen, 2019; Nazaryan, 2020; Tran, Hardie, & Cunningham, 2020).

On the contrary, however the school leaders (P1, P6, P9) who implemented mitigation strategies not supported by vocal stakeholders in their community, each described an increase in turbulence for the school district and their own positionality as its leader was the consequence (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Based on the responses of the participants, the number one indicator of Moderate Turbulence, with the potential for

Severe Turbulence in the 2021-2022 school year, was the requirement of masking for students in schools. Of the twenty-one terms identified during interviews, the term mask was the fifth highest term referenced throughout all of the interviews. Overall, the politicization of masks was classified as divisive by all of the leaders except P2, P4, and P7 who's district did not require students to wear masks. Most participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9) of the study acknowledged they no longer had the Psychological Capital to require masks, thus, the district's level of Stability could potentially result in Cascading into higher levels of Turbulence (Ira & Bulut, 2018; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

By late July 2021, guidance released by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended face-to-face learning for the 2021-2022 school year with face masks worn by all students two years and older (Korioth, 2021). The guidance made by the AAP has the potential to Cascade Turbulence for school districts should local health departments use the AAP guidance and mandate masks for public schools within their county. Subsequently, as described in Chapter Four, most schools do have a school board policy stating the school will follow local health department guidance during a pandemic. Thus, the current predicament for school leaders, as well as possible future issues, will force leaders to decide whether the Ethic of Justice, following laws or policy, or Ethic of Profession, meeting community codes or ethos, is the appropriate ethical decision which should be made for the upcoming school year (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Moreover, based upon the interviews with each participant, the researcher believes most public school leaders in Missouri will choose the Ethic of Profession, and will follow community codes or ethos. While the Ethic of Justice initially carried the greatest weight during the spring 2020 shutdown all the way through the development of the reentry plan, by the end of the

2020-2021 school year, the Ethic of Profession had a profound effect on school leaders' decision-making as each leader considered the community ethos and codes (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

During each interview, every participant referenced how relationships with stakeholders were strained throughout the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year, primarily due to circumstances which were the result of the COVID-19 phenomenon at both the local and national levels. Viewed from the Power of Position perspective, school leaders experienced stress and emotional struggles, due to constantly being “on call” (P1) and providing, as stated by researcher Harris (2020) “messy, trial-and-error, butterflies-in-the-stomach leadership” (p. 324). School leaders referenced the difficulty experienced to please stakeholders, but, as described by P8 and alluded to by all participants, school leaders during the COVID-19 phenomenon believed “you can't make everybody happy, but you can somehow make everybody unhappy.” The ability to “make everyone unhappy” highlighted the Positionality of school leaders during the Turbulence which was caused as a result of the leader's Power of Position and decision-making (Ellis et al., 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020; Harris, 2020; Tran, Hardie, & Cunningham, 2020). The Turbulence was also felt through the constant use of communication between the participants and stakeholders. As leaders were forced to navigate many new and uncertain situations, communication was a constant necessity as all participants referenced the need to increase communication with stakeholders from the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year. However, leaders reflected on how communication often proved difficult as the individuals balanced the Ethic of Profession by trying to provide consistency and transparency while still protecting the

privacy laws of stakeholders as part of the Ethic of Justice (Hauseman, Darazsi, & Kent, 2020; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). As discussed by P5 and P9, the unwillingness of some vocal dissenters to meet with the school leader reduced the leaders' ability to provide clarification for any misunderstandings the dissenters may have expressed.

As the researcher interviewed each participant, it was evident not all was negative for participants throughout the COVID-19 phenomenon when considering collaboration. One of the biggest positive experiences discussed by school leaders was the actual increase in collaboration between other school leaders from the spring 2020 shutdown to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. Haverback (2020) identified the impact of collaboration among educational leaders, teachers, and school leaders, and how collaboration increased through the shutdown. The responses from each of the participants support the idea of increased collaborations as each indicated collaborated and communicating with local school leaders throughout the COVID-19 phenomenon. The participants collectively mentioned the collaborative meetings provided an opportunity to problem solve unique experiences posed by the pandemic, while seeking and developing plans to provide the optimal learning environment for students. The researcher found when completing the review of literature, Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) served as a major source of collaboration prior to the spring 2020 shutdown, but the participants of this study did not mention PLC's during the COVID-19 phenomenon.

The researcher also noted the most common Ethical Paradigm discussed by participants was the Ethic of Care, which was often mentioned by participants in regard to their concern for the safety and well-being of their stakeholders (Shapiro & Gross,

2013). As each participant mentioned the overall concern for faculty, staff, and students was the primary issue as stated by P4 “my number one concern was the health of our people.” Additionally, every participant discussed the school’s significance in people’s lives and how the decisions within the school could have a lasting impact on people’s well-being. Subsequently, the researcher found no surprise when three of the top four terms used in the interviews included students (kids), teachers (staff), and people. Furthermore, each participant also discussed their perception regarding the increased value face-to-face learning provided to all stakeholders, thus, such discussion supported prior research detailing the overall effectiveness of face-to-face learning environments (Baber, 2020; Christensen & Alexander, 2020; Dridi et al., 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Paker & Balci, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Moreover, as noted by P7, face-to-face learning environments were also important for staff members to develop “camaraderie” with each other and with their students.

According to each of the participants, not only did camaraderie provide, as defined by Collier et al. (2019) “support-oriented approaches to school safety” (p. 708), camaraderie also increased student achievement (Quinn et al., 2021; Park & Shea, 2020). While every participant did acknowledge a small percentage of students were successful within a virtual environment, every participant did mention a level of disconnect between the perception of the emergency remote learning during the spring of 2020 versus the remote learning provided during the 2020-2021 school year which was reinforced by prior COVID-19 research (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Tabatadze & Chachkhiani, 2021). Some (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7) participants reflected on how the students who elected to participate in virtual learning, as detailed by P2, increased “learning loss” within a solely

online environment because face-to-face “[student] engagement is very hard” to emulate online. Virtual learning environments were shared as a major concern by all participants thus, future research is necessary to determine the long-term impact of virtual learning on student learning during the COVID-19 phenomenon.

As each participant reflected on the topic of student achievement, it was evident the perception of student achievement varied among schools. Every participant stated the COVID-19 phenomenon provided an opportunity to accelerate change initiatives, including: 1:1 technology and innovative pedagogy, focus on student growth and mastery, and increased rigor. Participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P9) discussed 1:1 technology was a byproduct of the COVID-19 experience. Of the participants who reflected on 1:1 technology, P2, P4 and P6 were not 1:1 with technology prior to COVID-19, and highlighted the financial investments which were received as part of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funds to purchase devices for students (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2020). As participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P9) all reflected on 1:1 technology, each participant also discussed the necessity of preparing students for a technology-rich world post-graduation. Additionally, P3, P5, and P8 also mentioned how the COVID-19 experience highlighted the importance of individualized and differentiated education for all students to best prepare and support them. Furthermore, three schools reflected on how COVID-19 had impacted previous mind sets regarding statewide assessments, as P8 shared...pre-COVID-19 “we were really good at no child left behind.” However, the COVID-19 experience reminded leaders’ schools serve a greater role than test scores. Finally, in regard to best preparing and supporting students, P7 was the only participant who directly reflected on the

importance of increasing the rigor for students. To best prepare students, P7 shared, “we need to make sure we're requiring enough rigor” to preserve the long-term viability of schools.

Transferability of the study showed the power the community ethos and codes have on the school leaders' decision-making, especially when leaders are faced with ethical dilemmas (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Unless the school leader has a strong guiding coalition, Psychological Capital, or Stability within the organization, a decision to go against the community ethos or codes can lead to high levels of Turbulence throughout the organization, and cause the school leader to experience negativity due to their Positionality (Ira & Bulut, 2018; Kotter, 2014; Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Overall, the study highlighted the delicate balance school leaders faced due to decisions, both in and out of their own locus of control, after the spring 2020 shutdown and the subsequent 2020-2021 school year.

Professional Implications

Each year school leaders encounter challenges in preparation for a new school year, and participants in this study had hoped the pressures during the summer of 2020 would be an extreme exception. Yet, as school leaders prepared for the 2021-2022 school year, the political and health environment during the summer of 2021 brought the same level of uncertainty which was faced the prior year. As mentioned by P6, decisions were “amplified,” as the 2020-2021 school year gave the leaders a glimpse of how stakeholders would potentially respond to any semblance of the mitigation strategies used during the 2020-2021 school year for the 2021-2022 school year as well. As the summer months of 2021 dwindled toward the new 2021-2022 school year, Ethical Decision-

Making by school leaders was not a completely new experience. The implications for school leaders include the ability to perceive potential Cascading or Stability issues which could escalate Turbulence, much as they experience in the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year. As discussed by P3, the leader's district practiced multiple possible scenarios during the 2020-2021 school year, to best prepare for every decision "in the event that something changes" and "constantly found ourselves" working through changes, due to the novelty of the COVID-19 experience. The difference for school leaders moving forward into the future is the novelty of a pandemic is no longer present and many of the potential landmines for leaders with their "amplified" (P6) decisions will potentially remain the same.

Inequity as found in early COVID-19 educational research, was also highlighted in this study. Common inequities lacking sufficient emphasis in educational entities prior to COVID-19 included: devices, internet access, food insecurity, and learning loss. Every participant mentioned how the spring 2020 shutdown of public schools highlighted specific inequities and helped the leaders quantify the existence of such inequities through the feedback generated from community surveys. Each participant in this study also discussed the lack of devices and quality internet at home for students. Every participant in the study discussed district's inability to transition to a fully virtual learning environment with students due to the digital inequities present within the school district. Moreover, even suburban and urban districts, which often have access to a higher percentage of infrastructure, described having roughly 10% (P3) of students without quality internet at home, while rural areas had as high as 50% (P7) without access to internet at home. As mentioned earlier, many participants in the study were not 1:1 with

technology to students prior to COVID-19, and only now have that capacity.

Subsequently while devices are less likely a source of the digital inequity, home internet access will continue to be a delineating factor for both rural and suburban/urban schools in Missouri.

Another common point of discussion among participants included the provision of food for students as stated by P6, “we worried about food from an equity stand point.” However, changes in federal regulation, Ethic of Justice, provided an opportunity for districts to provide food to students and members of the community, Ethic of Care (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). During the spring 2020 shutdown, each participant indicated and P8 noted, “we provided curbside food for every student” and used regular bus routes as P9 explained, “five days a week to provide food, regardless of families’ financial status.” In addition, each participant also discussed the fear of learning loss during the spring 2020 shutdown due to a student’s home environment. The fear for the home environment students had to endure was echoed by P2, “I worry about the kids that stayed in a bad home... what type of domestic abuse has increased.” Furthermore, while considered by school leaders prior to COVID-19, inequity gaps were discovered to have a much broader relationship in regard to student learning. While federal and state regulations have placed an emphasis on state assessment scores, the COVID-19 phenomenon expanded pedagogies out of necessity, but has also emphasized how schools need to consider the academic needs as well as basic needs of students.

Another insight gleaned from the study was the importance and power community ethics or expectations have on a school leader’s decision-making (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). Three participants (P2, P4, P7) of the study did not require masks for students and

an additional three participants (P1, P6, P9) described facing high levels of Turbulence as a district by requiring masks in a community which disagreed with a masking requirement. Two of the three participants (P1 & P9) described how the Turbulence within their own Positionality as a school leader prompted their desire to retire, despite the goal of continuing to work before COVID-19. Additionally, six participants (P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P9) each articulated their concern to require masking for students, even if required by county guidance. Even the three participants (P3, P5, P8) who had experienced minimal resistance to requiring students to mask described a fear for requiring masks again in the future. Subsequently, when considering future experiences for school leaders, other issues or topics will potentially have the political weight akin to students masking. However, the questions for school leaders to consider, based upon this study, include whether or not leaders have the Positionality, or Stability, as an organization to implement a policy an individual believes is necessary even when the community may disagree. If the leader does not have the Positionality or organizational Stability to follow-through on their beliefs, then the leader may find themselves in difficult circumstances which could greatly affect their social emotional health and/or job status (Ira & Bulut, 2018; Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

Overall, each participant in the study described the COVID-19 phenomenon, from the spring 2020 shutdown to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, as an emotionally draining experience which exasperated the staff shortage already faced by schools. While discussing the COVID-19 experience, P6 stated the constant barrage of unknowns eventually “mentally wears you out” (P6). Such draining experiences, as indicated by P3, reinforced the importance of “leaning on each other to support one

another” to carry on through the difficulties. Additionally, each participant reflected on the importance of “providing space” (P9) for staff and administrators, as “our staff is exhausted” (P7) and “administrators are tired or worn out” (P9). Overall, each participant hoped, as described by P7, to have a new appreciation for “some time to step away” from the responsibilities and weight educators carried for students, staff, and community members for many weeks and months. In the end, P1 detailed the importance of happiness for success for all people and emphasized “mental health plays a big role in your happiness.” Therefore, leaders have a moral imperative to provide both students and staff with opportunities and resources to implement self-care to overcome traumatic experiences as a result of COVID-19 (Crosby et al., 2020; Hlemke, 2020).

Furthermore, new research conducted by Turner (2021), associate professor of the College of Education at Missouri State University, reinforced the social emotional toll the spring 2020 shutdown and the 2020-2021 school year had on educators in Missouri. When asked “Which of the following have you experienced or are currently experiencing this school year due to the pandemic?” (p. 19), the top two responses were “added stress” at 18%, and “drained of physical and emotional energy” (p. 19) at 17%. When asked how the spring 2021 school year compared to prior years, 79% felt more stressed during the spring 2021 than in other years. Additionally, 83% stated COVID-19-related factors negatively impacted the ability to do their job. According to the survey, 25% of participants eligible to retire indicated they would retire at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year and of the nearly 10% of educators who planned to leave the educational profession following the 2020-2021 school year, 58% indicated the departure was a COVID-19 related reason (Turner, 2021). Furthermore, this study, along with

research by Turner (2021), unveiled the mental health of staff and students may have been provided insufficient resources or consideration with the pressure and expectations at the federal, state, and local level prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The shortage of educators is not a new problem, but one which will likely continue based upon the COVID-19 phenomenon and additional pressures on educators. For example, participants in this study, such as P4, stated, “[I] remember when we would have 50 or 60 applications for a for an elementary position... now we might get half a dozen... specialty positions, like biology, or chemistry, or math... might only have one or two” applicants. The shortage of applicants mentioned by P4 was supported by the Educator Vacancy Report released on June 2021 by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE, 2021d) which indicated 5% of teaching positions were left vacant due to the lack of certified applicants. The teacher shortage problem is projected to continue based upon the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Missouri Public Schools, released by DESE to the Missouri Legislature in December of 2020 (DESE, 2021e). Moreover, enrollment of college students in educational programs has dropped from 14,139 students in 2010-2011 to only 8,214 students during the 2017-2018 school year. Additionally, during the same years, the number of students completing educational programs dropped from 4,795 students in 2010-2011 to 3,386 students in 2017-2018 (DESE, 2021e).

The last question all participants of this study answered, as part of the interview protocol (See Appendix A), asked participants to reflect on the future of public education and the impact of the COVID-19 phenomenon. The most common reflection made by all participants, as a possible Refreezing Step by Lewin (1947), was the momentum gained

by school choice and voucher advocates. The influential power of school choice and voucher legislation was highlighted by the Missouri Senate bill SB55, sponsored by Cindy O’Laughlin, the chairperson for the Missouri Senate Education Committee (Kerrigan, 2021). The Senate bill was opposed by many Missouri public educational advocacy groups, such as Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA), Missouri School Board Association (MSBA), Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP), and Network for Public Education Action, who claimed the bill would siphon finances from public schools, to private or charter schools (Haughey, 2021). By the end of May 2021, the specific Senate bill failed to garner enough votes to officially pass the Senate. Yet, the bill’s unprecedented support by the Missouri legislature cast a fear among public school advocates indicating this was but a small battle in what will become a larger war.

Despite the failure to pass SB55, one portion of the bill was approved and signed by Governor Mike Parsons (Balletine, 2021). The standalone bill created a voucher program for individuals living in cities of at least 30,000 people to be used at a private or charter school of choice. As stated by P4, “people have lost so much trust and confidence in some of our institutions” and such loss of trust extends into our public schools. Trust and confidence have been reduced by a few factors such as: forced shutdown of schools in spring 2020, forced virtual education on families in parts of the state, and forced hybrid learning environments two days a week (Balletine, 2021). Furthermore, the actions taken during the division politicization of the COVID-19 phenomenon, rather than during the traditional school operation pre-COVID or actions taken by rural areas of the state such as described in this study, have “given them all the ammunition that they

need to push through things that I never dreamed would get pushed through” (P4). In sum, each participant expressed fear the future of Missouri public education, as has been known historically, will be changed dramatically as public education competes with school choice advocates.

Recommendations for Future Research

Overall, the study provided insights on the perspective and Positionality, as defined by Shapiro and Gross (2013) of school leaders from the spring 2020 shutdown through the 2020-2021 school year. While findings were anecdotally discussed by participants of this study, the perspectives of other individuals should be further researched to gather additional positionality within the COVID-19 phenomenon and include: students, teachers, school board members, building level administrators, and families. The inclusion of other stakeholders was exemplified by P1 when the participant commented on the community pressures school board members faced by agreeing to COVID-19 mitigation strategies, specifically masking. As stated by P1, “they've [school board members] grown up with all those people. And those people [community] are hammering them as hard as they're hammering me.” Similarly, other participants described their hope for staff (teachers, non-certified staff, and administrators) to support the decisions made throughout the COVID-19 phenomenon.

Furthermore, additional research could also be completed to identify the differences in how learning in virtual, hybrid, and blended classrooms compared or differed during the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, by focusing on teachers and students, future researchers could potentially identify the various pedagogies implemented daily and the results of such strategies within the framework of student

achievement. Also, a delimitation of this study was to exclude schools who remained virtual in the state of Missouri for the majority of the school year, specifically in urban centers of Missouri. The researcher chose this delimitation due to the expected outliers from including a full virtual school as opposed to a face-to-face or hybrid learning model. As a result, future research could be completed to include schools which were completely virtual beginning the 2020-2021 school year, when the school district chose to return to some variation of in-school learning, and what drove the decision. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be completed regarding how the decisions by schools regarding face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual learning environments effect student learning and social emotional health overtime and into a student's future careers. Similarly, researchers could also investigate the strategies used for Special Education (SPED) students from the spring 2020 shutdown through the stabilization of the COVID-19 phenomenon and potentially identify the effect school shutdowns, quarantines, or adjusted educational minutes had on reaching SPED goals.

Finally, an additional opportunity for researchers for future examination could be to identify how planning for future school years, such as the 2021-2022 school year, differed when compared to the prior year 2020-2021 school year. Specifically examining how school leaders perceive the 2021-2022 school year with the rise of the Delta COVID variant during the summer of 2021 when compared to the 2020-2021 school year. Subsequently, a future study could also replicate this specific study at the conclusion of the 2021-2022 school year to identify any changes in themes, perceptions, or Ethical Paradigm shifts school leaders indicate in subsequent years further removed from the original spring 2020 shutdown of public schools.

Conclusions

This qualitative narrative phenomenological study was based on Lewin's (1947) 3-Step Model of Change Theory and Shapiro and Gross' (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigm and Turbulence Theory. Lewin's (1947) theory provided a framework for how the COVID-19 pandemic upended traditional learning environments in schools from a holistic perspective. Shapiro and Gross' (2013) theory provided a framework for interpreting school leaders' perception and influence as the leaders developed and implemented school re-entry plans for the 2020-2021 school year. In Missouri, school leaders were provided local control over how best to provide learning opportunities for students (Keller, 2020b). Due to local autonomy, school districts' responses varied greatly based on various geographical, ethical, and logistical factors which challenged each school district. Such factors posed incredibly difficult ethical dilemmas for schools as educational leaders considered the impact the factors had on the present and future educational opportunities for students and staff.

Experiences learned by school leaders during or throughout the spring 2020 state-wide shutdown of public schools, along with the ever-changing guidance from governmental entities, such as Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and local county health departments, alone could have provided an unprecedented challenge for the implementation of a new school year (Keller, 2020b). Yet the politically charged environment school leaders faced due to the governmental and societal pressures at the national and local level, created an untenable background for the development of the 2020-2021 school re-entry plan (Nazaryan, 2020). This qualitative narrative phenomenological study allowed the researcher to answer the question "What is

it like to experience a certain phenomenon?” (Peoples, 2021, p. 3) as the depth of the COVID-19 experience by school leaders required a broader investigation and analysis, which a qualitative narrative phenomenological study offers (Peoples, 2021). The experiences of each participant was captured through interviews and used an interview protocol (See Appendix A) developed by the researcher, based upon the literature review in this study. The following overarching research question was the basis for this study: How did Missouri public school leaders’ perceptions during the phenomena of COVID-19 inform the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year? The second overarching research question which was also the basis for this study was: How did Missouri public school leaders’ perceptions during the Turbulence (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extreme) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) caused by the phenomena of COVID-19, shape the leader’s ability to make decisions and respond to Contextual Forces (Cascading, Positionality, Stability) (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) during the creation, implementation, and on-going adjustments of the school re-entry plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

When analyzing research question one, the themes discovered in the review of literature fit within the data presented through this study and included: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) relationships, (d) student achievement, and (e) power of position. The second research question revealed all four Ethics of the Multiple Ethical Paradigm from Shapiro and Gross (2013) played an instrumental role in each participant’s decision-making. Additionally, when considering Lewin’s (1947) 3-Step Change Model, this study demonstrated schools are still within the Change Step, the 2nd step, but some possibilities in the Refreeze Step appear likely in the near future and include the growing

legislative power of school choice advocates and the decreasing number of educators available to fill vacancies throughout Missouri. Overall, the two concepts, while present prior to the spring 2020 shutdown, have been amplified by the experiences and decisions made during the COVID-19 phenomenon. Furthermore, research demonstrated the significance of the Ethic of Profession and the impact of community codes, as defined by Shapiro & Gross (2013) as each have a powerful impact on the perception and power of school decisions. The powerful impact was especially evident with politicized issues, such as masks in the COVID-19 phenomenon of the 2020-2021 school year, which forced school leaders to make decisions as part of the Ethics of Justice, and included policy, laws, or guidance, but were not supported by the community (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). As future school years are approached, whether in tumultuous times as the 2020-2021 school year or in peaceful moments, it is vital for school leaders to understand community codes while making ethical decisions to improve collaboration, communication, relationships, and student achievement through the power of their position.

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Tables

Table 1

Number of Local Education Agency's (LEA's) and K-12 Students in Patterns of Instruction

Patterns of Instruction	Number of LEA's	Number of 2020-21 K-12 students in LEA's
Onsite	178	92,519
Onsite with distanced option	259	323,587
	58	236,392
Blended onsite/distanced	62	226,129
Distanced	0	0
Closed		

Note. Numbers provided by Missouri DESE for schools as of September 14, 2020.

Table 2*Demographic Information of Study Participants*

Participant Data	Experience as School Leader	Experience at Current School	Gender	Ethnicity	School District Classification
Participant 1	19	6	Male	White	Suburban
Participant 2	2	24	Female	White	Rural
Participant 3	13	7	Male	White	Urban
Participant 4	13	5	Male	White	Rural
Participant 5	13	4	Male	White	Suburban
Participant 6	3	3	Female	White	Rural
Participant 7	4	15	Female	White	Rural
Participant 8	9	17	Male	White	Suburban
Participant 9	8	28	Male	White	Rural

Table 3*Demographic Information of Study Participants*

Participant Data	Experience as School Leader	Experience at Current School	Gender	School District Classification
Participant 1 (P1)	19	6	Male	Suburban
Participant 2 (P2)	2	24	Female	Rural
Participant 3 (P3)	13	7	Male	Urban
Participant 4 (P4)	13	5	Male	Rural
Participant 5 (P5)	13	4	Male	Suburban
Participant 6 (P6)	3	3	Female	Rural
Participant 7 (P7)	4	15	Female	Rural
Participant 8 (P8)	9	17	Male	Suburban
Participant 9 (P9)	8	28	Male	Rural

Table 4*Code terms usage per participant in interview transcript*

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
<u>Code Terms</u>									
Mask	23	9	12	16	29	47	29	15	32
Local Health Department	4	13	26	10	8	13	29	15	25
Face to Face (In Person, Seated, In School)	7	3	16	4	16	4	11	8	9
Re-Entry	3	10	8	5	6	7	22	7	6
Conversation (Talk, Communicate)	26	4	29	14	28	28	33	25	17
Teachers (Staff)	29	26	22	37	34	28	56	17	46
Students (Kids)	60	53	28	71	111	62	47	55	62
Quarantine	10	17	3	17	20	17	5	9	13
Community	8	12	20	19	12	5	25	10	13
Guidance	0	7	21	13	8	8	2	2	4
Classroom	2	42	10	8	34	5	1	9	3
Virtual	19	16	17	7	13	12	9	10	20
Blended	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Hybrid	0	0	3	0	2	17	0	3	2
People	26	10	35	31	12	22	44	51	18
School Board	20	23	42	8	21	10	14	14	23
Decision (Decide)	11	19	16	20	15	12	2	13	13
Learning (Educate, Teach)	25	16	42	15	31	16	20	12	18

Meetings	5	6	5	7	13	7	24	13	12
School	65	61	54	66	60	101	79	64	83
County	6	14	14	19	17	7	22	35	32

Table 5

Code terms average usage in interview transcript, including high and low number of usage.

	Average	P2	P3
<u>Code Terms</u>			
School	70.3	101	54
Students (Kids)	61.0	111	28
Teachers (Staff)	32.8	56	17
People	27.7	51	10
Mask	23.6	47	9
Conversation (Talk)	22.7	33	4
Learning (Education, Teach)	21.7	42	12
School Board	19.4	42	8
County	18.4	35	6
Health Department	15.9	29	4
Community	13.8	25	5
Virtual	13.7	20	7
Decision (Decide)	13.4	20	2
Classroom	12.7	42	1
Quarantine	12.3	20	3
Meetings	10.2	24	5
Face To Face (In Person, Seat, In School)	8.7	16	3
Re-Entry	8.2	22	3
Guidance	7.2	21	0

Hybrid	3.0	17	0
Blended	0.3	3	0

Table 6

Coding Terms by Theme

Collaboration	Communication	Relationships	Student Achievement	Power of Position
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Conversation (Talk)• County• Health Department• Guidance• Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• County• Health Department• Community• Conversation (Talk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Community• Health Department• Face-To-Face	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• Learning (Educate, Teach)• School Board• Virtual• Classroom• Quarantine• Face-To-Face• Hybrid• Blended	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Mask• Community• Health Department• Conversation (Talk)• Decision (Decide)• Re-Entry• Guidance

Note: Coding terms from interview transcripts, as identified in Table 5, and separated into themes.

Table 7

Coding Terms of Themes for Research Question 2

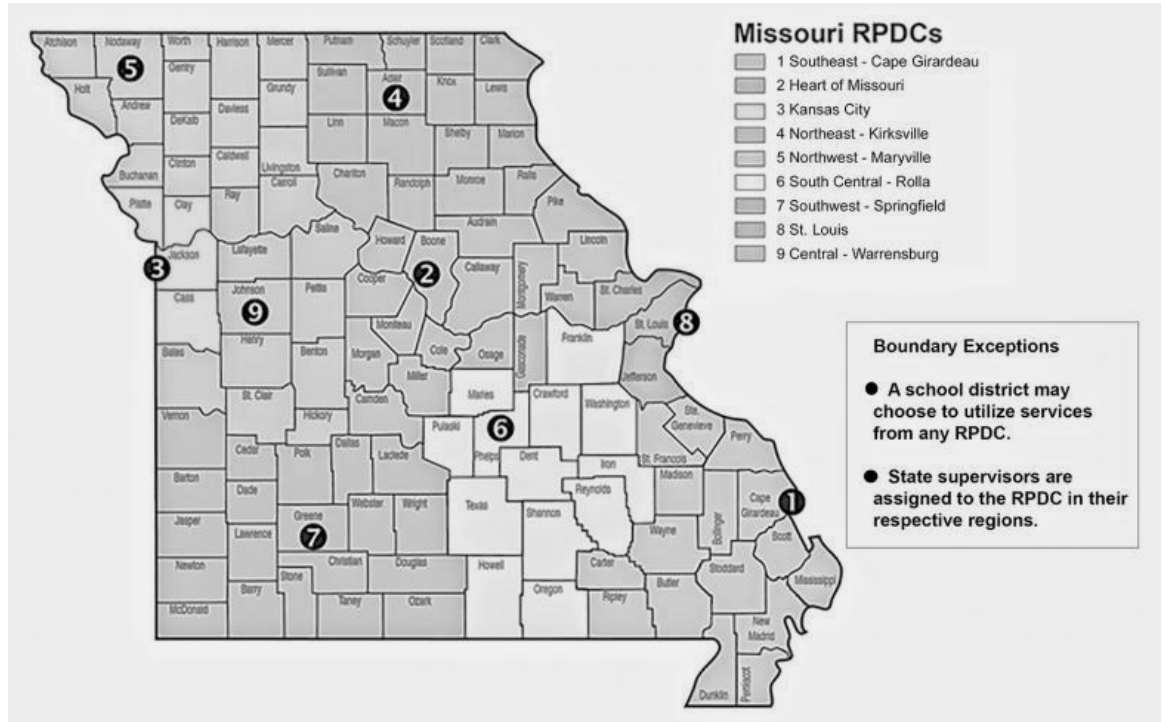
Ethic of Justice	Ethic of Critique	Ethic of Care	Ethic of Profession
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• Mask• People• Guidance• County• Health Department• School Board• Guidance• Re-Entry• Decision (Decide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Community• Conversation (Talk)• Virtual• Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• People• Learning (Educate, Teach)• Community• County• Health Department• Face-To-Face• Virtual• Meetings• Classroom• Quarantine• Blended• Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School• Students (Kids)• Teachers (Staff)• Mask• Learning (Educate, Teach)• School Board• Virtual• Decision (Decide)• Classroom• Quarantine• Face-To-Face• Hybrid• Blended

Note: Coding terms from interview transcripts, as identified in Table 5, and separated into themes.

Figures

Figure 1

Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDC)



Note: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Missouri RPDCs. Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/educator-development/regional-professional-development-centers>

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introductory

I'd like to thank you for being willing to participate in the interview process on your experiences as a school leader during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our interview today will last approximately 45 minutes during which we will be asking you a variety of questions in hopes to gain additional insight.

The dual purpose of this study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020 COVID-19 school shut down and how that shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation, and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year; and second, to discover how their perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape their ability to make ethical decisions and respond to these forces as they created and implemented their school re-entry plans during the 2020-2021 school year.

I would like your permission to record this interview. Please note, no names or titles will be used in our report and all individuals will be referred to as participants. Do we have your permission to record this interview. ___ Yes ___ No

If yes: *Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.*

If no: *Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.*

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this interview, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

Interview Questions

(RQ=Research Question)

Demographic Question: What is your position in your school district?

1. What legal considerations, such as federal/state/local regulations, school board policy, etc., played a role in your re-entry plan? (RQ2a)
 - a. As the school year progressed, did any changes occur in the legal considerations used to adjust your COVID procedures, if so what and how?

2. Describe the process you used to identify those who faced inequitable situations.
(RQ2b)
 - a. Who were they? How did the school seek to provide them an equitable solution?
3. While developing and implementing the school's re-entry plan, what were the long-term concerns you faced with the decisions that had to be made? (RQ1)
4. Describe how you involved stakeholders in the re-entry plan. (RQ1)
 - a. Who were they? Why were they selected to participate?
 - b. What, if any, issues were caused by their participation (or others not being involved in the decision-making)?
5. What ethical dilemmas did your school face during the spring 2020 shutdown?
(RQ2)
 - a. The development of the re-entry plan?
 - b. Adjustments of the re-entry plan throughout the 2020-2021 school year?
6. Describe how COVID has changed the following: (RQ2d)
 - a. Your position as a school leader.
 - i. Your relationship with stakeholders such as teachers, community, school board, etc.
 - b. Your definition of student achievement.
 - c. The practical use of instructional-pedagogy strategies and assessments of students.

7. How has the social-emotional health changed for your administrative team, staff, and students throughout the spring shutdown to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year? (RQ2c)
8. Describe the turbulence or barriers you faced, both as a school leader and as a district, from the spring 2020 shutdown to the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. (RQ2)
 - a. What factors, events, or stakeholders contributed to the turbulence?
 - b. How did you seek to resolve the turbulence?
9. From your perspective, what are the long-term effects that public schools will face due to the COVID-19 educational learning experience? (RQ2c)

Appendix B

RRB Approval

031 Houp
Ethical Considerations of School Leaders Responding to COVID-19

THIS FORM IS FOR RRB USE ONLY

RRB RESEARCH REVIEW DETERMINATION

- Exempt from Review (Chair RRB)
- Expedited Review (RRB Subcommittee)
Chair, please list names of the subcommittee:
- Full RRB Review (Full RRB Committee)

RRB RESEARCH APPROVAL DETERMINATION

- Disapproval Date: _____
 - Conditional Approval* (circle A or B) Date: _____
 - A. Approval, subject to minor change
 - B. Approval in general but requiring major alterations, clarifications or assurances
- (* Data collection cannot begin until Full Approval is given by the RRB Chair)

Full Approval Date: 5/5/21

COMMENTS:

Angie Mowbray DNP, RN, CNE Date 5/5/2021
Chair, Research Review Board



May 5, 2021

Re: Ethical Considerations of School Leaders Responding to COVID-19

Dear Mr. Houp,

On May 5th, 2021 a review of your application and supporting documents for the above named research proposal was completed. The Research Review Board (RRB) for Southwest Baptist University has determined that the proposed research project meets the criteria for Exempt status as per policy 1.15.3 in the faculty guidelines. As per the above policy "If the project is certified exempt, the principle investigator need not resubmit the project for continuing RRB review as long as there are no modifications in the exempted procedures". The study has now been approved, therefore, work on the project may begin.

If any modifications to the exempted procedures are made, the RRB will need to complete a new review of the changes to determine if the project remains Exempt or if further review is necessary.

Congratulations on the approval of your project, we wish you well during its completion. If you have any questions regarding the RRB's decision, please contact me at sxmorrow@sbuniv.edu.

Sincerely,

Suzie Morrow

Suzie Morrow, DNP, RN, CNE
Southwest Baptist University
Research Review Board, Chair
Sxmorrow@sbuniv.edu
(417) 893-7138

Appendix C

Consent Form

Will be in a Google Form that will be linked to the email.

The advisor for this dissertation project is Dr. Tammy Condren, Professor of Education and Ed.D. Director at Southwest Baptist University. My study has been approved by the Research Review Board of Southwest Baptist University.

The dual purpose of this study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020 COVID-19 school shut down and how that shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year; and second, to discover how their perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape their ability to make ethical decisions and respond to these forces as they created and implemented their school re-entry plans during the 2020-2021 school year.

Potential Benefits and Foreseeable Risks: Findings of this project will be integrated into reports, presentations and publications that can advance the professional learning for leaders in order to foster high levels of collective teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. Findings may also be used in articles, presentations and other publications to inform a national and international audience. Potential risks associated with participation in the study are loss of privacy should confidentiality of responses be compromised. The researcher has taken steps listed below to protect participants' identities in order to protect individuals from embarrassment that may be associated with the identities of respondents with their Responses.

Confidentiality: All information associated with project participants will be kept in a locked office accessible only to the researcher. In accordance with the federal regulations, the research materials will be kept for a period of seven years after the completion of the research project. No comments will be attributed to you by name in any reports or publications related to this study. You may be identified by category (e.g., school leader), but a pseudonym will be used in place of your name in all reports. Neither the school nor the school district will be identified in any reports or publications related to this study.

Participation is Voluntary: Your voluntary participation in the interview is appreciated, and your responses will be kept anonymous. You may decline to answer any questions or discontinue participation in the study at any time without any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the project, all interview data pertaining to you will be destroyed. Refusal to participate or discontinue participation at any time will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Interview Method: To provide flexibility and honor your time, the interview will be completed via a video call system, such as Google Meets or Zoom. If you do not have a preference for a specific product, the interview will be completed by a Google Meet that

will be scheduled with you.

Request for the interview to be recorded will take place on the day of the meeting, which can help the researcher provide accurate transcripts of the participant's answers. You have the right to request the interview not be recorded, and the recording and/or interview be stopped at any time. Recordings and transcripts will be destroyed seven years following the completion of this study.

Informed Consent and Choice of Interview Method: Your input is very valuable, and your participation will be greatly appreciated. Please indicate your willingness and consent to participate in the survey by digitally submitting approval at the bottom of this Informed Consent form. By providing your digital signature, you are consenting to allow use of your interview responses in this study. You will also share your initial consent for the interview to be recorded for the researcher's accurate transcription process.

Questions: If you have any questions regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research advisor. I can be reached at auhoup@agpirates.com or (417) 522-6515. Dr. Tammy Condren can be reached at tcondren@sbuniv.edu or (417) 328-1737. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board.

Sincerely,

Austin Houp
Ed.D. Student, Southwest Baptist University

Appendix D

Email Communication

Good Evening, _____ (participant),

I am a doctoral student completing my final requirements for the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at Southwest Baptist University. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled “Ethical Considerations of School Leaders Responding to COVID-19.” The dual purpose of this study was, first, to understand the lived experiences of school leader's decision-making during the spring 2020 COVID-19 school shut down and how that shaped the re-entry plan creation, implementation and adjustment during the 2020-2021 school year; and second, to discover how their perceptions amidst the turbulence and Contextual Forces helped shape their ability to make ethical decisions and respond to these forces as they created and implemented their school re-entry plans during the 2020-2021 school year.

At this time, my research proposal is complete, and I have received RRB approval from Southwest Baptist. I have been an educator for fifteen years and have taken precautions to avoid any potential biases. I am seeking to interview you for approximately 45 minutes about your experiences from the spring shutdown of 2020 through the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year. Your interview will be used, along with eight other school leaders from Missouri public schools' individual interviews, to determine the ethical considerations you faced as school leaders in Missouri during the COVID-19 experience. The nine school leaders that will participate will represent the nine DESE RPDC's, to represent all regions of Missouri.

If you are willing to be part of this study, will you please fill out the following [Informed Consent Link](#) and confirm with a return email.

Attached to this email are the interview questions that will seek to help you shared your lived experience.

If you have any questions or concerns and would like to further discuss this study, I would be happy to do so. Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Austin Houpp
Ed.D. Student, Southwest Baptist University
Cell Phone: (417) 522-6515
Email: auhoup@agpirates.com

Reminder Email

This email script will be sent to interview participants who chose the interview method of digital call two days before the scheduled interview.

Greetings! I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to remind you about our scheduled interview we have scheduled for _____ (date) at _____ (time). Your responses to the interview questions will be used as data to support my doctoral research study regarding school leaders' perceptions of the COVID-19 phenomenon during the 2020-2021 school year. The questions we will discuss are:

[insert questions from Appendix A]

Please let me know if you have any questions that I can answer before we meet.

Please use [this link](#) [link provided] to access our meeting at the designated time.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Austin Houp
Ed. D. Student, Southwest Baptist University