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How Do Exemplary Public School Superintendent Lead During Turbulent Times by Relying on Their Moral Purpose, Concern for the Collective Interest, Personal Temperament, and Resilience

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How Do Exemplary Public School Superintendent Lead During Turbulent Times by
Relying on Their Moral Purpose, Concern for the Collective Interest, Personal
Temperament, and Resilience

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

April 2021

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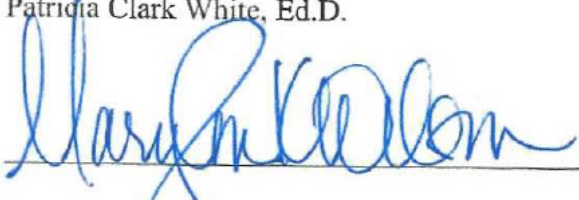
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Temperament, and Resilience

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ABSTRACT

How Do Exemplary Public School Superintendent Lead During Turbulent Times by Relying on Their Moral Purpose, Concern for the Collective Interest, Personal Temperament, and Resilience

by Jason A. Lea

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to the describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience.

Methodology: This phenomenological study examined 12 exemplary superintendents in California who have led districts with a student population with at least 1,500 students, who have been in the position for a minimum of 2 years in the same district during a crisis period that occurred within the past 5 years, led their districts during turbulent times. Participants were interviewed on an online platform. There were observations and the examination of artifacts included.

Findings: Examination of the phenomenological data collected from 12 exemplary California superintendents found to lead their districts during turbulent times relied on the leadership behaviors of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience.

Conclusions: The study supported that exemplary superintendents must build effective communications systems creating regular 2-way communication flow within the community; actively build relationships, which in turn develops trust; are collaborative, which includes listening to and valuing the opinions of others; engage in continual

reflection on their own practice to continually improve; develop their own resilience, and share their “why” or moral purpose with their community to successfully lead during turbulent times.

Recommendations: Further research is recommended to benefit active superintendents, training programs, and school boards. How superintendents lead during turbulent times using their personal temperament, on specific 2-way communication systems superintendents used during the pandemic to effectively manage the continually changing status produced by county health departments; how superintendents rebuilt trust after an extended labor strike; how superintendents of large districts work to be present and accessible to their community, lead past mistakes made by their leadership team or the board would be beneficial to support school leaders; and lastly, research on effective support systems to help superintendents lead beyond crisis would also support the important work of superintendents.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Leaders throughout history have faced turbulence, which has tested them during their tenure. In the 21st century, the world has become more complex. Organizations at every level are operating in a world that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA; Bywater & Lewis, 2019). The term VUCA originated at Army War College and describes the international landscape in the post-911 world (Barber, 1992). Though VUCA originated in a military context, it is applicable to all organizations (Bywater & Lewis, 2019). Leaders in public and private organizations are needing to lead their organization during turbulence magnified by the VUCA state of the world. The VUCA world that is facing leaders can be external or internal factors that are driving change. External factors can be political, environmental, or social events impacting the leader and the organization. Internal factors deal with the personal, behavioral, or mindset aspects of an organization. Leaders can struggle when they do not recognize and/or attend to these change factors (D. Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

The events that leaders are facing are no longer limited to personal or financial crises that have cyclically tested leadership skills. Natural disasters, active shooters, and global issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have now been added to the plates of those leading people (L. Anderson, 2018). Leadership training traditionally has not kept up with complex issues facing organizations. Leaders have learned through tragic events how to respond during crisis, but what is learned often only relates to process and response. These events are disruptions to complex systems that, in and of themselves, are testing leadership skills (Björk, Browne-Ferrigno, & Kowalski, 2018). Beyond the skills

themselves, the style or theory of leadership one subscribes to can also impact leaders facing turbulent situations.

Turbulent times within an organization can have a direct impact on the leaders themselves. The development of leadership within the context of a strong leadership theory focused on leaders and their interaction with the organization can help leaders on a personal level (Millar, Groth, & Mahon, 2018). Effective leadership is built on a foundational level of knowledge of basic leadership theory to provide options for practical application (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). Also, different leadership theories can impact the course taken by a leader during turbulent times.

Traditionally safe places, public schools now require leaders who can lead through turbulence. Only when school superintendents are prepared to lead during good times and adversity can they provide a quality educational environment (Gainey, 2009). To be successful, superintendents are expected to be creators, implementers, facilitators, and motivators for change, all in the hopes of achieving the primary goal of increasing student learning (Przybylski, Chen, & Hu, 2018). Beyond these job requirements, the issues facing public school superintendents are no longer limited to the traditional financial issues, labor and management conflict, or social unrest (Gainey, 2009). Natural disaster can strike at a moment's notice as witnessed with Hurricane Katrina and the California wildfires of 2017 (L. Anderson, 2018). Meeting these events head-on may require more than a foundation in leadership theory and training connected to traditional superintendent pathways.

There are other qualities that have allowed leaders to overcome a crisis impacting their organization and lead through the turbulence. Superintendents are considered to be

CEOs who need to be scholarly, political, social, and communicative leaders (Björk et al., 2018). Moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience have allowed leaders at the national level to lead through some of the hardest times in this nation's history (Goodwin, 2018). Can these individual characteristics, demonstrated by U.S. presidents in turbulent times, give rise to practices that promote superintendents' success in leading their districts through turbulent times in today's world?

Background

In the 21st century, there are many elements that contribute to the uncertainty within organizations. The Information Age and technology have accelerated the impact of events. Vulnerability, uncertainty, chaos, and ambiguity (Bywater & Lewis, 2019) have become a part of the equation for organizations. The term has its origins in the military but certainly applies to organizations within both the public and private sectors. Dealing with the VUCA world has become a constant for organizations of all kinds (Millar et al., 2018). The human element and the type of leader leading during these times can determine how the organization responds and whether it survives the turbulent times. Leaders face both external and internal turbulence that can lead to the failure of the organization. Those external or internal factors can be regarded as change drivers for the leaders to bring their organization successfully through turbulent times (D. Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Embracing the turbulence can actually help leaders to make the changes necessary to lead their organization through it.

Factors of Turbulence

Leaders face both external and internal factors that can change the course of their organizations. Increasingly, organizations face external factors that not only challenge organizations but also challenge their leaders to lead them through it. Natural disasters have long tested leaders to guide their organizations or communities through the turbulence that accompanies such events. With the environmental changes, the frequency of disasters has increased, which contributes to the VUCA world. Most recently, communities have been hit with wildfires that have impacted many parts of California, Washington, and Arizona (Krilich & Currie, 2018). Most recently, external factors impacting organizations and communities include mass shootings. Since the Columbine tragedy in 1999, mass shootings in public and private industry have challenged leaders to make changes that meet their new realities and bring their communities together (L. Anderson, 2018). In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic pushed leaders to their limit. Superintendents are facing a situation, unlike fires, floods, or school shootings, that is neither localized nor a one-time event. This is a situation that continually changes day by day (Starr, 2020). These external factors have tested leaders and added to the complexity of their roles in addition to the internal factors leaders face.

Internal factors are those related to the people within the organization. Examples of internal factors of turbulence can be factual misrepresentation of facts, such as Volkswagen and diesel emissions or leaders accused of maleficence or sexual harassment (Jelassi & Avagyan, 2017). People also add an element of uncertainty to the path of an organization. Individuals create issues during turbulent times for leaders by their individual reactions, and these responses need to be managed (Eliadis, 2019). When

there is a tragic human event within an organization, it is the role of the leaders to respond and bring their organizations through the event. As previously mentioned, shootings in companies, schools, and universities and their impact on the organization are a source of turbulence leaders face. The death of a member of the community or the organization can also challenge the stability of an organization and a leader's skills (McGee, 2016). Issues of racism or discrimination are internal factors causing turbulence that a leader can face (Eliadis, 2019). External or internal factors can create turbulence for organizations and challenge the leaders' ability to lead their organization and either create problems or opportunities for change. The leadership theory that leaders ascribe to can impact their success in handling these turbulent situations.

Leadership Theory

Transactional theory. In the face of turbulence within an organization, leaders rely on their philosophy connected to leadership theory to guide their decisions. Transactional leadership involves the exchange of incentives and punishment between the leaders and those they lead (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). The transactional approach also undervalues the relationship between the leader and the employee. Research also shows that transactional leadership negatively impacts employee mood and morale (Zhang, Hu, & Wang, 2020). Though effective in certain situations, transactional leadership theory could erode the leaders' ability to take their organization through turbulent times. During turbulent times, the transactional exchange of incentives or punishment may not be an effective approach. Leaders relying on transactional leadership may have personal traits that would allow them to lead during turbulence.

Trait theory. Trait leadership theory is considered one of the first modern leadership theories. It is based on the idea that leaders are born with traits that make them better suited to lead (Barker 2001; Wyatt & Sylvester 2018). Some leaders possess traits that better suit them for dealing with turbulence or crisis, such as being decisive, having the ability to make tough decisions, or being compassionate (Vaid, 2015). The evaluation of traits as precursors for successful leadership can be difficult. When looking at perceived personality traits with elected political elites, Wyatt and Sylvester (2018) discussed the idea that voter perception of personality traits do not always equate to success. The leaders' view of themselves in their leadership role can also lead to the ability to handle turbulence.

Servant theory. The term servant can carry negative connotations. A servant was someone who played a subservient role in the social hierarchy (i.e., a house servant). *Merriam-Webster* defined servant as “one that performs duties about the person or home of a master or personal employer” (“Servant,” n.d., p. 1). It can also be connected to service, the idea of serving others for a higher purpose. The concept of servant leadership comes from one's desire to have an impact on others within the organization, and the expression of that desire then inspires others (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Research has discussed the components of servant leadership that focus on concern for others, the greatest good for the organization, and belief in people (Parris & Peachey, 2013). These attributes can serve leaders as they work with their organizations to survive turbulence. Servant leadership can also serve to build relationships leaders can use to transform their organization. Servant leaders focus on the current situations then use their relationships with their followers to help them get

through turbulent times by focusing on the future vision of the organization (Heyler & Martin, 2018).

Transformational theory. Transformational leadership focuses on the relationship built between leaders and followers. These connections can result in increased morale and motivation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Transformational leaders set aside their own interests and model this behavior for their followers. Followers then recognize this behavior and become willing to identify the shared interest or vision articulated by the leader (Faupel & Süß, 2019). Berkovich (2016) discussed the idea that transformational leadership alone may not be enough for leaders facing turbulence within their organization. Transformational leadership theory should be connected with other leadership theories to fit the context of the organization (Berkovich, 2016). Leadership theory connects to the individual leaders and how they approach leadership during turbulent times.

Theoretical Framework

Goodwin (2018) presented four leadership behaviors in her book, Leadership During Turbulent Times (personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and a moral purpose) and applied those to leading during turbulent times. Goodwin presented those leadership behaviors in her case study of four presidents: Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson. Her examination of the four leadership behaviors provided an understanding of each in the context of each president. Goodwin detailed how the leadership behaviors helped each president successfully lead the nation during turbulent times. The

connection between the leadership behaviors Goodwin developed in her 2018 book was the foundation for this research study.

Moral purpose. Legitimate and credible role models who practice what they preach and make principled and fair choices that can be observed and emulated by others while using frequent, two-way communication to define ethics and create moral codes for the organization and infuse the organization with principles that will guide the actions of all employees are aspects of leading by a moral purpose (M. E. Brown & Treviño, 2006; M. E. Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Kaptein, 2019; Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000). Keeping sight on one's moral purpose is an important part of leading during turbulence. Goodwin's (2018) examination of Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, FDR, and Lyndon Johnson provided evidence of the importance of their moral purpose as they faced historical decisions during their presidencies. The moral purpose of leaders can be the driving force for their vision of their organization and the adversity they face (Marques, 2017). Leadership itself and promoting a vision for a better organization can be seen as a moral duty (Ndalamba, Caldwell, & Anderson, 2018). When operating during turbulent times, effective leaders keep sight of their moral purpose as they lead both private and public organizations.

Collective interest. The concern for the collective interest is putting the interests of the whole before one's self-interest (Goodwin, 2018). The collective interest comes from the idea of civic leadership, working within a community for the purpose of promoting the common good (Chrislip & O'Malley, 2013). The concept has deep roots in the philosophy of being virtuous and living a virtuous life. When leaders and their organizations understand how the focus on the common good promotes their own

success, the organization and those within experience success (Arjoon, Turriago-Hoyos, & Thoene, 2018). During turbulent times, leaders can be tested and how they hold up to the pressure can determine success or failure.

Personal temperament. The prevailing mood pattern or characteristic level of emotional excitability or intensity of individuals is their personal temperament (Goldsmith et al., 1987; Keirsey & Bates, 1984; Rothbart, Ellis, Rueda, & Posner, 2003). Personal temperament can impact a leader's response to crisis. Being self-aware and understanding their own personal temperament impacts how leaders are viewed by their followers (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2005). When leaders can recognize their own personality traits, they can begin to adjust and respond to their professional context (Freeman, 2009). Leaders need to be decisive and make decisions under pressure (Vaid, 2015). Having the personal temperament to function during turbulent times allows a leader to focus on the organization.

Resilience. Individual resilience during a crisis can make or break a leader. In Goodwin's (2018) book, the pressures of the presidency during the most crucial moments in the nation's history tested individual resilience. Resilience is made up of both mindset and behaviors (Kim, Hanna, & Dotres, 2019). In the context of an organization experiencing turbulence, it requires psychological safety, a maintained learning organization, and individual discipline. Resilience is an individual's ability to maintain control and move forward during adversity in a positive manner (Cline, 2015). Resilience is also an important personal resource that allows one to cope with adversity (Bird & Wang, 2013). Resilience allows a leader to move forward during turbulent times to maintain focus on what is important.

Public School Superintendents

Public schools are complex human organizations. The superintendent is the leader and CEO of this complex organization (Björk et al., 2018). As public education grew across the United States so did the number of superintendents (Melton, Reeves, McBrayer, & Smith, 2019). The job itself has also become more complex. It is no longer a position of manager but of instructional leader, community representative, and even political leader, depending on the size of the district (Przybylski et al., 2018). Successfully leading public school districts requires leading conflicting interests and perspectives and keeping sight on their long-term vision while solving day-to-day problems (Schechter, 2015). Superintendents face the same external and internal factors facing all leaders in a world of VUCA (Bywater & Lewis, 2019). Superintendents also have to encounter the same tragedies impacting communities across the country while keeping the well-being and development of children in mind (Björk et al., 2018). Goodwin's (2018) leadership elements apply to leaders at all levels of public life.

Superintendent Traits

Goodwin's (2018) leadership elements was derived from the examination of U.S. presidents facing some of the most turbulent times in the nation's history. Resilience has been seen as an important component for long-term success for a superintendent (Klocko, Justis, & Kirby, 2019). However, this is in the context of the normal issues facing superintendents in the course of their job. Political turbulence has long been seen, again, as a normal part of the public school superintendency (Melton et al., 2019). Maintaining a vision for students in a school district requires superintendents putting the best interest of students before all others in the organization. A key facet of getting support for this

vision is maintaining one's moral purpose and building trust (Davidson & Hughes, 2019). The VUCA world is also impacting the role of superintendents as they face those external factors that can bring an organization to the brink of experiencing turbulent times.

Application of Goodwin's Elements

It is important to examine how Goodwin's (2018) turbulence leadership elements apply to public superintendents as they deal with the turbulence of shootings, death, and natural disasters facing organizations around the globe. Superintendents need to rely on their personal temperament to lead through these events. Resilience is a key attribute identified that has even become even more important during turbulent times. A strong moral purpose possessed by a person responsible for leading both adults and students can be an important guiding light to keep the leader moving forward. Lastly, the concern for the collective interest is used by the superintendent to keep all within the organization focused on healing, recovery, and change. How public school superintendents specifically use Goodwin's turbulence elements during crisis is not clear in the current literature. Goodwin's elements of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience need to be examined in the context of public school superintendents.

Gap in the Research

Minimal research has been done on Goodwin's (2018) leadership elements of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience and their application to leadership in general. Public school superintendents lead one of the most complex organizations that face turbulent times regularly. With the complexity of the job and the increase in crisis situations, there is a need for highly qualified public

school superintendents to serve school districts in California (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). More information is needed on how Goodwin's (2018) leadership elements could apply to public school superintendents as they lead their districts through turbulent times.

Statement of the Research Problem

Leading human organizations has become much more complex. The world has become more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (Bywater & Lewis, 2019; Millar et al., 2018). This applies to both private and public institutions. The challenges of the 21st century require leaders to possess specific leadership skills beyond what was expected in the past (L. Anderson, 2018). The turbulent events facing leaders have now expanded beyond simple organizational leadership in which mass shootings, natural disasters, and community tragedies are becoming part of leading an organization (Millar et al., 2018). It is imperative for leaders to possess the right skills and leadership style to bring their organization through turbulence (Eliadis, 2019).

Public schools are also becoming increasingly complex and greatly influenced by the rapidly changing world. Responding to external factors that create turbulence is emerging as a part of public school leadership (Gainey, 2009). Fires, shootings, and student suicides add a higher level of complexity to the role of superintendent. Superintendents need a combination of both learned and inherent skills to lead their districts through turbulence (Przybylski et al., 2018). During turbulent times, what are the skills superintendents need to lead their districts through turbulence and create a more resilient organization?

The superintendents' approach to leadership can impact their ability to lead through turbulence. Responding to external factors that challenge the stability of a

district requires the superintendent to follow a leadership theory involving people within the organization to build connections with those they lead (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). These connections allow the followers of superintendents who are transformational leaders to identify the shared interest or vision articulated by their leader (Faupel & Süß, 2019). However, being transformational leaders may not be enough for superintendents to lead their district through turbulence. What other elements are necessary for superintendents to lead during turbulent times?

Leading an organization during turbulent times necessitates that the leader possess the individual characteristics to successfully bring an organization through crisis. The individual characteristics of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience are characteristics that have allowed presidents to lead the nation during some of the most turbulent times in history (Goodwin, 2018). Individual elements of Goodwin's (2018) examination of leadership behaviors have been discussed as contributing factors leading to superintendent success. Resilience as a factor of success for superintendents has been discussed (Klocko et al., 2019). Research has examined resilience in the context of the difficulties superintendents face as a normal part of their job but not during turbulent times. Though the research has identified other characteristics of successful superintendents, it has focused on political and managerial success (Hill & Jochim, 2018; Melton et al., 2019) and has not looked through the lens of turbulence. How do Goodwin's (2018) leadership elements and their characteristics fit with public school superintendents and their success?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

The central question for this research study asked, “What behaviors do exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience as presented in the leadership elements by Goodwin (2018).

Research Subquestions

1. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using moral purpose?
2. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using concern for the collective interest?
3. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using personal temperament?
4. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using resilience?

Significance of the Problem

Leading an organization in today’s world is continually becoming more complex. The world has become more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, and this has

made leadership more difficult according to Bywater and Lewis (2019). Leadership in this context requires leaders to possess a specific set of competencies to help their organizations make it through turbulent times (Eliadis, 2019). D. Anderson and Anderson (2010) discussed the idea that in order to navigate the turbulent events, skills need to be identified and the lessons from leaders who have been tested need to be understood.

Public school superintendents are experiencing the same level of VUCA turbulence that is becoming a normal part of the job (Gainey, 2009). The job of a superintendent is already very difficult. Because of the normal factors facing public school superintendents, there is a high level of turnover in the position (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Research has been done discussing the characteristics of successful superintendents in the normal course of their jobs (Bird & Wang, 2013; Björk et al., 2018; Davidson & Hughes, 2019). However, public school superintendents face turbulence related to natural disasters, mass shootings, and student suicide, all of which are beyond normal organization events that test a superintendent's leadership ability (L. Anderson, 2018; Björk et al., 2018; McGee, 2016). The increased complexity has made finding quality superintendents difficult.

The research examining how superintendents lead when their organizations are faced with the highest level of turbulence is incomplete. The work of Goodwin (2018) discussed four leadership characteristics—moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience—in the context of four U.S. presidents who led the nation during times of extreme turbulence. It is important to apply Goodwin's leadership elements to public school superintendents. Superintendents now

face turbulence in their roles as a regular part of the job (Gainey, 2009), and this research study will help fill the gap in the body of work that examines successful public school superintendents and specific leadership characteristics during turbulent times.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 2020) outlined eight areas of focus in their school superintendent training academy. They include the normal aspects of the superintendent position, instructional leadership, finance, board relations, equity, politics, communication, continuous improvement, and the position of CEO. However, there is no mention of superintendent leadership during turbulent times. This study may be valuable to the AASA as they examine their superintendent training program for improvement. The research from this study can also support the work that school boards must do to find the quality of superintendents to lead their districts, which has become more difficult because of turnover (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

Definitions

Terms used throughout this study are defined to provide clarity and a shared understanding of their meaning. The definitions that follow were used in this context throughout the whole of the study.

Moral purpose. Leaders who conduct themselves with moral purpose are legitimate and credible role models who practice what they preach and make principled and fair choices that can be observed and emulated by others. They use frequent, two-way communication to define ethics and create moral codes for the organization to infuse the organization with principles that will guide the actions of all employees.

Collective interest. Collective interest refers to prioritizing outcomes, actions, and decisions to benefit the greater common good rather than strategizing to produce self-serving advantages or outcomes.

Personal temperament. Personal temperament is the prevailing mood pattern or the characteristic level of emotional excitability or intensity of an individual.

Resilience. Resilience is the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, or more successfully adapt to actual or potential adverse events.

Turbulent times. Turbulent times are situations that are large and uncontrollable in scale happening at a high velocity and fluctuation with cascading effects and unclear patterns of evolution that lead to chaotic situations. These characteristics distinguish turbulent times from normal critical situations (Jelassi & Avagyan, 2017).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to 10 Northern California area public school superintendents who led districts serving a range of 1,500 to 3,000 students for a minimum of 2 years in the same district during a crisis period that occurred within the past 5 years and who have been recognized for their exemplary service by their local community leaders, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), or California School Boards Association (CSBA).

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters, a references section, and appendices. Chapter II presents a review of the literature, utilizing the framework of critical race theory, corresponding to the changing student demographics in public schools and its implications for educational leadership by a Latina superintendent. Chapter II includes

an exploration of support systems contributing to retention of Latinas in the superintendent position. Chapter III explains the research design and methodology of the study and includes an explanation of the population, sampling frame, and sample. Furthermore, Chapter III describes the instrumentation and procedures used for data gathering and data analysis. A presentation of data findings, analysis of the data, and a discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for actions and further research are elucidated. The study ends with a references section and appendices.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature within this chapter reviews the current volatile world facing leaders today. The chapter focuses on the turbulent times, the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity and their impact. This chapter also explores the research on theoretical leadership and the influence each leadership theory of approach can have on an organization. The review of the literature in this chapter discusses the leadership elements described in the work of Goodwin (2018) and frames the four leadership behaviors within this study. Lastly, the chapter analyzes the research regarding successful public school superintendents and how they lead their organizations.

Turbulent Times

Turbulent times are part of what leaders need to navigate to successfully lead their organizations. Turbulent times are situations that are large and seemingly uncontrollable in scale, happening at a high velocity and fluctuation, with cascading effects and unclear patterns of evolution, which lead to chaotic situations. These characteristics distinguish turbulent times from normal critical situations (Jelassi & Avagyan, 2017). Turbulent times are conditions that military leaders have been facing for many years. Researchers have looked to military history to find lessons that can be applied to leadership in civilian organizations. With leaders facing a current geopolitical climate, coupled with the pandemic, they are operating in what seems like “the fog of war” and looking to the past for examples of how to lead during this peacetime crisis (Feigen, Wallach, & Warendh, 2020, p. 2). Feigen et al. (2020) outlined leadership behaviors for business leaders to use that mirror what military leaders have modeled to be successful. Feigen et al. explained that being in the trenches and acting decisively, leading with confidence, and

communicating to inspire others are behaviors used by military leaders of the past. The military's experience and preparations have provided valuable research on leading during turbulent times.

Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous

The military prepared its leaders to be able to operate in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Anita, 2016). The term VUCA was discussed by Barber (1992) as he described the work that military colleges do to enhance their leaders to be strategic thinkers. Barber stated that military leadership maintains its vision by “influencing organizational culture, allocating resources, generating activities, and building consensus” (p. 5) to keep the organization moving forward during a VUCA environment. In addition to the military, the term VUCA has made its way into other organizations. Wolf (2010), when providing guidance to nonprofits, described VUCA as a messy, chaotic, and turbulent reality facing organizations. Garrow and Varney (2015) elaborated on the VUCA terminology as a more volatile world in which periods of stability can seem like a thing of the past. Instead, the world has more instability, wider fluctuations, and often very rapid and unexpected change. With so much volatility, not only is the future unlikely to be much like the past but also the present is often very different too, creating uncertainty. Information is incomplete because it is changing, and there is too much going on to know it all. That increase in uncertainty makes it much harder to figure out what is happening today, let alone trying to understand what organizational form and capabilities might be important in the future. Uncertainty is amplified still further by complexity, the “C” in VUCA. The technological ease of connecting with people far and wide has created more interdependencies and feedback

loops than ever before. Within those intricate and multilayered networks, actions can have unintended consequences, which cannot be predicted. Garrow and Varney (2015) described the last element, ambiguity, as “unknown unknowns” (p. 2) that abound in complex, uncertain, and volatile environments, so ambiguity increases. If no precedents exist, it becomes harder to reach clarity and agreement about the meaning and significance of events. Thus, increase in doubt and hesitancy makes it easy for inertia to take hold. Therefore, in a highly ambiguous environment, it can be difficult to reach decisions about organization design strategies. The leadership strategies born on the battlefield have been studied and applied to other leadership situations.

Millar et al. (2018) discussed how VUCA has been an obstacle for leaders outside the military world, frequently preventing decisions from being made because of the lack of experience and training in operating during VUCA situations. Millar et al. also discussed the aspects of the modern world, which make VUCA more of a standard operating environment for leaders in the 21st century. Global demographic shifts, migration, trade protectionism, and technological disruptions are all fueling the fire of VUCA (Millar et al., 2018). The research of Millar et al. made recommendations on how to operate in a VUCA environment. First, Millar et al. recommended that leaders not shy away from VUCA but observe how the military responds to understand the context and see it as an opportunity to be innovative. Also, leaders must understand their customers and the impact of VUCA on the market. Lastly, leaders need to build the response into the vision of the organization to create dynamic capabilities into the organization. Another important aspect of Millar et al.’s research was the acknowledged impact of VUCA on the leader. Leading during VUCA can have a detrimental impact on the

leaders' well-being, and Millar et al. suggested that further discussion was needed to understand the connection to leadership theory.

Bywater and Lewis (2019) followed the research vein of Millar et al. (2018) as they discussed the leadership competencies needed to succeed in a VUCA environment. Bywater and Lewis (2019) stated, "Leaders need to cope with this VUCA environment on a personal level, but they also need to lead a team or organization through this transition" (p. 3). Bywater and Lewis identified agility as the key element of their study. They outlined context agility, stakeholder agility, creative agility, and self-leadership agility and the four competencies to succeed in a VUCA environment. Context agility is the leader's ability to quickly understand the environment to frame what needs to be done. Stakeholder agility is the ability to understand the changing needs of those within and working with the organization to build support for initiatives. Creative agility enables the leader to change problems encountered into needed results. Lastly, self-leadership agility is the ability of the leader to reflect and develop as a leader to meet the challenges (Bywater & Lewis, 2019).

Research on female leaders during turbulent times and/or VUCA has discussed seven human attributes that were connected to the leader's success (Eliadis, 2019). Eliadis (2019) discussed the human attributes of being communicative, being supportive, being collaborative, creating mutual trust, being transparent, having empathy, and having a positive attitude. Communication is clear and provides up-to-date information openly. A leader being supportive of those in the organization creates a culture of support that looks like, "You win, I win; you hurt, I hurt, hence everybody wins and suffers less" (Eliadis, 2019, p. 110). The leader needs to be continually collaborative and transparent

with actions and initiatives. Being an honest and trustworthy leader and building trusting relationships with others creates an environment of mutual trust. Eliadis then explained that when there is mutual trust, the leaders can be transparent in their actions. Successful leaders during VUCA times are empathetic and use their positive energy and attitude to inspire others. Eliadis not only described leadership competencies and attributes required to lead during turbulent times, or VUCA, but also stated that VUCA is the current reality leaders regularly need to be prepared for.

There have always been natural disasters and organizations that are well led and prepared for these types of disasters, not only for handling the immediate response but also for ensuring everyone's safety during and after the event. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken the direction of leadership to a new level. The Shock Leadership Framework discussed by Shufutinsky, DePorres, Long, and Sibel (2020) outlined an approach to assist leaders to transform themselves through understanding of leadership theory and training in preparation for events that constitute a "shock" to organizations. The impact seen with the pandemic underlines how globalization and the disruption thereof were not on the radar of leaders in the world. Using multiple leadership styles and integrating and agilely adjusting them to evolving situations, the "surge leader" trained under Shufutinsky et al.'s proposed framework has the ability to react more effectively to disruptive, surprising, and destabilizing conditions that shock systems, regardless of the organization. Shufutinsky et al. described the training, coined surge leadership, as real time and consistent simulation training to help leaders respond rapidly with highly analytical decisiveness in catastrophic situations. Shufutinsky et al. also

discussed the importance of this type of training because this type of big shock is becoming more prevalent.

Crisis the New Norm

Organizations prepare for turbulent times as part of their normal mode of operation. They must make what seems like an outside chance of becoming part of their business operations, keeping sight of preparing for the unexpected and not getting lost in the daily grind (Kielkowski, 2013). Many organizations in government and public service make emergency preparation a standard part of their work. It is now part of the business world. Businesses that train their leadership and teams and expose them to different roles and emergencies help employees see the work as second nature when real crisis hits (Kielkowski, 2013).

Technology has brought the world closer together and made turbulence felt globally. This global ecosystem and process structures continually interact, and a new reality emerges in response to turbulence (Crosby, 2010). Crosby (2010) presented the idea that leaders will not be successful if they do not understand the full context of the current reality and how their organization is connected to various systems and stakeholder groups. Digitalization, the internet, and globalization have created a world in which VUCA is accelerated more than any other time in history (Krawczyńska-Zaucha, 2019). Technology is an important element for leaders during this new reality of VUCA. Rodriguez and Rodriguez (2015) discussed the idea of a “cloud leader” in the current VUCA reality facing organizations. During crisis, a cloud leader uses technology bidirectionally to provide stability, clarity, shared experiences, and collaborative opportunities to the team (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015).

Researchers have looked to early leadership and management theory guidance on leading during turbulent times. Nikezić, Dželetović, and Vučinić (2016) reviewed the writing of Chester Barnard, who wrote about leadership and management in the early 1900s, to see what might be applicable in today's turbulent world. Nikezić et al. found Barnard's humanistic approach to followers and view of leadership, teams, communication, and vision fits within the leadership code for the 21st century leadership and support organizations as they face turbulent times. Nikezić et al. provided more evidence to support the concept that operating during turbulent times is a part of leadership in the 21st century. Identifying the variables or behaviors that superintendent leaders use during times of crisis to successfully lead their school districts was the focus of this study.

Within the last 25 years with technology, social media, and environmental concerns, there has been an increase in the types of event that create turbulence for leaders and organizations. A variety of turbulent events have faced leaders and organizations for years. Gainey (2009) discussed a world of political events, natural disasters, and financial crisis events that are much more impactful with globalization. Leaders and organizations have also faced wide-scale product failure and the resulting fallout (Henman, 2010). Researchers have grouped what leaders and organizations are facing into five categories: skills need, unethical behaviors, individual leadership, training cost, and crises and disasters (Megheirkouni & Megheirkouni, 2020). The categories discussed include but are not limited to sexual harassment, employee theft, violence, financial and economic crisis, geopolitical events, and climate issues. Megheirkouni and Megheirkouni (2020) discussed the five categories as challenges

leaders will face in the 21st century, which will require leaders to rethink their priorities. Leaders who have the skills to lead through turbulent times can lessen the impact of those events on their organizations.

Organizational Impact

For leaders and organizations, turbulent times have always been part of their existence. Operating in a VUCA world requires leaders to prepare for crisis. Gainey (2009) discussed the fact that only 21% of the CEOs surveyed had a crisis plan in place on September 11. But in the aftermath of 9/11, that changed. Needing to prepare has pushed leaders to prioritize the preparation and response into their work and make choices about how to prioritize the work (Gainey, 2009). Gainey's work showed the pressure to prepare has an impact on the organization. Not preparing for turbulent times can lead to the failure of those in leadership. The lack of preparation can result in rushed or poor decisions by leaders, which can damage the organization (Henman, 2010).

Regularly facing a crisis is challenging long-established leadership frameworks used by leaders and organizations (Probert & James, 2011). Probert and James (2011) stated that modifying these collective, unconscious assumptions in an organization is a difficult task because they represent embedded cultural assumptions. Crisis can generate a cognitive overload, which might force leaders and the organization to focus on the turbulence itself and not successfully moving through the event (Probert & James, 2011). Researchers have discussed the fact that crisis is not something that comes completely unexpectedly. The culture of an organization and its leadership are deep rooted and respond to crisis in predictable patterns (Bowers, Hall, & Srinivasan, 2017). Bowers et al.'s (2017) work again illustrated the idea that the important and difficult work of

preparing for a possible crisis has an impact on the organization operating in a VUCA world.

There are two types of crisis that impact organizations: crisis as an event and crisis as a process (T. Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd, & Zhao, 2017). Each crisis can derail the leaders and their organization. Crisis as an event includes natural disasters, severe global political events, climate episodes, and threats of terrorism, to name a few, and is unanticipated and certainly impacts leaders and their organizations on many levels. Crisis as an event is also what organizations create plans, run simulations, and regularly prepare for (T. Williams et al., 2017). T. Williams et al. (2017) also discussed crisis as a crisis. Crisis as a process is the impact of the crisis event after the initial impact and leader's ability to get the organization successfully through it. T. Williams et al. discussed crisis as a process is equally important to prepare for an organization preparing for the initial event itself. Leaders need to include long-term recovery processes to ensure the organization is able to fully recover (T. Williams et al., 2017). The COVID pandemic has put the spotlight on the current reality of continual turbulence and leadership in the world.

The leadership systems of the 20th century are drowning in the global circumstances of the 21st century (L. Alexander, 2020). The COVID pandemic crisis has called into question the type of leadership needed to lead organizations. L. Alexander (2020) discussed how the current pandemic crisis is highlighting deficiencies in traditional leadership values and will be a catalyst to allow leaders to see it as an opportunity to facilitate change. It will be an opportunity for leaders to not only focus on improving what is but also look to leading toward what could be. Post pandemic leaders

will need to be more connected to people. Leaders who cannot deliver results on multiple fronts are not effective during turbulent times (Phillips & Phillips, 2020). The COVID pandemic has impacted people's confidence, and leaders need to understand the cares and concerns of the people and those within their teams to get through the pandemic successfully (Fiorini et al., 2020).

Theoretical Foundation

Leadership

Leadership has many definitions. The definitions have evolved over time and are complex, resulting in different frameworks, perspectives, and concepts (Raffo & Clark, 2018). *Merriam-Webster's* dictionary defines leadership "as the office or position of a leader, capacity to lead, the act or instance of leading, or a group, leaders" ("Leadership," n.d., para. 1). With this dictionary definition, leadership can be defined in different contexts to have different meanings. Over time, the definition of leadership has evolved from the individual focus on control and power to the focus on process, relationships, and influence (Raffo & Clark, 2018). Northouse's (2019) book *Leadership Theory and Practice* outlines the evolution of leadership. Table 1 shows both the changes over the decades and the focus of the theoretical research. The evolution outlined in the table also begins to connect the perceptions of followers of leadership itself (Raffo & Clark, 2018).

Rosari (2019) looked at contemporary definitions of leadership provided by scholars Bernard Bass, John Kotter, and C. Rost. The purpose of Rosari's examination was to find the application of definitions as well as the principles for her own teaching. Leadership is not an individual; it is a relationship maintained by active people with leaders and followers leading together (Rosari, 2019). The role of the followers and their

Table 1

Evolution of Leadership Definitions

Decade	Leadership definition emphasis
1900–1920s	Control, power
1930s	Traits, influence
1940s	Groups
1950s	Groups, relationships, goals, effectiveness
1960s	Behavior
1970s	Organizational behavior, reciprocal process
1980s	Influence, traits, transformation
21st century	Leadership vs. Management, process, authenticity, values, follower focus

Note. From *Leadership Theory & Practice*, by P. Northouse, 2019, Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

empowerment are becoming elements of successful leadership. Those who recognize their power use it both consciously and conscientiously (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008). McKee et al.'s (2008) research supported the relational component of leadership in the 21st century. McKee et al. contended that it is also important to recognize that leadership happens at multiple levels. It is not just at the top. Effective leaders support leadership at every level of the organization (D. Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

Additional work presented by D. Anderson and Anderson (2010) again supported effective leadership and its inclusivity as an element of success. The definition of leadership at its basic elements naturally leads to important theories of leadership.

Transactional Leadership

In the face of turbulence within an organization, leaders rely on their philosophy connected to leadership theory to guide their decisions. Transactional leadership involves the exchange of incentives and punishment between the leader and those they lead

(Amanchukwu et al., 2015). The transactional approach also undervalues the relationship between the leader and the employee. The research has also shown that transactional leadership negatively impacts employee mood and morale (Zhang et al., 2020). Though effective in certain situations, transactional leadership theory could erode the leaders' ability to take their organization through turbulent times. During turbulent times, the transactional exchange of incentives or punishment may not be an effective approach. There are many variables to be controlled by the leader under the transactional theory approach.

Successful transactional leadership requires the leader to have complete control over the incentives and penalties used (Bass, 1990). Depending on the structure of the organization, some incentives like pay are beyond the control of leaders. More often, the transactional approach reinforces mediocracy and over the long term can be counterproductive (Bass, 1990). Politically skilled leaders have attributes that make them more successful: relationships, experience, and a high level of understanding of their context (Buch, Thompson, & Kuvaas, 2016). However, Buch et al.'s (2016) research showed that those attributes do not completely mitigate the negative impact of long-term transactional leadership. Leaders operating with a transactional leadership approach may possess personal traits or characteristics, which would allow them to successfully lead during turbulence regardless of their reliance on transactional leadership.

Trait theory. Trait leadership theory is considered one of the first modern leadership theories. It is based on the idea that leaders are born with traits that make them better suited to lead (Carleton, Barling, & Trivisonno, 2018). These traits can be both physical and personality traits. Research has found that physical traits, such as

gender and attractiveness, lead to initial perceptions of leadership (Kalish & Luria, 2020). Research regarding trait leadership has even gone deeper to explain how physical traits impact perceived leadership. Research has examined facial expressions displayed by leaders and the impact on followers' perceptions of that leader (Trichas, Schyns, Lord, & Hall, 2017). Trichas et al. (2017) examined the perception of happy faces and nervous faces and found that positive facial expressions promoted positive perceptions of leaders as they presented to followers. Beyond physical traits, personality and behavioral traits have also been associated with leaders.

Traditional traits of courage, strength, and resilience have served leaders during crisis (Cangemi, 2011). Contemporary traits that better support leaders when dealing with turbulence or crisis are being collaborative, communicative, and compassionate (Vaid, 2015). Being a caring leader should not just be for turbulent times; it is important to be a caring leader when facing the normal struggles of organizations (Forck, 2011). Eliadis (2019) laid out the attributes of being collaborative, communicative, supportive, positive, empathetic, honest, and trustworthy as key traits for leading during crisis. The evaluation of traits as precursors for successful leadership can be difficult. When looking at perceived personality traits with elected political elites, Wyatt and Silvester (2018) discussed the fact that voter perception of personality traits does not always equate to success. Specific traits have been associated with leadership but by themselves do not equate to successful leadership (Uslu, 2019). The leaders' view of themselves in their leadership role can also lead to the ability to handle turbulence.

Servant theory. The term servant can carry negative connotations. A servant was someone who played a subservient role in the social hierarchy (i.e., a house servant).

Merriam Webster defined servant as “one that performs duties about the person or home of a master or personal employer” (“Servant,” n.d., *especially* line). It can also be connected to service, the idea of serving others for a higher purpose. Servant leadership is connected to the desire to create a more caring and better society (Andersen, 2018). The concept of servant leadership comes from one’s desire to have an impact on others within the organization, and the expression of that desire then inspires others (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Parris and Peachey (2013) discussed the components of servant leadership that focus on the concern for others, on the greatest good for the organization, and on the belief in people.

The attributes promoted by Parris and Peachey (2013) can serve leaders as they work with their organizations to survive turbulence. Research on servant leadership grounds the theory in the humanistic characteristics of listening, empathizing, healing, being aware, persuading, conceptualizing, having foresight, being a good steward, committing to growth of people, and building community (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Prioritizing the success and growth of others makes important connections between leaders and those who follow. Servant leaders focus on the current situations then use their relationships with their followers to help them get through turbulent times by focusing the future vision of the people in the organization (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Putting the needs of their followers and the needs of the organization before their own needs differentiates servant leaders from other leaders (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Servant leadership’s humanistic approach builds the capacity of followers whom leaders can use to transform their organization.

Transformational theory. Transformational leadership focuses on the relationship built between leaders and followers. According to Bass (1990),

Transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. (p. 20)

The transformational approach can result in increased morale and motivation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Similar to servant leaders, transformational leaders set aside their own interests and model this type of behavior for their followers. Followers then recognize this and become willing to identify the shared interest or vision articulated by the leader (Faupel & Süß, 2019). The transformational leadership approach assists leaders in taking their organizations through change while maintaining a positive employee attitude and perception of leadership (Farahnak, Ehrhart, Torres, & Aarons, 2020).

Farahnak et al. (2020) also found the impact of transformational leadership went beyond just attitude and the perception of the leaders. Under transformational leaders, implementation of changes went further. Transformational leadership is a universal style, and leaders who apply the theory are more successful across organizational contexts (Andersen, 2018). There are elements found in transformational leaders contributing success across contexts. Research has indicated that transformational leaders practice a level of mindfulness, having an indirect positive impact on their efficacy (Carleton et al., 2018). Transformational leaders create a culture that assists them as they face crisis within their organization. During times of crisis, transformational leadership qualities

become highlighted and decrease the negative impact of the crisis on followers within the organization (Scheuerlein, Chládková, & Bauer, 2018). Elements of transformational leadership theory may be a component of successful leadership during turbulent times.

Leadership attributes. Researchers have suggested there are components and/or attributes associated with transformational leadership that leaders possess that contribute to their success during turbulent times. Berkovich (2016) discussed the idea that transformational leadership alone may not be enough for leaders facing turbulence within their organization. Transformational leadership theory supports a number of leadership behaviors that support change and the success of followers. Those components of transformational leadership should be connected with other leadership theories to fit the context of the organization (Berkovich, 2016). Leadership attributes that connect individual leaders and how they approach leadership and support their followers during turbulent times are important.

Inclusive leadership approaches during turbulent times or crisis can help lessen the psychological impact of the crisis (Ahmed, Zhao, & Faraz, 2020). A high level of trust is an important leadership attribute associated with transformational leadership. During crisis, leaders who had built trust with their subordinates were more successful and more likely to invest in their subordinates, which had a positive impact on the organization (E. Williams, Woods, Hertelendy, & Kloefer, 2019). Regardless of the leadership theory, there are behaviors, or attributes, that successful leaders exhibit in a variety of contexts: being clear, being supportive, building relationships, investing in others, having confidence, being trustworthy, and being transparent (Vaid, 2015). Effective leadership involves using nuances from different leadership theories to fit the

need of the context leaders find themselves in (Burgess, 2016). Burgess's research supports the idea that there are a variety of attributes that contribute to successful leadership. Burgess (2016) discussed the humanistic approach of transformational leadership as a good place to start when looking at successful leadership strategies. Leaders can then continue their own learning from various leadership constructs.

Turbulence Leadership Framework

The year 2020 continues to present leaders around the world with unprecedented turbulent times. People are looking for direction on these rough waters. Journalist Narayan Ramachandran (2020) looked to the works of those providing guidance to leaders facing the nation's current reality. Facing the facts, focusing on values, providing inspiration, looking forward, and communicating vision are elements taken from Doris Kearns Goodwin's work that will help leaders guide their organizations during the nation's current reality (Ramachandran, 2020). Goodwin discussed the fact that this country has experienced this high level of polarization in the past and overcame it (Rhodes, 2019). This illustrates how lessons from the past can be applied.

Goodwin's (2018) book *Leadership: In Turbulent Times* suggested leadership behaviors that are essential during turbulent times. These behaviors are presented in the form of a turbulence leadership elements in this study. Goodwin described these behaviors in her case study of four presidents: Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson. Her examination of four leadership behaviors provided an understanding of each behavior in the context of each president. Goodwin detailed how the four leadership behaviors helped each president successfully lead the nation during turbulent times. The leadership elements Goodwin identifies are

the foundation for this research study. Goodwin explored four elements of leadership: moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience and applied those to leading during turbulent times.

Personal Temperament

The prevailing mood pattern or characteristic level of emotional excitability or intensity of individuals is their personal temperament (Goldsmith et al., 1987; Rothbart et al., 2003). Personal temperament can impact leaders' responses to crisis. Research has shown that these skills are developed in the first few years of life (Rothbart et al., 2003). Being self-aware and understanding their own personal temperament impacts how leaders are viewed by their followers (van Knippenberg et al., 2005). When leaders can recognize their own personality traits, they can begin to adjust and respond to their professional context (Freeman, 2009). Freeman (2009) stated that there are increasing pressures on leaders and learning the impact of their personality traits and the importance of those people around them. Research has made connections between the personality traits of leaders and their followers. When there are complementary relationships between the personality traits of leaders and their subordinates, they lead to diversity of thought and better success for the organization (Holliday, Martin, & Martin, 2010). Again, this emphasizes the need for leaders to be aware of their own personal temperament and those whom they work with. There are other aspects of a leader's personal temperament that are important for success.

Specific personality characteristics of leaders can contribute to their success during turbulent times. Leaders need to be able to be decisive and make decisions under pressure (Vaid, 2015). Having the personal temperament to function during turbulent

times allows a leader to focus on the organization. During situations of intense pressure, leaders need the ability to maintain their composure or keep their cool (Forck, 2011). Having the ability to sustain effective relationships during turbulent times is an important factor in the success of leaders and also contributes to their ability to maintain a positive culture and climate (Webner, 2017). During crisis, leaders need the skills to handle immense pressure for long periods of time (L. Anderson, 2018). L. Anderson (2018) also coupled the capacity to handle stress with the ability to act decisively and proactively under the stress as important attributes exhibited by leaders during the wildfires of 2017.

Goodwin (2018) identified specific aspects of the personal temperament of four presidents: Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), and Lyndon B. Johnson. Goodwin discussed how Lincoln was able to understand the emotional needs of the members of his team. This attribute was acknowledged by Gandolfi and Stone (2018) and Heyler and Martin (2018). Goodwin (2018) later wrote that Teddy Roosevelt saw how his ability to keep his temper in check served him well during crisis, in addition to finding ways to also relieve the high levels of stress. Adaptability was part of FDR's personal temperament, which allowed him success during the numerous trials he experienced during his presidency. Lyndon Johnson's fiery temperament was witnessed behind closed doors but was seen as passion for his work and drove him and his staff to success. Goodwin's case study of these leaders established personal temperament as the first of four elements of the turbulence leadership behaviors.

Collective Interest

The concern for the collective interest is putting the interests of the whole before one's self-interest (Goodwin, 2018). The collective interest comes from the idea of civic

leadership working within a community for the purpose of promoting the common good (Chrislip & O'Malley, 2013). The concept has deep roots in the philosophy of being virtuous and living a virtuous life. Promoting the collective interest or common good has been part of the success of different cultures in the world (J. M. Alexander & Buckingham, 2011). When leaders and their organizations understand how the focus on the common good promotes their own success, the organization and those within it experience success (Arjoon et al., 2018). Research has also suggested that the interests of leaders or the organization can be in conflict and be difficult to align (Robertson, Wang, & Trivisvavet, 2007). With the growing complexity and connectivity of the 21st century, it is more important for leaders to understand the context of their organization and its connection to the interests of their followers. Working to make the connections between the organizational context and the interests of the followers' part of the collective interest can help leaders move their organization through change and crisis (Crosby, 2010). The evolution of civic duty and social unrest has pushed the collective interest to the forefront in the United States, making it an important part of successful leadership (Chrislip & O'Malley, 2013).

During turbulent times, leaders can be tested, and how they focus on the collective interest of the organization can impact their success. For instance, van Knippenberg et al.'s (2005) study found the following:

There is consistent evidence that as followers identify more strongly with the collective (i.e., group, organization), the extent to which their leader is perceived to be group prototypical (i.e., to represent the collective identity) becomes more influential in determining leadership effectiveness, whereas the extent to which

the leader has typical leader characteristics becomes relatively less influential.

(p. 498)

Leaders who strongly identify with the collective and its mission may, for instance, be more likely to engage in acts that build follower identification, and leaders who strongly believe in the collective's ability to achieve desired ends may be more likely to engender follower efficacy (van Knippenberg et al., 2005). The focus on the collective interest can create a social contract within an organization, which allows leaders to go beyond one skill set and create a culture of skillful professionals using all their skills for a common objective (Mohammed & Kurian, 2014). Steffens, Mols, Haslam, and Okimoto (2016) discussed how leaders who focus on the collective interest or are prototypical leaders, identified as one of the groups, create a culture of authentic leadership experiencing more success.

When leaders construct their own identity based on being part of the collective, it creates alignment and makes the collective interest a focal point (Steffens et al., 2016). Leaders identifying as a member of the group and putting the collective interest ahead of their own interests need to keep the perceptions of fairness and justice to maintain the culture of the collective interest (Emler, 2019). The promotion of the collective interest can be a conflict between liberty and civility, and leaders need to keep this in their minds as they make decisions for the organization (Prabuddha, 2019). The conflict between liberty and civility is more prevalent in the United States, a country founded on the idea of liberty and individualism.

Goodwin (2018) examined the focus on the collective interest in the context of the character of the four presidents of the United States. Goodwin pointed out how Lincoln

looked past his own personal interests and recognized the need to put the ambition of the collective above his own. Goodwin showed how Theodore Roosevelt saw involving those who may be impacted in the process and made sure to share the recognition of success with all those who made sacrifices to move forward. FDR used his communications with the American people to infuse a sense of shared purpose and direction when facing turbulent times. Lastly, on collective interest, Goodwin examined how Lyndon Johnson gave stakeholders a chance to shape measures from the very start. Goodwin's case study illustrated the importance of the collective interest as the four presidents worked through turbulent times.

Resilience

Individual resilience during a crisis can make or break a leader. Resiliency is the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, or more successfully adapt to actual or potential adverse events (Luthans, 2002). Research has shown a person's resilience is a combination of different factors. Early research looked at the impact of childhood experiences, exposure to adverse events, and even genetics (Rutter, 2006). Resilience is made up of both mindset and behaviors predicated on the idea that setbacks are temporary and opportunities to learn (Kim et al., 2019). Resilience is an individual's ability to maintain control and move forward during adversity in a positive manner (Cline, 2015). Resilience is also something that can be intentionally developed. Having positive mental modeling, accepting failure as a growth opportunity, being reflective, maintaining balance in life and work, and having deeper self-awareness are strategies leaders need to develop resilience (Cline, 2015). Resilience is also an important personal

resource that allows one to cope with adversity (Bird & Wang, 2013). The personal resilience of leaders can translate to the organizations they lead.

Resilience allows leaders to move forward during turbulent times, helping them to maintain focus on what is important. In response to turbulent times or crisis, there are four human reactions over time: thriving, having resilience, surviving with impairment, and succumbing to it (Carver, 1998). Leaders who are resilient will lead their organizations through crisis to the point of thriving. Luthans (2002) wrote not only on the origins of individual resilience but also on how resilience was a positive organizational behavior leaders exhibit during crisis. In the context of an organization experiencing turbulence, a leader needs to create an environment with psychological safety, maintain a learning organization, and individual discipline (Kim et al., 2019). Leaders create a culture that contains the elements outlined by Kim et al. (2019). Leaders demonstrating resilience coupled with transformational leadership attributes have a positive impact on the resilience of members of the organization (Sommer, Howell, & Hadley, 2016). There are intentional actions that leaders can take during turbulent times to build resilience in their organization. Leaders should utilize their network, influence new connections, and work to create collective sensemaking of a crisis event to provide next steps the organization needs to take (Teo, Lee, & Lim, 2017).

The research has continued to show the connections between leader resilience, transformational leadership, and the resilience of the organization and over positive impact on employees (Wang, Li, & Li, 2017). Resilience evolves over time within an individual or an organization; however, it starts with the leader and then radiates out to the organization when an inclusive approach is taken by leaders (E. Williams et al.,

2019). L. Anderson (2018), like Wang et al. (2017) and E. Williams et al. (2019), looked at the amount of stress leaders face during turbulent times and how resilience is key to their success and the success of the organization. L. Anderson also referenced leadership behaviors of collaboration and transparency as part of transferring their resilience to their followers. Leaders with a high level of resilience are adept at recognizing their own weaknesses and finding ways to grow and learn in these areas (Klocko et al., 2019). Self-reflection and seeking out mentors, new learning, and building strong relationships all contribute to the resilience of leaders who are working through turbulent times (Levey & Levey, 2020).

Each of the four presidents examined by Goodwin (2018) presents examples of their resilience in the face of turbulent times. Lincoln found ways to cope with the pressures, maintain balance, and replenish energy during difficult times. Goodwin detailed how Teddy Roosevelt needed ways to relieve his stress as he faced crisis and saw it was important to find ways to save face to keep positive during shortfalls. With FDR, adaptability was key to his resilience. Lyndon Johnson saw readiness as a part of surviving crisis. Goodwin's case study does establish resilience as an important part of the leadership elements outlined in her work.

Moral Purpose

Leading by a moral purpose is made up of legitimate and credible role models who practice what they preach and make principled and fair choices that can be observed and emulated by others while using frequent, two-way communication to define ethics and create moral codes for the organization and infuse the organization with principles that will guide the actions of all employees (M. E. Brown & Treviño, 2006; M. E. Brown

et al., 2005; Kaptein, 2019; Treviño et al., 2000). The essence of leadership itself is being moral and promoting a vision for a better organization, which can be seen as a moral duty (Ndalamba et al., 2018). The leaders' moral purpose can be the driving force for their vision of their organization and the adversity they face (Marques, 2017). Keeping sight on one's moral purpose is an important part of leading during turbulence and creates a positive vision of the leader in the eyes of the followers.

There have been many examples of immoral or unethical behavior by leaders that continually show up in the media. As a result, researchers have been looking at the impact of moral leadership (M. E. Brown et al., 2005). The same research from M. E. Brown et al. (2005) found connections between moral leadership and transformational leadership practices. Moral leadership involves modeling moral behavior, being fair, building strong interpersonal relationships, being transparent, and giving followers a voice in the process (M. E. Brown et al., 2005). M. E. Brown and Treviño (2006) identified positive impacts of moral leadership on followers within the organization. Their research found that moral leadership resulted in ethical follower behavior, prosocial behavior within the organization, decreased negative follower behavior, and a higher level of productivity, follower satisfaction, and commitment. With what appears to be a rise in immoral and even illegal behavior of leaders in various sectors, research continues to work to build connections between leadership theory and maintaining a moral purpose (Jones & Millar, 2011). Globalization has increased the need for a moral purpose.

Thompson (2010) discussed global issues facing all leaders. Climate change, economic interdependence, and resource scarcity have created a need for a global moral purpose for leaders. There is also a moral mandate for leadership, which has been

connected again to transformational leadership theory (Thompson, 2010). Leaders need to be able to call into question their own value commitments because this is a way to be open to changes facing the world and organizations (Johnsen, 2018). The complexity of the world is making the pressures and temptations of following a moral purpose more difficult (Emler, 2019). Emler (2019) discussed the moral challenges facing leaders in their position of power, self-interest, tyranny, justice, and risk of failure. Emler (2019) focused on the moral mandate leaders need to center on that will keep them from the temptations previously mentioned. When the world is facing a pandemic, the need for moral leadership is important.

Fiorini et al. (2020) stated, “Today’s pandemic could help catalyze an urgently needed tipping event in humanity’s trust, collective moral values, priorities and sense of self and community” (p. 67). Leaders are in the position during turbulent times to promote the focus on moral values. In areas of rural China during the pandemic, researchers found that local leaders led with a sense of moral obligation, and in turn the followers responded with a higher level of moral obligation to support the direction taken by leaders in response to the pandemic (Yang & Ren, 2020). When leading during a crisis, following one’s moral purpose is nonnegotiable (Prestia, 2020). Prestia (2020) continued to outline other components of successful leadership tied to maintaining a moral purpose. It is important to balance the needs of followers with the organization, be a truth teller to ensure all know the reality, and not minimize the negative but maximize success (Prestia, 2020). Moral leadership indicates that leaders may disrupt the moral fabric of organizations and society by taking organizational members and other stakeholders along in embracing an alternative moral view of issues facing the

organization (Solinger, Jansen, & Cornelissen, 2020). All research included in this section outlined leaders who operated using a moral purpose saw a higher level of success within their organization.

Goodwin's (2018) examination of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, FDR, and Lyndon B. Johnson provided evidence of the importance of their moral purpose as they faced historical decisions during their presidencies. Goodwin discussed how Lincoln assumed full responsibility for pivotal decisions, worked to establish a standard of mutual respect and dignity and control anger, and lastly kept his word. Theodore Roosevelt demonstrated a moral purpose when valuing reliable facts, causes, and conditions of situations before moving forward and sharing credit for successes and resolution with all those involved. FDR's actions provided Goodwin with several examples of how he followed a moral purpose as he led the country during turbulent times. Goodwin outlined how FDR worked to restore the confidence of the American people and struck the right balance between realism and optimism. He infused a sense of shared purpose and direction and told people what to expect and what was expected of them during crisis. Goodwin demonstrated in her research that FDR led by example. The fourth president, Lyndon Johnson, in Goodwin's case study supported the leadership element of a moral purpose by demonstrating during his presidency that honoring commitments was key to his leadership, and he took the measure of the man, which meant Johnson needed his actions to be an example of leadership.

Goodwin's (2018) case study of the four presidents established a foundation for her leadership element of leading during turbulent times. Goodwin's research also connected with the research previously discussed on the four variables of Goodwin's

work. The research on the personal temperament of leaders shows the need for a personal temperament that allows leaders to maintain composure and be able to make decisions that move the organization in the necessary and positive direction (Forck, 2011, Vaid, 2015). Closely connected to personal temperament is the research on resilience and Goodwin's (2018) examples of resilience. Leadership positions in general come with stress, but adding crisis or turbulence to the equation highlights the importance of resilience for leadership (Bird & Wang, 2013; Cline, 2015). Leaders guiding organizations during turbulent times can be guided by their moral purpose. Both Goodwin (2018) and other researchers (M. E. Brown & Treviño, 2006; M. E. Brown et al., 2005; Kaptein, 2019; Treviño et al., 2000) show a moral purpose as a key element of successful leadership. Lastly, research has supported the concern for the collective good as the glue leaders use to bring their organizations through turbulent times (van Knippenberg et al., 2005).

Superintendents

History

As public schools began to develop across the nation during the early 1800s, especially in growing cities on the East Coast, the need for centralized control and leadership also grew (Callahan, 1966). Callahan (1966), though a dated source, provided a history and a perspective on the job of public school superintendent that is still very applicable to the role today. His research discussed the growth of school populations in growing cities and the need for management of public schools in urban areas of the eastern United States. Callahan also described the evolution of the position and the different philosophies that have been the focus over time; scholarly leader, business

executive, educational statesman, and applied social scientist are the roles Callahan outlined chronologically. Björk, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2014) provided a similar historical development of the superintendent position in the United States. Their research discussed how superintendents became necessary as school populations grew and the local boards could not handle oversight. Superintendents were originally seen as scholarly leaders, then CEOs, democratic leaders, applied social scientists, and from the late 1970s to the present, as communicators (Björk et al., 2014). Research has also discussed how the role of superintendent has become increasingly more complex.

Callahan's (1966) research is over 50 years old, but his work pointed out that the precarious position superintendents find themselves in with the public, community, and school boards are the same faced by superintendents in the 21st century. The weakness of the superintendent position is the lack of job security, which is also a weakness in the public school system that has been responsible for many problems for public schooling over the years (Callahan, 1966). Though Callahan discussed the superintendent position in 1966, he pointed out in his research that the superintendent was the most important person in any school system in terms of potential for influencing the quality of work that goes on in school. Though more current research (Björk et al., 2018; Denver, Raymonnesha, & Hsien-Yuan, 2018) supports Callahan's assertion from 1966, it also points out that in the last 40 years, there have been more educational initiatives impacting public schools and superintendents.

Björk et al. (2014) discussed the impact of educational initiatives at the national level and their impact on the roles of superintendents. In the 1970s, policy makers at the national level began focusing on the deficiencies in public education. *A Nation at Risk*, a

report from the National Center of Educational Excellence published in 1983, was a turning point discussed by Shaked and Schechter (2016), which began a series of reform movements in public education. There were three waves of reform initiatives beginning in 1983, increasing the focus on public education and the complexity of the superintendency. Björk et al. (2014) discussed the fact that the three waves they identified in their research brought a higher level of involvement of both the federal and state governments into locally controlled districts. The different reform initiatives applied a new level of scrutiny and accountability to the position of superintendent (Björk et al., 2014). Björk et al.'s research not only described the history of the role and the influences on the position, but it also supported how superintendents have long had a tenuous role within the organization.

Role of the Superintendent

Björk et al. (2014) wrote extensively on the position of the superintendent and stated,

The history of the superintendency suggests that the superintendent's roles and responsibilities are defined by emerging social, economic and political conditions, which in turn establish performance expectations for schools and students that are aligned with perceived national needs and transformational efforts. (p. 17)

Their research showed the role and the pressures associated with it have been constant since the creation of the role. Superintendents today face a number of continual issues (Björk et al., 2018). Kowalski and Brunner (2011) ranked the following issues in order, starting with the most prevalent: financing schools, maintaining board relationships, assessing student learning and outcomes, planning and goal setting, changing priorities in

the curriculum, dealing with management problems, and maintaining accountability and credibility. The outlined areas of concern show the complexity of the role. Schools are of a bigger community: municipality, regional, state, national, and international (Paulsen, Johansson, Moos, Nihlfors, & Risku, 2014). Paulsen et al. (2014) examined the position on an international level and discussed the roles superintendents play within their organizations. Paulsen et al. looked at the role in Nordic countries and the United States and found the same pressures of political initiatives mentioned by Björk et al. (2018) and the areas of focus discussed by Kowalski and Brunner (2011). Paulsen et al. (2014) also found that the superintendents in the research discussed how the position and its level of control does not allow them to always prioritize the focus of the role. Their research showed the role of superintendent is similar across systems and even countries (Paulsen et al., 2014).

When examining the roles of superintendents in Sweden and the United States specifically, the research shows there are similarities. Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011) compared the roles of superintendents in Sweden and school districts in the state of Wisconsin. Their research found that the system in Sweden with its national approach to education provided consistency of support and guidance across the entire system. However, in Wisconsin, similar to systems across the United States, its systems were subject to federal, state, and local control and local funding. However, when they looked at political pressures, geographic regions, and district size the roles, work, and pressures were similar for superintendents in both Sweden and the Wisconsin districts. To address the pressures in both systems, context responsive leadership was needed in both

(Bredeson et al., 2011). Similar research has been done comparing the role of superintendents in the United States and China.

Studies have compared the roles of superintendents in China and the United States. Though each is operating in a drastically different political system, there are similarities and opportunities to learn within each (Przybylski et al., 2018). Chinese superintendents often have no educational experience and are chosen by seniority within the political system. In comparison, the vast majority superintendents in the United States come from extensive educational backgrounds (Przybylski et al., 2018).

Przybylski et al.'s (2018) research pointed out that superintendents in each country are subject to political pressures and, though different systems, have high levels of turnover because of not meeting those political pressures. This researcher saw similarities in the roles in each country but saw superintendents in China with a higher level of consistency in a national educational system. This put superintendents in the United States in a unique and difficult position of needing to face national, state, and local reform efforts while facing local control and community pressures. Research has shown that the role of a superintendent is complex because of the number of areas of focus that are part of the job and the social and political pressures in the job. Research has outlined what success looks like in this difficult position.

Success. The superintendency is a very demanding and high-profile position in any school district (Kinsella, 2004). The process of entering the role requires not only that the administrators have the necessary qualifications and training but also that the administrators must be open and transparent as they seek the role because their personal attributes and sometimes personal lives become the focus during the process (Kinsella,

2004). Kinsella's (2004) research showed the pressures faced, even before entering the role, of what administrators need to be willing to do to start a successful career. Being able to establish relationships with stakeholders during the hiring process is an important first step. Once in the role, strong relationships with the school board and especially the school board president contributed to the tenure of superintendents (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006). When working as a superintendent, research has identified steps to building those relationships.

Superintendents have pointed to the process of building a district vision and mission or strategic planning as an important initial step (Dolph & Grant, 2010). Dolph and Grant (2010) discussed how the process allowed superintendents to build relationships with their board members and communities during the process. They outlined other themes in addition to building a vision and mission contributing to success of a superintendent: communicating the mission, embracing continual improvement, emphasizing the importance of community, being data driven, understanding the fiscal realities of public education, communicating the belief in staff, and maintaining self-awareness and personal health (Dolph & Grant, 2010). In each of these themes, relationship plays a part. Grissom and Andersen (2012) looked at superintendent turnover and found that the most common element resulting in a departure of a superintendent was the status of the relationship with the governing board. This again illustrates strong relationships are key to success. The research supporting relationships leads to the need to understand what the traits, skills, and approaches of successful superintendents are.

Approaches to leadership. As discussed in previous sections of the literature review, successful leadership is a combination of traits, skills, and approaches to leadership. This is also true of successful public school superintendents. When Bird and Wang (2013) examined successful superintendents, those operating from an authentic leadership approach experienced a higher level of success. They found that those superintendents with a high level of self-awareness (knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses), relational transparency (building strong relationships and capacity of others), moral integrity (building a shared vision and having integrity), and balanced processes (relying on data and seeking input from others) built strong district communities and experienced a high level of success (Bird & Wang, 2013). Successful superintendents have also shifted their focus from the traditional managerial concentration to that of teaching and learning.

The superintendents' role has needed to change from manager to instructional leader because of the reform efforts previously mentioned. Superintendents who have been able to focus on teaching and learning and creating a district culture focused on collaboration, collective learning, and building the capacity of leaders within their districts have not only been successful but also seen success in student outcomes (Schechter, 2015). Additional research has found both school boards and superintendents valued the ability to create a culture and climate in which teachers feel valued and supported and can be productive. There is also a shared sense of a moral imperative within the district to assure students achieve at a high level (Webner et al., 2017). Again, the research supports the need for superintendents' ability to build such a culture (Björk

et al., 2018; Klocko et al., 2019; Przybylski et al., 2018). Building such a culture requires both skill and strategy.

Skills. Successful superintendents need a variety of skills, political skill being one of them. Building the necessary relationships and coalitions within a school district requires political skill and an understanding of the system (Hill & Jochim, 2018). Hill and Jochim (2018) discussed how political skill allows a successful superintendent to identify the key areas and groups in which coalitions need to be developed, both inside and outside of the district. Building the necessary coalitions allows the superintendents to make changes or move forward with initiatives to increase student achievement (Hill & Jochim, 2018). Superintendents are charged with serving students while being influenced by the priorities of the adults in the system, and navigating this requires political skill (Melton et al., 2019). Superintendents who garner the requisite political skill are able to build trust, which is another important skill.

Developing and maintaining trust with board members rose as one of the most important areas of trust that needs to be developed by superintendents (Davidson & Hughes, 2019). Davidson and Hughes (2019) pointed out important elements superintendents used to establish trust within their districts. By their actions, words, and support, superintendents set a tone allowing trust to grow. Also, investing in and developing principals builds trust at the management level, and lastly, supporting employees at all levels during difficult times is important for trust building (Davidson & Hughes, 2019).

Communication skills are also important for superintendent success. Public education has been under a high-level of scrutiny since the reform movements began 40

years ago. Superintendents with a command of data and strong communication skills are able to respond to and reframe the discussions regarding public education (Harvey, 2019). Superintendents need to arm themselves with the facts and use those facts to educate the community on the great things happening within the system so the negative narrative is not in control (Harvey, 2019). The work of reframing the narrative is not just the work of the superintendents. Successful superintendents have strong collaborative skills in use as well. As public education came under a higher level of national policy, collaboration was necessary for superintendents to implement change (Björk et al., 2014). Collaboration was important not only to implement reforms but also to elevate the status of the superintendent within the organization (Paulsen et al., 2014). Collaboration skills are an important component of the skills leading to the overall success of superintendents (Henrikson, 2019).

Leading During Turbulence

It would be difficult to pick up a newspaper or watch the local news without seeing a turbulent event impacting public education. This is impossible with the current COVID-19 pandemic touching every school in the world. Even before the world was experiencing a pandemic, research had been done recognizing the crisis management role in education (Gainey, 2009). The year of Gainey's (2009) work marked the 10th anniversary of the Columbine tragedy though there were other similar incidents on public school campuses. Gainey's research found that 80% of metropolitan districts had created a crisis management plan to respond to a number of events. Of the same districts surveyed, 70% had hired a public information officer to assist with information and communication during crisis events, and the majority of the superintendents saw the need

of a crisis management plan as a crucial part of their role (Gainey, 2009). Whether it is a natural disaster, school or community violence, or social unrest impacting communities, it is clear that turbulence and crisis are part of the public school environment.

How a superintendent and school leadership prepare and respond to turbulent times is the real test. In a community that experienced a racially motivated incident because of changing demographics, the leader saw the incident as an opportunity not just to repair the harm but to transform the culture (Huddleston, 2014). The leadership in Huddleston's (2014) study partnered with the city leaders and an outside group to look at critical race theory to transform the district culture after the racially motivated, public incident. In a school district where the Latino population had been overlooked, and the Latino community felt marginalized by the district leadership because of a high profile cheating scandal, it was found that the superintendent was the leader who needed to embrace and model the social justice work desired to rebuild the culture of the district (DeMatthews, Izquierdo, & Knight, 2017). Social and racial issues have long faced superintendents in their role. Violence or student harm have become more prevalent in the last 3 decades.

The suicide or intentional death of a student can shine the public light on the functioning and thus the leadership of a district. When dealing with and confronting the realities of a student suicide, the superintendent is charged with investigating the culture of a district that may contribute to the anxiety quotient in students' lives (McGee, 2016). McGee's (2016) own experience and success provided an example of how a superintendent must be prepared to respond to crisis. With the sad reality of school shootings becoming part of the national landscape, there is a need for school leaders to

prepare to address these possible events. Superintendents and school site-level leaders need to review the facts of prior school shootings and learn from these events to build plans that can prevent, respond, and recover from possible tragic events (C. H. Brown, 2018). The world continues to present new challenges to superintendents as they work to serve students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added a new layer of complexity to the job of a superintendent. The pandemic and distance learning have highlighted the inequity that existed and provided additional issues school leadership needs to address to serve all students (Darling-Hammond, Schachner, & Edgerton, 2020). Superintendents face immediate issues of the digital divide, student engagement, student and staff social and emotional health, and measuring progress, which are just some of the issues leaders are attempting to address during the pandemic (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) also outlined what superintendents will need to do to address the long-term impacts of distance learning, both positive and negative. The pandemic has shown a bright light on the existing inequitable situations many of our students of color face daily (Paremet et al., 2021). Additional research has also added the financial impact and human resource impact of the pandemic now facing superintendents that will need to be addressed long after schools return to the new normal (Starr, 2020).

A Gap in the Research

Despite the extensive research done regarding leading during VUCA or turbulent times and regarding the role of public school superintendents and what leads to their success, there is little research to specifically address how superintendents lead during turbulent times. The complexity of the superintendent's role is growing due to the

VUCA world, and understanding the necessary practices and characteristics is important. There has been limited research conducted on the practices and characteristics of successful superintendents leading during turbulent times. Specifically, applying the leadership elements outlined by Goodwin (2018) in her book *Leadership: In Turbulent Times* would be beneficial to understanding and to seeing how the application could impact superintendent training moving forward.

Summary

Leading an organization in today's world is continually becoming more complex. The world has become more VUCA, and this has made leadership more difficult according to Bywater and Lewis (2019). Leadership in this context requires leaders to possess a specific set of competencies to help their organizations make it through turbulent times (Eliadis, 2019). L. Anderson (2018) discussed the idea that in order to navigate the continual turbulence, skills need to be identified and the lessons from leaders who have been tested need to be understood.

Public school superintendents are experiencing the same level of VUCA or turbulence, which is becoming a normal part of the job (Gainey, 2009). The job of a superintendent is already very difficult. Because of the normal factors facing public school superintendents, there is a high level of turnover in the position (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Research has been done discussing the characteristics of successful superintendents in the normal course of their jobs (Bird & Wang, 2013; Björk et al., 2018; Davidson & Hughes, 2019). However, public school superintendents face turbulence related to natural disasters, mass shootings, and student suicide, all of which are beyond normal organizational events that test a superintendent's leadership ability (L.

Anderson, 2018; McGee, 2016). The increased complexity has made the job of superintendents more difficult.

The research that has examined how superintendents lead when the highest level of turbulence faces their organization is incomplete. The work of Goodwin (2018) discussed four leadership characteristics—moral purpose, concern for the collective good, personal temperament, and resilience—in the context of four U.S. presidents who led the nation during times of extreme turbulence. It is important to apply Goodwin's leadership elements to public school superintendents. Superintendents now face turbulence in their roles as a regular part of the job (Gainey, 2009), and this research study will help fill the gap in the body of work that examines successful public school superintendents and specific leadership characteristics during turbulent times.

AASA (2020) outlined eight areas of focus in their school superintendent training academy. They include the normal aspects of the superintendent position, instructional leadership, finance, board relations, equity, politics, communication, continual improvement, and the position of CEO. However, there is no mention of superintendent leadership during turbulent times. This study can be valuable to AASA as they explore the improvement of their superintendent training program. The research from this study can also support the work school boards must do to find quality superintendents to lead their districts, which has become more difficult because of turnover (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

Chapter III lays out the methodology taken in this research study. Chapter IV includes an analysis of the data collected and presents the findings of the study through tables and narratives. Finally, Chapter V provides a final summary of the study including

major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research as well as concluding remarks and reflections from the researcher.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The world is operating in a state of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). VUCA challenges leaders to successfully guide their organizations. That becomes even more difficult when events push organizations into turbulent times. There are both internal and external factors that create turbulent times within an organization. How leaders handle turbulence is impacted by their guiding leadership philosophy and by leadership behaviors relied upon to assist them to successfully lead their organizations during these turbulent times. Public school superintendents lead complex human organizations. The challenges of operating in a VUCA world have made it even more complicated.

Superintendents also are operating in a VUCA world. Understanding the leadership behaviors that superintendents possess when facing turbulent times caused by both internal and external factors can help understand their likelihood for success. Chapter I provided the background, significance, and organization of the study. In Chapter II, the literature was reviewed as it pertained to turbulent times, leadership theory during crisis, theoretical leadership background, the leadership elements outlined by Goodwin (2018), and the role of the superintendent as a leader. This chapter provides a review of the purpose statement and research questions. In addition, the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, and data collection process are provided.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times

using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

The central question for this research study asked, “What behaviors do exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience as presented in the leadership elements by Goodwin (2018).

Research Subquestions

1. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using moral purpose?
2. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using concern for the collective interest?
3. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using personal temperament?
4. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using resilience?

Research Design

The researcher was part of a four-member thematic team that was supervised by two professors. The team was comprised of one business professional, two retired military officers, and one K-12 educator. All team members took a qualitative phenomenological approach to their research. In the area of business, the team member worked to discover and describe the behaviors that manufacturing managers used to lead

their organizations through the turbulent times of the COVID-19 crisis. The retired Army officer looked at how Army first sergeants practiced when leading their companies through turbulent times while in Afghanistan throughout Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Freedom Sentinel. The researcher has 25 years in public education, including 20 years in administration. The researcher looked at exemplary public school superintendents who have led their districts turbulent times. Lastly, the retired Navy officer searched behaviors that exemplary Navy submarine commanders practiced when leading their command through turbulent times. All researchers used the leadership attributes of personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and moral purpose, which are the elements of Goodwin's (2018) leadership research. The members of the thematic team conducted their research independently. The team collaborated on the purpose of the research, the research questions, key definitions, and interview protocols and questions.

To understand the lived experience of superintendents as they led their organization through turbulence and what characteristics helped them be successful, it was important to study them using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is especially powerful because it emerges from the researcher's observations and interviews out in the real world (Patton, 2015). A qualitative study allows the researcher to gather data in the environment in which they have occurred. The data collected focus on words and stories rather than numbers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). When researching leadership characteristics, it is important to identify themes that come from the stories of those participating in the study (Patten, 2018). There are multiple approaches when

considering a qualitative research study. Selecting the correct qualitative method is important when considering research outcomes (Patton, 2015).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was the best approach for this research study to find how exemplary superintendents used moral purpose, concern for the collective, personal temperament, and resilience to lead their districts during turbulent times. At the core of qualitative research is the belief that the world is complex, and there are few simple answers for human behavior (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This applies to the leadership actions of a superintendent in a human system like schools. Qualitative research also allows the researcher to focus on issues in depth and in detail, unconstrained by predetermined categories (Patton, 2015). Understanding how the participants both perceive their own reality in a specific situation and then react to that reality is an important part of qualitative research. The qualitative approach allowed this study to provide data on leadership in complex realities facing superintendents.

Phenomenology

Patten (2018) defined phenomenology as “the examination of the perceptions of the constructed reality of people experiences with a particular situation” (p. 165). For this study, the qualitative approach was a phenomenological study. Gaining knowledge of the subjects’ perceptions of their role in an organization is a phenomenological approach (Patten, 2018). Patton (2015) discussed a phenomenological study as the search for the essence of a lived experience. When studying how individuals have led their organization through crisis or turbulence and what behaviors they relied upon, this approach allows the researcher to get to the essence of that experience.

Using the phenomenological qualitative approach requires the researcher to conduct thorough interviews. These interviews give the researcher the participants' perspectives on their lived experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Interviews are important when the researcher was trying to gain understanding of how superintendents relied on the characteristics outlined in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that interviews also provide the researcher with the context of the individual's experience to help frame the data collected from interviews. Identifying the appropriate participants for the phenomenological study was the next step.

Population

The population of a research study refers to the elements, objects, or individuals that meet specific criteria to which the researcher plans to generalize the results of the research (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The population used in a research study can be large, for example, public school superintendents in the United States. But when the population is large, it is important for a researcher to consider the logistics of collecting and evaluating data (Patten, 2018). The nature of this study, exemplary superintendents who have led their districts through turbulent times, narrowed the population that may participate in the study. It was important for the researcher to take a purposeful sample approach to ensure the participants met the necessary criteria. Patten (2018) discussed how researchers select key participants who represent the full range of those under the study. There are 13,728 superintendents leading public schools in the United States (AASA, 2020). All superintendents across the country have faced turbulent times and are currently leading public schools during a pandemic. It was important to narrow the scope of the population for both logistical purposes and to ensure that the research best fits the

circumstances that exist for superintendents in California. In California, there are 1,093 superintendents leading public schools (CDE 2018).

Target Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated, “A population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research” (p. 129). This is referred to as the target population. For this reason, superintendents in California were the target population and the population to which the researcher was able to generalize the results (Patten, 2018). For this study, exemplary superintendents who have experienced major crises or turbulent events during their leadership could have included many regions and district sizes. Identifying the sample was important to insure both participation and data collection. For this research study, the target population was exemplary public school superintendents who had led school districts of 1,500 or greater and had been serving in the role of superintendent during the time period of 2010 to the present. According to the Small School District Associate of California there are 462 districts with a student population of 1,499 or less. This left 631 superintendent as possible participants as the target population. With the pandemic keeping all meetings on an online platform, the researcher would look for participants meeting the criteria from all over the state.

Sample

A sample is a subset of the population the researcher is going to study (Patten & Newhart, 2018). When considering the sample of a research study, there are criteria that need to be considered. In the beginning, for planning and budgetary purposes, one specifies a minimum expected sample size and builds a rationale for that minimum

(Patton, 2015). This study was limited to 12 California area public school superintendents who led districts serving a minimum 1,500 students for a minimum of 3 years in the same district during the time period of 2010 to the present and who had been recognized for the exemplary service by their local community leaders, school boards, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), or California School Boards Association (CSBA). The sample included exemplary superintendents who have led their districts through turbulent times, demonstrating behaviors of personal temperament, concern for the collective good, resilience, and moral purpose. The participants worked in ten of the fifty-eight counties in California. The counties range highly populated to counties with smaller populations. The following counties were represented in the study; Butte, Los Angeles, Orange, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Joaquin, Solano, and Sonoma. There are five from Northern California and five from Southern California. It was important to attempt to get representation from a variety of districts to gain access to ensure participants were representative and the research was generalizable to the target population.

The selection of participants can be done by using a probability or nonprobability approach. Using the probability approach involves drawing subjects from a population randomly using different methods of selection. Nonprobability selection allows the researcher to choose subjects who are accessible or may represent certain characteristics (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher used the nonprobability approaches of both convenience sampling, because of accessibility, and purposeful sampling, to ensure participants provided the desired information and experience. Figure 1 illustrates the numbers in the population, target population and sample size. Purposeful sampling

allows the researcher to choose participants who are information rich because they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2015). The researchers' knowledge of the population allows them to select participants who can provide the best information (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher in this study had worked in a variety of leadership groups in the selected geographic region, which assisted with participant selection.

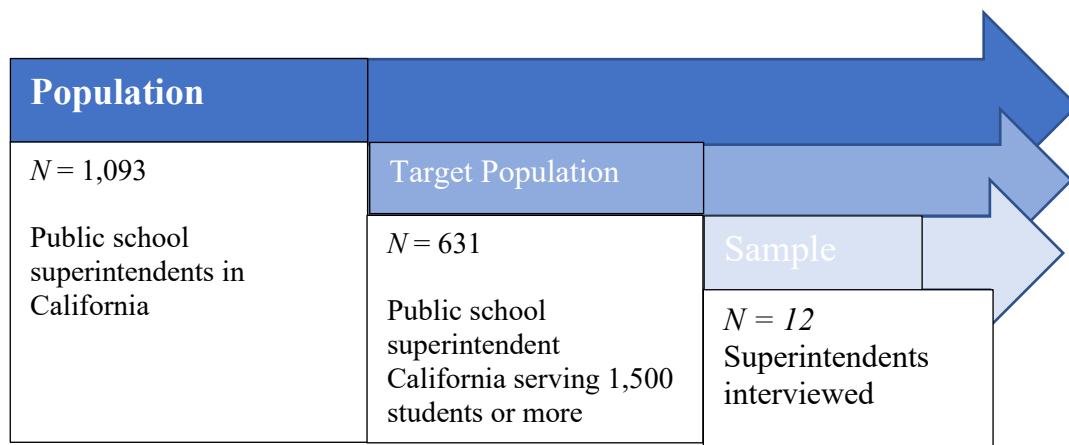


Figure 1. Public school superintendent in California and research sample.

Sampling Procedures

Because of the number of superintendents in California, two sample approaches were used during the research. First, convenience sampling allowed the researcher to access the highest number of participants and allowed for the generalization to similar subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) though this approach can be less representative of the identified population. With the current turbulence caused by the COVID pandemic, finding qualified subjects within the population was not an issue. The researcher took a purposeful sampling approach to select participants who had experience in the phenomenon and were information rich (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The sampling of 12 public school superintendents from identified public school districts from all over California, representing ten counties that met the specified criteria were involved in the study. The researcher worked with ACSA and the California County Superintendents and Educational Services Association (CCSESA) to identify superintendents who have led school districts of 1,500 students or more, held the position for a minimum of 3 years in a single district during the time period of 2010 to the present, and were recognized either by their local community leaders, school boards, ACSA, or CSBA.

Instrumentation

Qualitative research relies on fieldwork made up of interviews, observations, and collection of artifacts supporting the inquiry the researcher is attempting to understand. Patton (2015) explained that the researcher spends time in the research setting studying, observing, interviewing, and collecting information on the topic of study. In the context Patton outlined, the researcher worked to understand the lived experience of the participants as they led their districts through turbulent times. Taking a phenomenological approach to the research was important. Patton described phenomenology as the search for the essence of the lived experience. Phenomenology is a technique that involves in-depth interviews with participants to gain an understanding of perspectives on their everyday lived experience with a specific phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified the key role of the researcher in both the qualitative and phenomenological studies.

Researcher as an Instrument

The researcher was at the center of the fieldwork done in this phenomenological study. Researchers need to bracket or identify their personal past knowledge and all other theoretical knowledge not based directly on the study so that their full attention can be given to the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). The researcher brought 25 years of public education experience to the study, of which 19 years had been in leadership positions. He possessed a master's degree and a doctorate. The ideal qualitative researchers are detached from the study to avoid bringing their own experiences, background knowledge, and bias to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher had spent the last 2 years in a unique setting, providing professional development to teachers and administrators. Working outside a school site and district serving students assisted the researcher with the detachment to remain neutral during the study. The quality of the information received during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer and the quality of the questions (Patton, 2015). To mitigate any implicit bias, the researcher solicited feedback from a qualified observer during the field test and submitted transcription drafts to the interviewees for fact checking.

Interview Questions

Once the area of study has been identified, it is important for the researcher to develop questions that will elicit the responses from the participants who provide information to the researcher on the identified variables of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the researcher was part of a thematic team who developed the interview questions and the supporting probes to address the research

question of how exemplary leaders lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and moral purpose. Because of the complexity of the leadership attributes included in the study, it was important to understand the types of questions, including experiential, feeling, knowledge, opinion, sensory, and background. The interviewer needs to keep these categories in mind prior to the interview and when reviewing responses (Patton, 2015).

Qualitative interview questions are open-ended questions that allow the participant to provide in-depth answers to the phenomenon in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the thematic team developed research questions based on the variables of the study from Goodwin's (2018) leadership element. The interview questions were then developed from the definitions of those variables and with the design to address each of the four research subquestions specifically. The team developed one or two questions and one or two probes for each attribute: personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and moral purpose (Table 2). All of the questions were reviewed by the team and university professors supervising the study.

Interview Protocols

Once the team had reviewed and revised the questions and prompts, interview protocols were developed. Interview protocols include written instructions for conducting interviews along with the questions and prompts to help maintain consistency in the interview process (Patten & Newhart, 2018). The thematic team followed the process outlined by Patten and Newhart (2018). The interview protocols

Table 2

Variable, Interview Questions, and Probes

Variable	Interview question	Probe
Personal temperament (Goldsmith et al., 1987; Keirsey, 1984; Rothbart, Ellis, Rueda, Posner, & Graziano., 2003)	Can you describe your personal temperament? What strategies do you use to adapt your temperament in different situations? For example, how might your temperament change in a turbulent environment compared to an everyday environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share a story where your personal temperament played a role in your leadership position during turbulent situations? • What were the elements of your personal temperament in that situation that helped or hindered a positive outcome/resolution? • Can you describe a situation in which you had to control your temperament to bring your people through a turbulent situation to achieve an important goal?
Collective interest (J. M. Alexander & Buckingham, 2011; Arjoon, Turriago-Hoyos, & Thoene, 2018; Goodwin, 2018; Steffens, Mols, Haslam, & Okimoto, 2016)	How do you assess and remain focused on the collective interest of your organization as you guided the organization through turbulent times? How do you prioritize the collective interest when it conflicts with your own sense of security or your own professional self-interest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there things you do to keep the collective interest in your mind and in the minds of others within the organization? • Tell me about a time when you have experienced this conflict. • What do you do to lead your organization when you are feeling this conflict?
Moral purpose (M. E. Brown & Treviño, 2006; M. E. Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005; Kaptein, 2019; Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000)	As a leader, how do you provide opportunities to your followers to voice their concerns and thoughts about ethical dilemmas confronting the organization? Can you share a story about a time when you had to make a difficult decision and your integrity was on the line?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you do to keep the lines of communication open? • How do you create an atmosphere of trust so your employees feel comfortable about expressing concerns or calling attention to problems in the organization? • What guided you in making that difficult decision? • How do you ensure your employees know how to make difficult decisions?

•

Table 2 (*continued*)

Variable	Interview question	Probe
Resilience (Carver, 1998; Luthans, 2002; Rutter, 2006)	Can you share a time where you needed to absorb and recover from the adversity of an unsuccessful event? What strategies did you use to bring out your own resilience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you increased your resilience in tough times to overcome events that you have failed from as a leader? • How have you demonstrated your resilience as a leader to your staff members within your organization?
	As a leader how do you increase your organization's resilience in handling setbacks and in meeting important project goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies have you found to be effective in building resilience in your team members? • What evidence do you have that your people are resilient in challenging times?

were reviewed by the team and participating university faculty and revised as needed prior to the field test.

Field Test

A field test was conducted with a participant who met the criteria but who was not part of the actual sample. The field-test participant had been a superintendent for over 3 years during the time period outlined and had been recognized for leadership by both local and state organizations for leadership during the Northern California wildfires of 2017. The participant was provided both the protocols and questions in advance. A university faculty member also observed the interview, which was conducted via an online format. A field test allows the researcher an opportunity to evaluate the process, revise questions for clarity and intent, and find ease with which the data can be summarized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Also, the field test allows the researcher to identify any possible bias the researcher may bring to the

research process (Patten & Newhart, 2018). After each thematic team member field tested the questions, the team and faculty advisors met collectively to review the processes and to make any changes needed to the protocols or questions. The work done through the question development and field testing increases the validity and reliability of research outcomes.

Validity and Reliability

According to Creswell (2014), “Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (p. 251). The researcher can work to insure validity of the research by making sure the data have mutual meaning between the researcher and the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This was accomplished by sharing both the interview transcripts and data summary back to the participants. The participants were given time to review the transcripts for accuracy and to ensure the transcripts reflected the interview. The researcher also used artifacts and observations, in addition to the interviews, to triangulate the findings. The researcher should clarify any bias that may impact the findings of the research as well as point out contrary findings that may appear in the research, both increasing the validity of the findings.

The researcher can take purposeful steps to also insure the reliability of the study. Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement or the extent to which the instrument is providing similar results during the data collection process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher took steps to maintain consistency of the process first by creating interview protocols with the thematic team. It is important to check all the interview

transcripts for errors, creating clear codes of themes for the data collected (Creswell, 2014). The researcher carefully reviewed each interview transcript prior to sending it to the participants for their review. Codes were developed by the thematic team to provide input and clarity prior to conducting intercoder work.

Internal Reliability

Data reliability is shown when the “researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). In qualitative research, it is critical to outline the steps the researcher took to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Internal reliability examines the stability of the data. The thematic team worked collectively to create a consistent process for conducting the research interviews. Creswell (2014) outlined several qualitative reliability procedures:

- checking transcripts to ensure there are no obvious transcription errors,
- making sure there is no shift in the meaning of codes during the process of coding,
- checking for inter coder agreement by cross-checking and comparing results,
- documenting procedural steps, and
- creating a case study protocol and database so others can replicate the study, thereby enhancing the ability to assess the accuracy of the findings. (p. 203)

Intercoder Reliability

Though the researcher was part of a thematic team, each team member focused on a different area to study. Thus, it was important for each individual researcher to cross-check the data and codes to find agreement (Creswell, 2014). The thematic team collectively worked to identify some basic code themes prior to evaluating the

research. Next, the researcher followed the steps outlined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) by identifying, defining, and further refining the codes within the individual data. The researcher also sorted through all of the data collected, which gave the researcher a broader sense of all of the information collected. Once the data were collected, team members cross-checked data to determine whether there was agreement on coding approaches. When there is consistent use of ratings or observations on the same data, this constitutes agreement (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). One peer team member checked 10% of the data collected and found 80% agreement between the team member and researcher.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, data collection is about strategies that are part of overlapping cycles (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). These cycles happen as part of the fieldwork done during the research phase of the process. Data collection or fieldwork is more than a single method or technique (Patton, 2015). It involves interviews, observations, and artifacts that allow the researcher to make connections and triangulate the data and gain a richer understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Once participants were identified, in-depth, in-person, and virtual interviews were conducted. In addition, artifacts were collected, and observations were done when possible.

Types of Data

Interviews. Interviews are the most commonly used measure of collecting data used in qualitative research studies (Patten, 2018). Interviews were the primary source of data collection used in this study. Participants were superintendents who had led

districts serving a minimum 1,500 students for a minimum of 3 years in the same district during the time period of 2010 to the present and who had been recognized for their exemplary service by their local community leaders, ACSA, or CSBA. Participants were sent the protocols and interview questions prior to participating in the interviews. The interviews were conducted via an online platform because of the COVID-19 pandemic preventing face-to-face interviews. The interview questions were created collectively by the thematic team that was led by two university faculty. All team members used the same questions and probes.

Observations. Observations are a way for a researcher to see and hear naturally what a participant is experiencing in the environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this research study, observations consisted of video observations of school board meetings, online leadership team meetings, and other online district meetings led by the superintendents. Observation notes were used to triangulate data.

Artifacts. Artifacts have long been part of research. In today's modern world, there is always a paper trail of artifacts, memos, e-mails, and agendas that are valuable for the fieldwork done in research (Patton, 2015). For this study, the researcher used memos, e-mails, newsletters, material posted on the district website, newspaper article, and meeting agendas produced by the participants as artifacts. The artifacts were also used to triangulate the research data.

Triangulation of data. There are techniques the researcher can take to increase the dependability, validity, and trustworthiness of the data (Patton, 2015).

Interview Procedures

Participants were interviewed using an online computer platform because of the current pandemic. The interviews were conducted using a semistructured format. The semistructured approach allows the researcher to ask probes and deviate from the script to gain clarification or more information from the participant (Patten, 2018). Both the interview questions and probes were developed collectively by the thematic team and reviewed by university faculty. The interviews were transcribed by the online meeting platform. All participants received copies of the interview transcripts to review for accuracy. Mechanically recording the interview and having the participants review the interview transcripts for accuracy also increases the validity of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The following process was used to collect data for this phenomenological research study:

1. The researcher used the criteria to find participants from the identified Northern California counties.
2. An e-mail was sent to superintendents in the geographic region who met the criteria.
3. The superintendents who agreed to participate were sent a copy of the interview protocols, questions, and the IRB and the informed consent forms (see Appendices A, B, C, and D).
4. The interview platform and procedures were outlined by the researcher when an agreed upon time was established.

5. The online platform recording and a transcript of the interview were sent to each participant.
6. The researcher described the possible artifacts that the researcher would be looking for and that the participant could supply.

Data Analysis

For a qualitative research study, the researcher collects different sources of data to understand the lived experience of the participants with a specific phenomenon. Qualitative researchers collect and analyze their observations and interviews to see patterns in the data that can be explained by theories (Patten, 2018). The study included interviews with 10 superintendents, observations of the participants leading meetings, and written artifacts produced by the participants. The challenge for the researcher in a qualitative study is the process of reducing large amounts of raw data into identifiable patterns and constructing a framework to clearly communicate the findings (Patton, 2015). There are specific processes the researcher can use to accomplish this task.

Creswell (2014) outlined a process for analyzing data in a qualitative research study:

- Organize and prepare the data for analysis, visually inspecting all the data.
- Read and look at all the data, gain an overall understanding.
- Start coding the data, use a computer base system, ex. NVivo.
- Use the coding process to generate themes and develop the setting.
- Develop how the description and themes will be presented.
- The final step is an interpretation of the research.

During the data collection process, the researcher reviews the data collected to gain the understanding discussed by Creswell (2014), to ensure interview processes are followed consistently, and to identify discrepancies that may occur during the process. The researcher conducted all the coding of the data. To assure reliability, the researcher had an independent consultant with a doctorate and experience in qualitative research recode the data. The researchers and independent reviewer were looking for a minimum of 80% agreement on 10% of the data (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Patton (2015) discussed the concept that semistructured interviews should provide a foundation for intercoder agreement, but when interviews vary with additional questions that are not replicated in every interview, this can diminish the agreement but not the value of the data. NVivo, a data analysis software, was used to organize coded responses. Analysis of frequency and variety of the codes was performed. This provided insights into the leadership behaviors superintendents used to lead their districts during turbulent times.

Limitations

All research studies contain limitations. Qualitative research studies provide rich data about the lived experiences of participants in a specific phenomenon, but the research must identify and acknowledge the study's limitations. Some limitations are beyond the control of the researcher.

Researcher Bias

The largest barrier to the credibility of qualitative research studies is the idea that the researcher will shape the data to the researcher's own perceptions or biases (Patton, 2015). The researchers must do their due diligence to be open with the

possible limitations of the study. The researcher in this study has worked in varying leadership roles, both at the site and district office level. This experience allowed the researcher to understand the systems in which superintendents are operating. It is important for the researcher to do a critical self-examination of the impact of the experience brought to the research and be transparent when describing the potential bias that may exist (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell (2014) stated, “Good qualitative research contains comments by the researcher about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as their gender, background, history, and socioeconomic origin” (p. 251).

Number of Participants

In this research study, the limitations included the number of participants in the study. The researcher included 12 superintendents representing a variety of districts similar to many around the state. However, this can be seen as a limitation considering the number of superintendents in California and the variety of districts that serve the students around the state.

Time

Time is always a limitation. Participants were scheduled for 1-hour interviews, which occurred during their workday. Job requirements of the day could have impacted the detail provided by respondents to open-ended questions.

Geography

Geography is also another possible limitation. However, with the use of online interviewing platforms the researcher was able to access superintendents from districts

from the entire state. The researcher worked to get districts from a variety of geographical settings to insure representation from all areas of California.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience. The methodology of this research study was chosen to help superintendents gain a deeper understanding of how the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience can impact their ability to lead their districts through turbulent times. The participants were able to provide a detailed account of their experience of leading their school district during turbulent times. Chapter IV provides an analysis of the data gathered and presents the findings of the study clearly and succinctly through tables and narrative description.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter reestablishes the purpose of the study, the research questions, the methods, and the data collection process used in this study. Study participant demographics are summarized prior to a data analysis and summary of key findings that correspond to the study's research questions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

The central question for this research study asked, "What behaviors do exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience as presented in the leadership elements by Goodwin (2018)."

Research Subquestions

1. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using moral purpose?
2. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using concern for the collective interest?

3. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using personal temperament?
4. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using resilience?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

In this phenomenological study, the researcher worked to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the behavioral elements of personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and moral purpose. The primary source of data collection was from qualitative in-depth interviews with each superintendent to provide detailed explanations of the lived experiences of the superintendents and how the behavioral elements helped them be successful. Data collected from artifacts and observations were used to triangulate data collected from the interviews.

The interview protocol (Appendix A) and research questions (Appendix B) were developed by a team of peer researchers working as a thematic team under the guidance of faculty chairs. The interview protocols were organized around the four behavioral elements of moral purpose, concern for the collective, personal temperament, and resilience. There were two questions for each of the behavioral elements. The protocols also included one or two probes for each of the questions to guide the participants deeper into their experience around each of the elements and questions. All 12 interviews were conducted via Zoom, were recorded within the application, and were audio recorded via the Otter.ai application to secure a second transcription source (see Appendix E). The interviews ranged from 42 to 59 minutes, with an average interview time of 44 minutes.

While the primary sources of data for this study were the 12 in-depth interviews that were conducted, additional data sources were used to validate the data collected from the primary source interviews. Twelve observations of the participants—either at board meetings or during recorded presentations—were done by the participants during the COVID-19 pandemic to update their communities on the status of schooling. The observation times ran from 12 to 30 minutes, resulting in an average observation time of 11 minutes.

Twenty-four artifacts were collected from study participants and through the researcher's investigation of publicly available artifacts on district websites, social media accounts, and other publications. Artifacts included participant resumes, newspaper articles describing superintendent or board member perspectives or actions, and website and social media postings by superintendents on updates on the crisis currently facing their district due to the pandemic. The artifacts were used to identify additional frequencies in the superintendents' communication with the public and districts of the behavioral characteristics in this study. Collection of these artifacts allowed the researcher to corroborate the information gathered from the interviews and observations in this study.

Population

There are 13,728 superintendents leading public schools in the United States (AASA, 2020). Superintendents across the United States have faced turbulent times while leading their districts. The researcher chose to seek participants from California. According to the California Department of Education (2018), there are 1,093 superintendents representing school districts in California. The population of

superintendents in the state was narrowed to a target population. Originally the study was to be limited to the nine Northern California counties because the population of California was too large to make it feasible to survey or interview all potential participants in the study. However, with the outbreak of the pandemic and the utilization of online meeting platforms, accessing superintendents across California became feasible. The population was opened to all superintendents in California leading districts of 1,500 or more, which allowed the researcher to reach out to superintendents leading a variety of districts in a variety of geographic regions. With data provided by the Small School District Associate of California, the researcher was able to identify districts with a student population of 1,500 or more. This left 631 district superintendents who could be possible participants.

For this study, exemplary superintendents who had experienced major crises or turbulent events during their leadership could have included many regions and districts or all sizes. Identifying the sample was important to insure both participation and data collection. Finally, opening up the participation to all districts with a student population greater than 1,500 again allowed the researcher to include a variety of districts in the study and to work to have a representative group of participants in regard to gender and ethnicity.

Sample

For this research study, the researcher worked with committee members and university faculty to create a list of characteristics to identify exemplary superintendents. The criteria were important to ensure that the participants had the necessary qualifications and, more importantly, the experience in a leadership position to communicate those

experiences to the researcher during the interviews and data collection. The following were the established and agreed-upon criteria.

1. Participants served in districts with a minimum student population of 1,500 students.
2. The participants have been in the position for a minimum of 2 years in the same district during a crisis period that occurred within the past 5 years
3. The participants have been recognized for their exemplary service by their local community leaders, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), or California School Boards Association (CSBA).

The researcher purposefully contacted superintendents from all over California via e-mail including an introduction letter (Appendix F). The researcher received 17 responses and, after applying the above-mentioned criteria, scheduled the 12 interviews. The sample included exemplary superintendents who had led their districts through turbulent times, demonstrating the behaviors of personal temperament, concern for the collective good, resilience, and moral purpose. The study included rural, suburban and urban districts from all over California. It was important to use the correct sampling procedure to gain access to enough participants to both ensure ease of access and that the research was generalizable to superintendents.

Demographic Data

Tables 3 and 4 describe the study participants by criteria match and demographics. The researcher maintained confidentiality by assigning a number to each participant. No names, schools, or districts were identified in this study. All participants in the study exceeded the established criteria for exemplary superintendents as noted in Table 3. Three of the participants met all of the criteria. Only one of the participants met

only three of the six criteria, and the remaining participants met at least four of the six criteria. The number of areas in which the participants met the criteria to be considered exemplary indicate the quality of the participants included in the study.

Table 3

Exemplary Criteria: Superintendents

Study participant	Minimum 2 years in current position	District enrollment >1,500	Recognized at local level	Recognized at county level	Recognized at state level	Recognized by professional organization
1	√	√	√		√	
2	√	√		√		
3	√	√			√	√
4	√	√	√	√	√	√
5	√	√	√		√	
6	√	√	√	√	√	√
7	√	√	√	√	√	√
8	√	√	√		√	
9	√	√			√	√
10	√	√		√	√	
11	√	√	√	√		
12	√	√	√	√	√	

Table 4

Study Participant Demographic Data

Participant number	Years in current position	Age range	Gender	Identified ethnicity	Terminal degree
1	4	45-55	F	C	EdD
2	7	55-65	M	C	EdD
3	6	55-65	M	C	EdD
4	8	45-55	M	Asian	PhD
5	4	55-65	F	DTS*	MA
6	5	45-55	M	C	EdD
7	4	55-65	F	Asian	EdD
8	14	55-65	F	C	EdD
9	7	55-65	M	C	MS
10	5	45-55	M	C	EdD
11	8	55-65	M	C	EdD
12	4	55-65	M	C	EdD

*Declined to state

Table 4 summarizes the demographic data collected from each participant. All participants had served as superintendents for a minimum of 4 years in their current district. The average years of service of the 12 participants was 6.33 years. The length of tenure of the participants was above the average tenure of a superintendent in California is 3 years (Frey, 2012). Four of the participants were in the age range of 45 to 55, while the remaining eight were in the 55 to 65 range. Ten of the participants held doctoral degrees. The remaining two had master's degrees. All participants had completed various professional trainings related to both their superintendency and role as a school administrator. Only four of the 12 participants were female. All but three of the participants identified as Caucasian, two identified as of Asian descent, and one participant declined to state.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The findings discussed in this section were gathered from online platform interviews, observations, and collected artifacts related to the leadership behaviors of the superintendents demonstrated while leading their districts during turbulent times.

Data Analysis

Transcripts of each interview were reviewed by participants for accuracy and then uploaded into NVivo software for computer-aided analysis of data. Coding of the interview data produced themes that reflected the four leadership behaviors of operating with a moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience. Each of the four leadership behaviors resulted in research questions with subquestions. The subquestions were coded individually. Upon completion of the coding process, frequency of the codes were collected and analyzed to determine the

strength of each theme. Analysis using the codes and frequencies of the codes provided information regarding the leadership behaviors exemplary superintendents use when leading their district during turbulent times.

Reliability

Data collected from the in-depth interviews were triangulated with artifact and observation data, the results of which were reported for each research question. A peer researcher reviewed 10% of the qualitative data to compare the data coding and themes developed by the researcher to determine whether the codes were consistently applied (Creswell, 2014). The peer researcher independently coded 10% of the data by coding one full interview and one major theme of another of the 12 interviews resulting in 83% agreement. The observations and artifacts were coded in the same manner as the interview data to measure frequency of themes and to triangulate the data from participant interviews. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “Artifacts are tangible manifestations that describe people’s experience, knowledge, actions, and values” (p. 361).

Research Question Results

Qualitative Data Results

The thematic research team developed common questions and probes for each of the leadership behaviors outlined in Goodwin’s (2018) work. The leadership behaviors of moral purpose, concern for collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience represented a research question. Each participant was asked the same questions and probes in the same order to insure consistent data collection. Each interview transcript was reviewed and coded in the same manner. Each research question was first coded as

an independent section. The researcher then reviewed the coded transcripts and identified common themes that were present across all four leadership behaviors and main research questions.

Table 5 shows the total code frequency for each research question, major theme, and their themes from all 12 interviews, observations, and artifacts. There was a total of 512 codes. Of the coded responses, 38% connected to the theme of moral purpose. Concern for the collective interest resulted in 27% of coded responses, personal temperament provided 15%, and resilience resulted in 20%.

Table 5

Research Questions—Major Theme Total Frequency

Moral purpose	Concern for the collective interest	Personal temperament	Resilience
194/38%	137/27%	77/15%	104/20%

The difference in frequency was connected to two aspects of the research. First, the number of themes for each of the research questions contributed to the total number of codes. Second, the connection to the individual participants was that they saw their own behaviors within their organization, which also impacted the total number for each major theme. This aspect of the research and each of the themes for each research question are explored further as the research data are shared. In the following tables and narratives, the researcher breaks down the themes for each research question and reviews the responses provided by the participants. This further exploration of the data also provides examples of the lived experiences of the participants as they led their districts during turbulent times.

Moral Purpose

Table 6 contains the frequencies related to the first research question and major theme of how exemplary superintendents lead their districts during turbulent times using their moral purpose. The research for this leadership behavior produced the highest number of coded frequencies. It also had the highest number of themes. There were eight themes that emerged through the research process.

Table 6

Moral Purpose Frequency by Theme and Source

Theme	Interviews	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Exemplary superintendents lead successfully with moral purpose when they				
Are present and accessible	10	12	22	23
Consistently model honesty & transparency	8	5	13	20
Build relationships	10	16	26	29
Communicate regularly	10	10	20	24
Develop trust	10	14	22	28
Promote two-way communication	11	15	26	30
Share their why	11	25	36	41

Accessible and present. The first theme was being present and accessible during turbulent times as the superintendent of a district. Of the participants, 83% provided information and experiences supporting the theme as being part of their moral purpose. Being accessible and present during turbulent times received 23 codes for this research question. Participants reported that being accessible and present was foundational to their success of leading during turbulent times. Participant 2 reported,

I have always worked to be present. I try and go to a lot of events, and when I go to an event and I see and there's teachers there I've worked to reach out to every

single one of them. I'm not a wallflower in the back. I'm not that type person, I would go out, I would talk to everyone. I want to engage with my community.

Participants reported that this was important part of their leadership from the very beginning of their tenure as superintendents in their districts. Participant 12 stated,

I have always been pretty good at being very approachable. People have a sense that I am there for them, and they have an easy time approaching me. You know, meeting with me or talking to me. So, you know I don't avoid you know people like, when they have an issue. I really, you know, invite inquiry. And I think people know that, you know, so I know that they, don't shy away from telling me when there is a problem.

Participants also indicated that this was intentional work on their part. Participant 9 discussed regularly making site time for conversations with staff where, "I have no agenda. I am there to hear from them and understand what is and what is not working for them." Being approachable and present as a leader, which was a component of the superintendent's moral purpose, had served them as their districts entered the COVID-19 lockdowns. Participant 5 shared,

I think first starting with an open-door policy prior to the COVID environment helped after the lockdown. They always know I am open for staff; helps build strong relationships, helps to kind of create that environment that is better able to handle a crisis.

Moral leadership involves modeling moral behavior, being fair, building strong interpersonal relationships, being transparent, and giving followers a voice in the process (M. E. Brown et al., 2005).

Modeling honesty and transparency. Another component of moral purpose was the intentional modeling of honesty and transparency. Of the participants, 66% provided responses for this theme. The frequency of this theme received twenty codes for this theme. The participants again shared that modeling honesty and transparency was another foundational piece of who they are as leaders. Participant 1 shared,

At the heart of my leadership is the desire to do the best for others, that it makes it easier to share information, so I think telling the truth. Not withholding information is key because it's going to come out one form or the other so better to be forthright and upfront in the first place.

Participant 10 attributed their longevity and success during the pandemic to the following: "It has been a validation of kind of my style and I'm very comfortable going into that [turbulent] environment, because I tend to just be honest and open with people."

The interviews also provided evidence that modeling honesty and transparency needs to take place before a crisis to help the superintendent navigate turbulent times. Leadership must be open and transparent as they seek the role because their personal attributes and sometimes personal lives become the focus during the process (Kinsella, 2004). Participant 1 stated,

I think just being open, creating a climate of developing a shared vision, and being honest, being transparent, letting people feel that it's okay, it's okay to give feedback it's okay to voice concerns, has helped and I have found in our district is that every time, no matter the crisis we've faced or the turbulent times we faced we have been able to get through.

This was also echoed by Participant 6 who shared, “From me as a superintendent there has to be clear, authentic transparent information provided to everyone in the educational community, that all people on either side of the dilemma get the same information.” Modeling honesty and transparency as part of Participant 6’s moral purpose created an environment that allowed others in the organization to respond in the same manner. This was evidenced by what Participant 5 provided,

And we model the conversation of honest[y] and openness to have that dialogue, you show that it’s a safe place to have these conversations and you get others who are willing to tell the superintendent that they might be wrong.

Building relationship. Though the next piece of the moral purpose theme received only 29 codes for this research question, building relationships is supported by the previous two themes discussed. Of the superintendents interviewed, 83% did include building relationship as an explicit part of their moral purpose. Dolph and Grant (2010) in their research discussed how superintendents need to build relationships with their board members and communities to be successful. Each of the 10 participants provided supporting statements for this theme. Participant 1 said,

If you’ve built a strong, trusting relationship with them, so that they see that you mean what you say you say what you mean, you have good follow through. Then they’ll be there to help you in the future too.

Again, this component seemed be a foundational part of successful leadership prior to turbulent times. Participant 1 also shared, “I intentionally set out to get to know their bargaining team, you know we’d have lunch together, really so that when you sit down at

the bargaining table really, you're able to solve problems." Participant 3 discussed the importance of building relationships prior to turbulent times:

I've gotten to know them pretty well over the last 6 years because before we went into lockdown. I made sure to be the leader walking around talking to people and developing the relationships. So, when it came time to have the hard conversations about what we were facing due to the pandemic, the connections were there.

Working to establish strong relationships allowed the participants to better navigate turbulent times. Participant 11 shared,

Well, I think everything is rooted in relationships. Trust and relationship are interchangeable, right? Our district has been rooted in the foundation of relationships, and we know that to be true in anything relationships trumps strategy, you can't get people to move unless they trust you. This has been so important in our current situation.

These experiences are evidence of the importance of the component building relationships, which is these leaders' moral purpose. As the research continued, it was clear that these elements of a moral purpose were not independent of one another.

Communicating regularly. This theme was mentioned by 83% of the participants. There were 24 codes in this theme. Eliadis (2019) discussed the human attributes of being communicative and making sure the communication is clear and provides up-to-date information openly and regularly. The participants shared a variety of regular communications they utilized prior to leading during turbulent times. Participant 8 explained,

From my first day in the role I'd say I engaged in cycles of communication and continuous improvement and that was integrated with broad means, e-mails, meetings, and several platforms of social media and other things, and that was prepandemic.

These systems of regular communication were evidenced by several of the research participants. Participant 5 explained the following:

In our district I always practice regular open communication and open dialogue. It is really important in making sure that everyone can see how to go about having those conversations, right? So that whether we openly discuss or dialogue about situations as a group, at meetings that are large or small, we really do try to do it in all communication modes, as an open forum and just really those hard conversations together.

Participant 1 shared the various modes of regular communication in which they engaged: "I use weekly meetings, videos and notes posted on our website for the four stakeholder groups, classified, certificated, management, and parents. I have been doing this from day one all the way up to today." Communicating regularly had also been done on a very individual or personal level by participants. Participant 12 stated,

I mean it's pretty basic, but I'm pretty good and very approachable. People have a sense or easy time. You know, meeting with me or talking to me. I think they pick up the phone or they want a Zoom meeting, or they want to meet in person if it's that personal.

There was evidence of a personal need to directly communicate with individuals in their community. Participant 2 established a system of communication where they wanted

their community to know to e-mail them if they had a question, “Please write to me.”

Participant 2 discussed spending hours in the evening responding personally to all the e-mails before the end of the day. It was clear this level of regular communication served the participants as they led their districts during turbulent times. Participant 1 explained,

Since March 13 weekly meetings, and the video and notes from those meetings are posted for the community to view. So, we’ve been meeting with folks weekly, the meetings have gotten a lot more streamlined due to the work done since the pandemic.

The regular communication has been used to ensure that district communities are informed on the status of schooling. Participant 2 shared that when people have a question or a concern, for example, “about getting the vaccine,” they have really tried to create a system of regular communication that allows their community to feel like they can reach out to them directly. Without communicating regularly, this might not happen. Participant 10 discussed that their team has been out there publicly since last March, so their families, community, and staff know that they will get regular communication letting them know how and when they will serve students during the pandemic and when they will safely get their kids back in schools. Participant 10 also shared,

You need to be honest, and direct with families with the community, and with staff, because people’s lives have had so much uncertainty and so many challenges in the last year that as a leader, if we can bring certainty, and stability.

Then we have a moral obligation to do that.

Again, participants illustrated how communicating regularly with their community is a facet of one’s moral purpose.

Developing trust. Developing and maintaining trust with board members and their community rose as one of the most important areas of trust that needs to be developed by superintendents (Davidson & Hughes, 2019). The interviews showed that developing trust is both an intentional leadership behavior, which is part of a leader's moral purpose, and a result of leading with a moral purpose during turbulent times. Of the respondents, 83% provided responses coded in this theme, the average frequency of those respondents was 3.25% higher than other theme frequencies. Participant 1 provided a statement showing the importance of this theme:

I start with the premise that I'm not the only person that has a moral purpose, and by believing that those around me, have a heart and want to do the best for others, that it makes it easier to share information, so I think telling the truth and having this mindset builds trust.

Participant 1 also added,

Over time with building relationships, when people get used to knowing that that you're not going to withhold anything that you're going to be forthright and upfront and transparent and everything at every stage of the process then it builds a level of trust.

Participant 2 provided evidence that the impact of the relationship they built has provided a level of trust, which has helped them with the work during difficult times:

And then, you know, you build relationships with people when people see that you have relationships, and that you care about them. I think that goes a long way to building a comfort zone to share ideas, and so they understand and sometimes you got to make decisions they don't like. But I think rather than think, "Oh that

dirty bastard,” they think he’s a pretty good guy. “I don’t know what happened here. But I trust him because I know him as a person.”

Developing trust was part of the evidence provided by the participants; this also showed how without trust, leading during turbulent times can be difficult. Participant 6 explained, “I think from a leader standpoint, the most critical thing about leading during [a] crisis is you have built relationships and these folks see you as credible and when you talk to them that they have trust you.” Building trust does not happen in a vacuum and is connected to other aspects of how one leads. Participant 8 stated, “As the superintendent I have continually asked, ‘Do we create an atmosphere of trust for our employees,’ so they feel comfortable about expressing concerns, or even calling attention to problems within your district.”

Having trust in place has allowed participants to lead their organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant 9 discussed that by creating an atmosphere of trust, they were able to have those conversations around the concerns of all stakeholders at a deep level. When leading during turbulent times, if trust is not in place, it can be an obstacle. Participant 5 explained, “Leaders that refuse to have those hard conversations, I think that doesn’t instill trust when the proverbial you know what hits the fan, they’re just they don’t trust that you’re going to do the right thing.” Finally, trust is something that needs to be maintained, especially during turbulent times. According to Participant 11,

Trust is something that you earn over time and then you follow through with what you say you’re going to do and when people feel that way then there’s a lot more willingness to have conversations during a crisis. If you don’t stick to that you can lose it very quickly.

Practicing open two-way communication promotes trust and was part of the many coded themes discussed above, but it was not one directional.

Promoting two-way communication. Superintendents leading during turbulent times rely on two-way communication as part of the moral purpose to be successful. M. E. Brown et al. (2005) asserted that leadership during turbulent times includes “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication” (p. 120). Ninety-two percent of the participants discussed two-way communication as part of their moral purpose. This coded theme received a frequency count of 30. Two-way communication as part of one’s moral purpose is interconnected to other themes. Participant 1 said that leaders have a moral obligation to be transparent and open with information and listen to all parts of their community. Participant 2 stated, “I really tried to make sure that there’s a real open floor, and I’m generally the last one to talk is I want to hear the dialogue, I want to hear what needs to be said by all groups.” Participant 11 discussed how important it is to have a system of two-way communication, to understand the concentric circles of communication, and to understand how information goes out and comes in through those circles. Public schools that are healthy systems have systems of two-way communication. Participant 10 shared,

I think the main thing is just the frequent communication. So, whether that’s, whether that’s one-way communication or two-way communication. You have to have frequent communication, because that just shows that that door is open and that there’s a vehicle to communicate ideas and concerns in many directions.

It is not enough for a superintendent to create a culture of two-way communication, but it needs to be seen as valuable. Participant 10 stated, “You have to show that, you really do value that communication taking place and it is not just something done to check the box.” It can be important to be intentional and public when valuing two-communication.

Participant 11 provided the following information:

I’ve worked really hard to make sure that people in disagreeing with me have an avenue to communicate. That it was okay to disagree with the superintendent. But as long as we kept in the core and a forefront equity of student outcomes, everything was open game. So, making sure we stay in our lane but creating those environments that allow them to express themselves.

Participant 6 discussed,

My, my thoughts on two-way is that it is important on a bigger scale. I’m just thinking is the culture of what needs to be established, so that so that stakeholders can speak their mind and their truth, and their insights, and that and that the superintendent can hear it.

A culture of two-way communication became very important during the turbulent times created by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the lockdown starting March 13, 2020, systems of two-way communication were utilized by the participants. Participant 1 explained what their school’s plan was moving forward after that day:

We had system in place to get information out to our staff and students. We utilized those by the end of day Friday. We met to plan the Zoom calls to begin first thing Monday. I explained we don’t necessarily have answers, we’re just going to hear from you. We want to hear what your experiences are, and we’ll

answer any questions we can. We did that with every stakeholder group so classified employees, certificated employees, and a management team, all on that Monday, we zoomed in different hours.

The communication systems needed to be understood and familiar so all stakeholders can access them. Communication systems need to be in place prior to turbulent times.

Participant 3 stated, “If the only time you’re communicating is when there’s a problem or when there’s a crisis, that won’t be enough to get through it all.” Participant 9 explained that having created many entry points to give the community a say is important decisions. Valuing everyone’s time by making sure the leadership team is there, especially in Zoom, in a pandemic, they have increased the number of meetings that they have had. This has allowed their organization to be better equipped to face the pandemic. Participants shared that being a successful leader of a public school district during turbulent times requires being focused on why one takes on that responsibility in the first place.

Sharing their why. Being a person focused on the reason or purpose for taking on a leadership role can be important on many levels. It is part of one’s moral purpose. Of the participants, 92% provided information for this theme. This theme also presented the highest overall number of codes, with 41 items equaling 20% of the codes from all eight themes under moral purpose. Superintendents’ why keeps them centered, motivates their work, and helps them inspire those within their district and the students they serve. Servant leadership is connected to the desire to create a more caring and better society (Andersen, 2018). It is also rooted in the idea of public education itself. Participant 8 explained the foundation for their why: “We have public education in the United States of America for a reason. That means the superintendent has to hold onto the spirit of

democracy that brought about public education.” Others have explained their why at more basic level. Participant 2 boiled it down to always doing what is best for the kids they serve: “If it isn’t a good enough for my kid, how can I say it is good enough for other people’s children. That has to continually be my focus.”

Participants revealed sharing their “why” is a constant part of their communication with the community and districts. Participant 10 stated,

I always share my leadership values with the entire district, and I do this annually so that they, they get to know more about me and who I am and what’s important to me and what some of my values are, as a leader. I have been doing this since my interview for the position.

During normal times this is an important practice to provide guidance to the district.

Participant 1 said as superintendent they work “to build this collective moral army of people wanting to pull on the right levers for the community for the school for the children we serve and for whatever the mission of the district is.” During turbulent times, like previous components of one’s moral purpose, sharing one’s why needs to happen before times get tough.

Participant 10 again shared, “I think, establishing and sharing your values and those of your organization has to be done in advance of turbulent times.” The current pandemic has complicated the work done by superintendents. Keeping site of their why or moral purpose is more important than ever. Participant 3 explained,

I have stuck to my guns, even though people thought that I wasn’t being caring or empathetic. I had to keep reminding people. I do care about you, but I think we can still do this in a safe environment. But I also care deeply

for the kids. That's what we're trying to do here is make sure that our kids have the best from us all.

Participant 6 said making sure everyone on the team understands their core beliefs and that they must be aligned for the system to really do the work for students that needs to be done during very difficult times. Participants have had to navigate, "between parent groups and teacher groups about whether we should open or close." They needed to make sure they went back to, again, the fundamental question, "What's in the best interest of the students?" As the participants shared how they were navigating the turbulent times associated with the pandemic, it was their "why" or their moral purpose that was important.

Participant 2 stated that when one is the superintendent, "It's your call, you make the decision, do what's best for kids and you never have to explain yourself." Participant 3 shared that when having a tough time, they can honestly sleep at night knowing that they did what they did because they knew it was right for the children they serve. All of the participants are serving well beyond the average tenure of service of superintendents in California and they connected to being focused on their moral purpose and their why. Participant 7 stated, "I don't think I've ever compromised my values, but I think you know back to the things that are happening with the pandemic, politically or around the equity work, and I know I am doing the right thing." Whether operating during the normal difficult human industry of public education or during turbulent times of the COVID-19, it is always important to bring the focus back to your why. Participant 4 summed it up well, "You've got to side with the kids, when you protect your students and

you make sure that you're doing the best for your kids and your community, that ultimately is your responsibility as the superintendent.”

Concern for the Collective Interest

Table 7 displays the results of the responses to the second research question and major theme of how exemplary superintendents lead their districts during turbulent times focusing on the concern for the collective interest of their districts. This leadership behavior produced the second highest number of coded frequencies. There were five themes that emerged through the research process. The concern for the collective interest had two common themes with the prior area of moral purpose, communication, and sharing their why.

Table 7

Concern for the Collective Interest

Theme	Interviews	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Exemplary superintendents lead successfully with concern for the collective interest when they				
Collaborate	12	20	31	33
Continually communicate with district	7	11	18	19
Get to know their district	9	7	16	20
Listen and value others' opinion	10	13	23	27
Share their why	12	21	33	37

Collaborate. From the smallest district of 2,400 students to the largest district serving 33,000 students, 100% of the participants identified collaboration as a key to their leadership success during turbulent times. Collaboration skills are an important component of the skills needed to lead and impact the overall success of superintendents (Henrikson, 2019). The theme received 33 codes for this research question. All 12 of the

participants stated that they were operating within a fairly successful collaborative model. It was part of their leadership philosophy when they became superintendents. The recent Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) model has broadened collaboration in California school districts. Participant 10 provided an example of this approach:

Local Control Accountability Plan is a collaborative plan. It can be a compliance document, or you can really be vested in that to get your classified your certificate, your board, your community, and make it a living breathing document. Our district spent lots of time with the stakeholders to get them involved and to create a document that we all owned.

When all aspects of an organization are human based, it is very important for the leader to collaborate. Participant 6 explained it this way:

Collaboration is a big part of our work, and the thought is that to be a collective, if you include the most marginalized, those on the edges, everybody else will come along with it. So, if you, if you reach out to the marginalized and bring them and bring them in. Every everybody else follows and so that's our collective interest, and it's working.

A collaborative leader recognizes their role, and

You have to kind of check your ego in at the door and say it's not about what I think, individually. Who needs to be in the room, you're hearing these concerns that are taking place, and you're trying to gather all that information and make the best decision for the group?

Four participants made a similar statement asking who is going to be impacted and how do superintendents hear from them on what is the next step in the process.

Similar to what has been mentioned about regarding moral purpose and its themes, the need to collaborate existed before the current turbulence of the pandemic for it to help superintendents lead during it. When the pandemic hit in March of 2020 having a system of collaboration was key to Participant 4. They immediately had all of their union leadership, both certificated and classified, their large education foundation leaders and a strong PTA leadership and together, and they started talking about what was going to happen in their district. This was a practice that existed in the district prior to the pandemic. So, it was easy to pull together when needed. Participant 4 said,

We're gonna all stand together in a YouTube video, we're going to talk to our entire workforce and then with our community. We did a YouTube together saying, here's what we know we have to do and here's what we're agreeing that we're going to prioritize to work on.

Again, this practice was established.

Participants shared collaboration needs to be built into the system, purposefully. That way if one person leaves the process, if part of the culture, and will survive turnover and turbulent times. According to Participant 7,

Early, as the superintendent, I pushed us to look at our values, we looked at our vision. So, I think having all that work done and codifying it into language that you can revisit to help guide your decisions when time are tough, I think for me was very important. (Participant 7)

It is also important to show you personally value the need to collaborate to preserve the process as illustrated by the following quote:

If cabinet is five against me. I'm going to think about that, I'm going to give it a pause and I don't do it often, but I may have to go along with them even though it's not something that I fervently believe in, because I believe in their collective wisdom is greater than my single wisdom.

It is important for those within the system to see the leader's willingness to collaborate and that importance needs to be communicated in the context of the concern for the collective interest.

Continually communicate. Keeping the entire community in the loop through continually communicating is key for a successful system. Kaptein (2019) discussed some relevant aspects of ethical leadership, such as honest and regular communication with the community. Of the participants, 58% provided evidence for this theme. The theme received 19 codes. Participants supported this idea both prepandemic and during the turbulence of COVID-19. Participant 12 believed that communication is not situational but part of every situation in a school district, and a strong communication system has to be in place from the beginning if change of any kind in going to be successful with a school district. Participant 9 stated, "All groups need to have a voice, and it is the superintendent's job to make sure they do, even if it is only in a consultation role so they are part of the decision make process." Participant 11 provided this perspective on communication in their district:

I always have had a rule of three with the board, I have a rule of three with our principals and our stakeholders. You need to make sure you communicate, communicate, communicate, three different ways, because once they communicate one way, we know that only certain audiences

hear it. So, how are you being intentional about the communication and making sure all audiences have access and are hearing it?

When the most recent crisis hit school districts all over the country, the need for continual communication was even more important for superintendents. One participant said,

I been out there communicating through our existing system publicly since last March, with our families, our community, our staff, so everyone knows when we're able to safely gonna get our kids back in school, which is why we're able to do that. (Participant 10)

It was the systems in place that allowed them to continually communicate. Making sure the communication is consistent and continuous is important and keeps the community looking at the common good, according to Participant 1. To effectively communicate, participants needed to know their districts and understand the best approach.

Get to know your district. It is important to have an understanding of one's entire system when at the top. It is important to balance the needs of followers with those of the organization, be a truth teller to ensure that all know the reality, and not minimize the negative but maximize success. This requires a leader to truly know their organization (Prestia, 2020). Of the participants, 75% shared how and why they saw getting to know their districts was important for them to keep the concern for the collective at the forefront of their work during turbulent times. The theme received 20 total codes. Participant 2 shared,

From day one as the superintendent three days a week I was out in the classrooms. I was walking around the schools are talking to people. I go

to school and I see teachers. Every teacher gets an e-mail from me every time that I've been in your classroom.

The participant worked in a district with over 5,000 students, but they knew it was important for them to get to know their district and for people to know them. Participant 10 discussed the complexity of a school district and shared their experience on getting to know their district:

You have to understand what the competing interests are across your system and across your constituents. Then you have to be able to address and reconcile those competing interests with the focus on what's in the best interest of our students. This understanding helps you keep moving forward and again you have to understand the political and social climate to keep the focus on what is best for the students at the center.

This is even more significant when operating a school district during turbulent times and allowed superintendents to establish connections during COVID-19. Participant 4 explained,

I made it an effort that I get to know my district before COVID. I got to every building, I got to every office, and I'm not talking just for teachers. I walked over and I'll know our facilities guys, so I intentionally, get to know each of them. . . . Once we were in lockdown, I already knew my organization, what to expect from some, but I hope everyone knew what to expect from me as the leader.

Turbulent times can expose what was working and what was not working within a district. Participant 8 explained knowing the district would get through this, but it was clear some functions of the district were exposed by the pandemic. But again, because

Participant 8 got to know their district, they were able to see that and will be able to help those parts of their district grow out of turbulence. But getting to know one's district is more than understanding the internal workings of the district. Participant 10 talked about getting to know the people they serve:

I need to understand my district and be empathetic that, you have families and students that are struggling, and you have your families that don't have the means to support their child at school or they're working a minimum wage got a single parent multiple kids working a minimum wage job down the street and they don't have the ability to take off work and or support their student I think that's when it gets back to.

It is really getting to know all aspects of who you are collectively as a district from the board to that future student you see at an event that allows the superintendent to understand their district.

Listen to and value others. Research on servant leadership grounds the theory in the humanistic characteristics of listening, empathizing, healing, being aware, persuading, conceptualizing, having foresight, being a good steward, committing to the growth of people, and building community (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Working in a system that has so many working parts, labor associations, diversity, and elected officials, it is important to listen, but not just to listen, but to hear the voices of others and make them feel valued. Of the participants, 83% provided evidence to support this theme. The codes for this theme totaled 27. Participants in this study saw the importance of listening to and valuing the opinions of others in their district.

Ten of the 12 provided examples of what that looks like in their roles. Participant 1 shared their experience when they first came into the position of superintendent.

Well, let's ask them, we need to know our parents. At first it was uncomfortable people were like, "Well, if we ask them how they feel they're going to tell us that they don't like it." Yeah, that's the point you know feedback is sometimes hard and, and that's how we build trust and that's how we, you know, figure out what we need to do.

Establishing the practice of listening to one's community and valuing their input support success.

Evidence from the interviews shows that these experiences are not always easy and comfortable for leaders, but they are part of the process. Participant 3 said,

You may disagree, and you'd have to move on from that. But at least if you've given your thoughts, you've shared why you believe what you do. You've kind of put that out there, and if they don't go with it. You know, you have to just keep on moving forward and value the opinions of others in the process.

Other participants shared their work on getting diverse thought partners on their team to make sure there is diversity of thought. It was important to them. Participant 4 said, "I surround myself with people that represent a lot of different interests, and they have the luxury of a single interest I have the responsibility of all of them." It is also to be intentional when looking for input and hearing from a community. Participant 5 believed, "I need to get feedback from everybody around, what's actually going on, and what the needs are within the community before we start making action plans and moving forward with action."

Navigating the current social, political, and pandemic environment that impacts public schools, listening to and valuing others is important to the collective health of a district. Participant 12 explained their empathetic approach to working with their community in the current context they are facing:

I think as long as you are sincere and authentic, you value, and listen to them to understand them, and you don't just try to say well that's not that's not right, that's not what's happening. But you say, "Yeah, I can see why you'd be feeling that way and I'm sorry you have been through this; however, let's see how we can work together to, you know, see if we can improve your situation and help our district."

The complexity facing superintendents in public schools currently is tremendous. However, these leaders who participated in this study have shared their experiences in successfully meeting that complexity.

Sharing their why. This is a reoccurring theme that surfaced as part of three of the larger research questions. It is connected to a superintendent's focus on the concern for the collective interest, just as it was with one's moral purpose and will be for the question of resilience. The leaders' moral purpose can be the driving force for their vision of their organization and the adversity they face (Marques, 2017). The power of one's why cannot be understated and is important on many levels. All 12 participants supported this with their lived experience during turbulent times. This theme was the only other theme under the concern for the collective where all 12 participants provide a coded response, again, a sign of its significance. The codes for this theme numbered 37 codes under Research Question 2.

The evidence provided by the participants showed how they keep their own eyes on their why. Being absolutely student focused is at the core of Participant 3 who never loses sight of that. Participant 7 contended that, “if you know what your core values are, what is your true north, and you’re willing to stand up for those, then you can. People know what that is, what they are, and they will understand when you make the decisions.” Participants also say it is important to bring the discussion of the district back to their why as well. Participant 2 shared,

I’ll say, “Okay guys, you know the question, what is best for kids?” And then that almost always quiets the dialogue and gets us narrowed and gets us focused.

So, I think as long as you try and do that you will focus on the collective interest. Standing up for those core values or their why is what keeps superintendents in this study moving forward. In the words of Participant 6,

For me it doesn’t matter that the I’m willing to take that risk. I’m willing to sacrifice that the relationship. In order to achieve what I think is best for students in our organization, and I have a strong core values and beliefs around equity and social justice. And that’s going to be a driver for me.

It was interesting to see how simple some saw this theme to be. Participant 11 stated that they will always err on the side of what is best for kids and that’s it. Participant 4 said, “I really believe if it is not in the best interest of the students, I am committed to serve, then I won’t do it, period.” For some, there is a real motivation to make sure they are serving those who are underserved in our school system. This became even more clear during the pandemic. Participant 1 shared,

We're gonna die on the hill for our students because they're being abused, they're being left at home, they're being malnourished, they don't have a place to do their work and you know our parents who are essential workers that are living in poverty, the parents gonna go to work anyways and the kids were at home by themselves.

With the competing interests and uncertainty facing so many of the adults in the public school system, it was important for the superintendents to hold their ground. Participant 12 agreed,

I couldn't sit there and allow kids not to be served. I had been at the board meetings. They're lining up at the podium. The bulk of them worrying about the health of the adults, but I've never lost focus of the audience that we serve, which is the students.

These lived experiences show how important the superintendents' why, and sharing that why is, as they work to support the concern for the collective interest during turbulent times.

Personal Temperament

Table 8 displays the results of the responses to the third research question, and the leadership behavior of how exemplary superintendents lead their districts during turbulent times by relying on their personal temperament. Personal temperament is a leadership behavior that allows leaders to maintain composure and be able to make decisions that move the organization in a necessary and positive direction (Forck, 2011, Vaid, 2015).

Table 8

Personal Temperament Frequency by Theme and Source

Theme	Interviews	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Exemplary superintendents lead successfully with personal temperament when they				
Maintain a calm, even temperament	11	10	20	20
Adjust temperament to situation or person	11	3	14	23
Model positivity	6	5	11	11
Model empathy toward employees	8	5	13	17
Stay focused on their values	4	2	6	6

This leadership behavior produced the fewest number of coded frequencies.

There were five themes that emerged throughout the research process. Adjusting their personal temperament to the situation or person received the highest coded frequency.

The theme of staying focused on their values as part of their personal temperament received the lowest coded frequency. The researcher discusses the possible reasons for the lower overall coded evidence for the leadership behavior in Chapter V. The participants provided evidence of how their personal temperament and the understanding of themselves helped them lead their districts during turbulent times.

Maintains a calm, even temperament. Of the participants, 92% provided evidence for the study. This theme presented 20 total codes for this leadership behavior. The evidence provided by the participants sheds light on the level of stress superintendents are dealing with while leading their districts during turbulent times. They shared how they have had to develop simple techniques to control their emotions. Participant 1 shared that just learning to simply breathe helped control their personal stress levels in the face of crisis. Eight of the 11 participants who provided evidence for this theme saw themselves having a naturally calm and even keeled demeanor. However,

six of the 11 shared that they need to do more to maintain that temperament. Participants 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11 discussed that the exercise or physical activity outside of their job provided them support in keeping calm at work.

Others have shared how they understand the impact of their temperament on their colleagues and work to be the model during turbulent times. Participant 12 shared, “In this position I have to remember that my emotions affect people. And so, if I act like the sky is falling, you know that’s how everybody is going to react.” Participant 3 intentionally responds to emotional situations calmly listening to both sides in hopes of diffusing the emotions. Participant 4 agreed, “I don’t get ruffled really easy and I do have the ability, and I do work on keeping a calm temperament intentionally because it is not always easy.” Working with so many different people and situations requires a superintendent to monitor and adjust to meet the situation.

Adjusts temperament to the situation or person. Of the 12 participants, 92% provided evidence to support this theme in the study. This theme represented 32% of the total codes. The participants discussed that when one is in a position of leadership, all eyes turn to that person when there is a crisis. Participant 8 shared an example they use to keep themselves focused on their own reactions. They explained that they always feel much more at ease when there is turbulence on the plane, and they look to the flight attendants who are calm or the pilots who come on with a calming voice. That is their role during turbulent times as superintendent. Participant 10 emphasized, “As a superintendent, when there’s a crisis, everyone turns looks at the leader to see how the leader is responding. They don’t want to see a leader that’s panicked, or overly excited or overly concerned.”

The participants shared that it takes intentionality on their part to make sure they are providing the appropriate temperament as the leader. Participant 12 agreed, “When we’re in these positions, we have to help people feel that we’ve got this, and we can handle it. That’s hard because we may be feeling differently on the inside.” Adjusting one’s personal temperament is not only important when reacting to a crisis but when working with a group to move the group forward. “It’s that temper, it’s that it’s that balance keeping my own passion in check when things are not moving as fast or in the exact direction I have,” stated Participant 2. The superintendent position requires adjustments to fit the situation. Crisis often arrives at their door and they need to respond. Participant 6 shared, “I take it in, I listen methodically, think about, okay, how do I de-escalate the situation in order to get the most accurate information about what’s going on.”

At times, the adjustment requires immediate attention and decisions. Participant 10 explained, “You cannot be afraid to make a decision. Ultimately, especially in times of crisis you’re often forced to make quick decisions. You need to be confident to instill confidence.” Participant 11 added,

I think people are looking for strong leadership and having strong convictions and so that part of my temperament has been kind of steady and being able and having a good understanding. I think has served me well in this emergency situation. The evidence shows the need for superintendents to have the ability to make adjustments to their personal temperament to lead their districts during turbulent times.

Models positivity. Only 50% of the participants provided evidence for this theme. It only received 11 codes. However, participants do provide evidence of the

impact of this theme in their work. Participant 3 said, “The attitude of a leader is really important for the temperament of the district, the superintendent must do their best to maintain positivity.” When there is a problem or an error made in the district, how the leader handles it can either temper or magnify its impact on the district. Participant 9 addressed these situations by asking, “Did they do what they thought was right, did they do what they could have to avoid it, and do they have a plan to not repeat it?” If yes, then they are good and they respond to the matter at a calm level to the outside. Lastly, Participant 4 shared they do have to model the ability to assume a positive intention of somebody coming their way. Superintendents have to practice their ability to keep an open mindset to finding the right solution regardless of the emotion surrounding a situation. Assuming positive intent of those in one’s community is required to have a level of empathy for those around them.

Models empathy. Of the 12 participants 67% provided evidence for this theme. The theme presented 17 codes in the area of personal temperament. Much of the shared experiences in this theme are connected to the current reality facing the superintendents related to the pandemic. Research on leaders during turbulent times and/or volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) has discussed seven human attributes that were connected to the leader’s success, one of which is empathy (Eliadis, 2019). The researcher discusses what lessons from the pandemic may carry over in Chapter V. The participants discussed showing empathy for what their employees were dealing with during the pandemic and what their community was dealing with as well. Participant 1 came to this realization 6 months into the pandemic:

As a superintendent one needs to make sure that you're providing these experiences for your staff that have been working too hard, and we need to plan things for them to have some decompression time. Wellness has been a focus for us, recognizing that the work is hard.

The current experience pushed some of the participants into a role they may not have been expecting but was necessary.

Participant 7 explained that the pandemic required an increased level of humanity, making oneself available to people, and honoring the honest displays of emotions and feelings. They have even had some moments, even on Zoom, when things were tough, and it was necessary to just give people space and let them have an opportunity to talk and say what it really felt like to be whatever was happening to them. Superintendents also shared that they were doing more social emotional work during the pandemic than they ever thought they would.

Participant said, "As a superintendent in very turbulent times, my counseling skills, and the work I've done as a counselor has been so much more prevalent in my work." Participant 12 shared that much of their recent work has been a lot of talking and just being with their leadership team, board members, and being empathetic listeners and saying, "We can do it, we get there, and we can get through this by being present to each other."

Staying focused on their values. Only 33% of the 12 participants provided evidence for this theme and the theme received only 6 codes for the research question. However, the evidence provided by the participants does show that connecting to one's values could help them with their personal temperament during turbulent times.

Participant 10 explained that being true again to that goal, the vision of the organization, and the values helped ground them and at least gave them solace during turbulent times. Participant agreed, “I think good leaders always do self-reflection and are always aspiring to get better and continuously finding opportunities to do so.” This self-reflection leads to thinking about one’s own values. Participant 6 discussed keeping sight of one’s own values to make sure they did not interfere with their ability listen to others’ values. Lastly, one participant revisited their values to make sure they did not lose sight of how the pandemic was impacting their most vulnerable, to make sure they were getting what they need. A superintendent’s own values not only impact their personal temperament, but can also, as mentioned above, provide superintendents strength during turbulent times.

Resilience

Table 9 displays the results of the last research question and leadership behavior of how exemplary superintendents lead their districts during turbulent times by relying on their resilience to help their district be successful. This leadership behavior produced the second fewest number of coded frequencies. Resilience is made up of both mindset and behaviors predicated on the idea that setbacks are temporary and opportunities to learn (Kim et al., 2019). Resilience is also something that can be intentionally developed. Having positive mental modeling, accepting failure as a growth opportunity, being reflective, maintaining balance in life and work, and having deeper self-awareness are strategies leaders need to develop resilience (Cline, 2015). There were five themes that emerged through the research process. A focus on the big picture had the highest code frequency and staying flexible and adaptable received the lowest number of codes.

Table 9

Resilience Temperament Frequency by Theme and Source

Theme	Interviews	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Exemplary superintendents lead successfully with resilience when they				
Avoid dwelling on mistakes	9	5	14	16
Focus on the big picture	11	23	34	35
Have a support system	10	3	13	14
Reflect on their own practice	10	7	17	26
Stay flexible and adaptable	9	3	12	13

Avoid dwelling on mistakes. Of the 12 participants, 67% provided evidence for this theme. The theme received 16 codes for this leadership behavior. Within a school district, there is so much room for human error. As leaders, superintendents have to respond to mistakes made throughout the system. It is unavoidable. First, Participant 7 acknowledged, “Stuff happens in our lives, and sometimes are completely out of our control. Just to know that and to be at peace with that.” Responding that way to mistakes is also a form of modeling, which can impact the capacity of others in the district. Participant 1 shared, “I think modeling and then letting people fail and allowing them to pick themselves up. And so, we’ve done that a couple times, so people know that is okay to fail.” This is part of building the experiences necessary to be resilient during turbulent times. Participant 10 also discussed how leaders have to learn from every experience whether it is good or bad. Reflecting and using that to grow helps you as a leader to get through the next adverse situation.

Developing the ability avoid dwelling on mistakes is a skill participants say they grow over time and they want to grow in others on their team. Participant 4 shared, “I think through resilience you learn it is not just showing up and taking punches, it’s

learning from previous things and filling those gaps in your own performance so that you can keep moving forward.” This can be modeled for others and can then encourage others to take risks to experience the same growth. Participant 9 shared telling the leadership team,

I need you to fail forward, you’ll never go wrong. In our district, if you’re doing the right thing, even if your method didn’t work. We just know we got to try something different. So, I try to really encourage them to try.

Growing from mistakes, not allowing them to pull you down, and using them to build resilience can also help a superintendent keep sight of the bigger picture.

Focus on the big picture. Of the 12 participants, 92% provided support for this theme. The theme received 35 codes of evidence for this leadership behavior. So many of the themes are connected to one another and do not operate independently. Staying focused on the big picture while leading during turbulent times supports the superintendent’s resilience. Participant 2 shared that crisis, and mistakes are made and “it is painful is that unpleasant, it’s all of those things. But we got to go out and show that in good times and bad. We can keep it in perspective and not lose sight of the bigger picture.” Participants 7 and 1 both explained that they determined what an event means, and it does not have any meaning in and of itself, they decide. When they kept sight of the students they served, it helped frame the crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping focused on what students need kept the work moving forward.

Participant 1 shared that their students would not get their basic needs met without schools being allowed his district not to skip a beat and serve 30,000 meals. The superintendent needs to be honest and direct with families, with the community, and with

staff, because people's lives have had so much uncertainty and so many challenges in the last year. As a leader, it is important to bring certainty and stability. Then we have a moral obligation to remind the district of the big picture. This role of staying focused on the big picture not only is about the resilience of the leader but also the resilience of their organization. Participant 11 explained,

Successful leadership is getting people to understand how and what we stand for by and sometimes can be the sage on the stage yourself up or the prophet in your land, you need to bring some research in and then have that dialogue around it.

However, it is the responsibility of the superintendent to promote the resilience of the district. Participant 11 added. "You really got to be rooted and grounded in who you are and where we're going and the purpose, to be able to have those serious conversations."

When the work gets done for students, and staff rallies to support the bigger picture, Participant 12 shared, "The relationships that I have developed with students, families, community members, organizations, and the socio-political network provides me the resilience." Multiple participants shared the students are the real example of resilience in how they cope with all that is going on in their lives.

Leading during turbulent times, like wildfires and the current pandemic, have led superintendents to focus on the bigger picture to get their district community through the crisis. After one of the 2017 wildfires that impacted a school district and ravaged the community, the superintendent knew the community needed to reconnect and reminded them all of the bigger picture.

Our kids have been out of school due to the fires and they wouldn't get to have their Halloween parades. In 2 days with a team we were able to bring you know

4,000 students and families onto the district office parking lot and you know give out 50,000 pieces of candy and more than that. What we did was we gave people hope; we gave them a connection back to the community and so I think if you want a tangible evidence of building that of resilience.

The participants have been successful during turbulent times because they, both for themselves, and for their districts, keep the bigger picture in the sight for all they represent as a superintendent.

Have a support system. Of the 12 participants, 83% provide evidence for this theme. The codes received 14 evidence codes. The idea of having a support system seems to be a simple idea supporting one's resilience. For a superintendent, there can be personal support systems and professional support systems building their resilience. The personal support system only occupied a small part of the evidence provided.

Participants 5 and 8 discussed how they carved out time to disconnect from their work and connect with friends and family to recharge. One participant simply stated, "I love if I can get home early enough to see the sun go down and see the birds kind of fly in the sunset. I love all that. That's very helpful to me."

Most of the evidence provided discussed the professional support systems. Participant 3 shared that their leadership team is tight: "I think that tightness came from good and bad things like they've, they've recognized that they're better together. I think from that we have grown stronger. I would say we definitely see themselves as more resilient together." This type of resilience can develop or be intentionally developed by a superintendent.

Participant 10 knew that if they built the leadership capacity within their district across the board, no matter what issue they faced, they would be able to work through those challenges to a successful outcome. This work needs to be done before you get to turbulent times. This is a support system to sustain a leader's resilience. According to Participant 6,

I draw on the relationships I have built with my team that I call a cabinet, and my cabinet is where you party and cry. The team that's where I get my recharge.

And my desire to keep moving forward, even in in as many crises that we've had to handle.

Having a support system is important for all of us. When leading a school district during turbulent times having a support system is even more important. Knowing you need that system or need to create one comes from reflecting on one's professional practice.

Reflecting on their own practice. Ten of the 12 participants, or 83%, provide evidence for this theme. The codes received 26 evidence codes. Taking the time to reflect on one's own practice seems like an easily integrated leadership practice. Self-reflection and seeking out mentors, new learning, and building strong relationships all contribute to the resilience of leaders who are working through turbulent times (Levey & Levey, 2020). But it has to be intentional, and time and circumstance can often get in the way. All of the participants mentioned that their experience has made them a better leader and more prepared for the work during turbulent times. Participant 10 shared, "I think oftentimes people get caught in a trap and leadership where it's okay to make a mistake or not acknowledge something didn't turn out as well as you thought it would." Taking time to reflect on mistake or process could benefit the leader in this example. The

same participant stated that the reflection piece is important, always reflect, communicate, be honest, be transparent, and be vulnerable. Participant 8, who has been in their position for many years, explained their approach to reflection that has served them well:

I keep a journal. I've been keeping it for years and years and its great help. Some time ago that once and I'll read through it, and that that has become the place where you can dump your worries and things and read back over all these things that I thought would happen as a result of my mistakes, not one of them happen.

Participant 8 stated that finding time to reflect, to really reflect about the situation, what's important, where they were trying to go, what were the priorities, just find that quiet time even at 4 in the morning is beneficial. Being intentional about the practice can not only help the individual but the district as well.

Participant 11 encouraged, "I think you always good leaders do self-reflection and are always aspiring to get better and continuously finding opportunities to do so." The practice can be expanded to beyond your own decision to that of the organization.

Participant 6 practices a constant review of the connection between what is expected and what the outcomes are for their evaluation goals. When working to improve outcomes for students, especially during the turbulent times the pandemic has brought to public schools, reflection is extremely important. Participant 9 explained the following when discussing the work their district is doing to get students to engage during distant learning:

I think that it's absolutely critical to reflect on what's working and what's not working and that you're the leader of the organization has to be the one to push that conversation and ask difficult questions of your immediate staff.

Self-reflection is important to learn from past experiences and prepare one for what lies ahead. It can increase one's ability to adjust to events and adapt to new situations.

Stay flexible and adaptable. Of the 12 participants, 75% provided evidence for this theme. The theme received 13 evidence codes. It is not clear who came up with the saying, "Blessed are the flexible for they never get bent out of shape." It applies here and staying flexible and adaptable is part of definition of resilience discussed in Chapter II. The participants described how staying flexible and adaptable has contributed to their resilience and success in their leadership roles. Participant 2 stated it simply, "You got to be able to stand up, adjust and move on and not let something get you down because if you let things get you down, you will have a very short career as a school superintendent." This both illustrates the difficult jobs they hold during turbulent times and the importance of resilience to success.

Staying flexible and adaptable allows superintendents to absorb and recover from the difficulties they face during a crisis. Participant 10 explained,

Eventually, there's an out, there's a, there's an outcome, right, and again the success of that outcome is in the eye of the beholder, but I think as a leader sometimes getting your district out the other side is success.

Modeling flexibility and adaptability can be done by the superintendent as an example for the district. Participant 6 stated,

I am a glass half full, rather than glass half empty. I'm looking for opportunities, anywhere and anywhere, anywhere any way I can. There is always a silver lining.

And there is always a way out of a situation, always. That is my mindset.

Superintendents during COVID need to be examples to their districts that they will get through it. Participant 8 agreed, "I have to be able to be the type to weather the storm when there's tough times, because I know this too, will pass, and, and that always does.

As with self-reflection, some superintendents have worked to build in a level of flexibility and adaptability into their teams by identifying the strengths that exist within their leadership team. According to Participant 9,

We also have catalogued our strengths as a leadership team. So, when there is a crisis, we immediately go into really strengths overload, ensuring that that they're deploying their strengths, and they're avoiding areas or behaviors that are going to be non-productive.

The key with this is the superintendent recognizes that they are not the only one with the ability to be flexible and adaptable and build resilience within the district. Participant 5 illustrated that it does not have to reside in one person by explaining,

We all have to recognize that, and we all need to be together and rely on each other to support us all and support each other, support kids, we're gonna have families that are going to be going through that same cycle.

Key Findings

Using the analysis of data collected from the coded interview transcripts, artifacts, and observations, key findings were established to address superintendents who lead their districts during turbulent times using the leadership behaviors of operating with a moral

purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience. Key findings identified from qualitative data were identified by assessing which themes were referenced by at 80% of the participants with frequency of a minimum 24. Based on the research the following key findings were identified.

Moral Purpose

1. Exemplary superintendents build relationships to lead during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants, 83% shared experiences of how building relationships helped them lead during turbulent times and represented 29 codes for this leadership behavior.
2. Exemplary superintendents communicate with their community regularly to lead during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants, 83% shared experiences of how regular communication helped them lead during turbulent times and received 14 codes for this leadership behavior.
3. Exemplary superintendents develop trust to lead during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants 83% shared experiences of how developing trust helped them lead during turbulent times and received 28 codes for this leadership behavior.
4. Exemplary superintendents build two-way communication to lead during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants, 92% shared experiences of how developing two-way communication helped them lead during turbulent times and received 30 codes for this leadership behavior.

Concern for the Collective Interest

5. Exemplary superintendents collaborate while leading during turbulent times. Eleven of the 12 participants, or 92% shared experiences of how collaborating helped them lead during turbulent times and received 30 codes for this leadership behavior.

6. Exemplary superintendents listen and value the opinions of others while leading during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants, 83% shared experiences how this theme helped them lead during turbulent times and represented 27 codes for this leadership behavior.
7. Exemplary superintendents share their “why” while leading during turbulent times. Twelve of the 12 participants, or 100% shared experiences how sharing their “why” helped them lead during turbulent times and received 37 codes for this leadership behavior.

Resilience

8. Exemplary superintendents remained focused on the big picture while leading during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants, 92% shared experiences about how this theme helped them lead during turbulent times and received 35 codes for this leadership behavior.
9. Exemplary superintendents reflecting on their own practice while leading during turbulent times. Of the 12 participants, 83% shared experiences about how reflecting on their own practice helped them lead during turbulent times and received 26 codes for this leadership behavior.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership behaviors of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience. The research included interviews of 12 superintendents, which provided descriptive data regarding the superintendents’ use the

leadership behaviors of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience. This chapter also provided a summary of the 22 themes associated with the primary research questions regarding the leadership behaviors used by superintendents to lead their districts during turbulent times. Data were summarized and coded from the 12 interviews. In addition to the interviews, 24 artifacts, which included 12 observations, were coded to triangulate the information shared by participants during the interviews. Nine key findings were identified, which described the leadership behaviors superintendents used to lead their districts during turbulent times. Chapter V offers a summary of major findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

In this phenomenological study the researcher identified leadership behaviors in the four areas of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience that exemplary superintendents used to lead their organizations through turbulent times. Data generated from interviews of study participants, observations, and artifacts resulted in 12 key findings. Chapter V offers a summary of the study, including the purpose, research questions, and key findings. In addition, this chapter includes unexpected research findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

The central question for this research study asked, “What behaviors do exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the leadership attributes of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience as presented in the leadership elements by Goodwin (2018).”

Research Subquestions

1. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using moral purpose?
2. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using concern for the collective interest?
3. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using personal temperament?
4. How do exemplary superintendents lead their organizations through turbulent times using resilience?

This phenomenological study described behaviors that exemplary superintendents practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times using the behavioral elements of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience. The primary source of data was collected from qualitative in-depth interviews with each superintendent to provide a detailed explanation of their lived experience when leading their organizations through turbulent times. The interviews were conducted using a series of questions developed by the thematic team (Appendix A). A total of 12 exemplary superintendents were chosen for face-to-face online interviews. The researcher asked the study participants open-ended, guided interview questions about how they used the leadership behaviors of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience to lead their districts during turbulent times. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then coded and analyzed for major themes and patterns. Data collection also included artifacts and observations, which were used to triangulate data collected in the interviews.

The primary source of data was collected from in-depth interviews with 12 exemplary superintendents providing a detailed explanation of their lived experience when leading their districts through turbulent times. In addition, artifacts were collected from the participants to triangulate the data collected in the interviews. The study's target population was 1,026 serving public school districts in California that met the following criteria:

1. Participants served in districts with a minimum student population of 1,500 students.
2. The participants have been in the position for a minimum of 2 years in the same district during a crisis period that occurred within the past 5 years
3. The participants have been recognized for their exemplary service by their local community leaders, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), or California School Boards Association (CSBA).

Major Findings

Several major findings were discovered from this research study. The findings are outlined below and presented by research question.

Moral Purpose

1. Exemplary superintendents build effective communications systems creating two-way communication flow within the community. Effective two-way communication was referenced by 88% of the participants and received one the highest frequency counts with an average of 27. It was also coded 12 times in the 24 artifacts.
2. Exemplary superintendents actively build relationships in their community, which in turn develops trust. Of the participants, 83% shared experiences around building

relationships and developing trust and had a frequency count of 28. It was also referenced 15 times in the 36 artifacts and observation.

Concern for the Collective Interest

3. Exemplary superintendents are collaborative which includes listening to and valuing the opinions of others. Conducting collaborative conversations and listening to stakeholders allowed the participants to keep the collective interest part of those conversations. Collaboration and listening to and valuing the opinion of others was referenced by 88% of the participants. This theme had a frequency average of 30 in the interviews and came up 16 times in the 36 artifacts and observations.

Resilience

4. Exemplary superintendents engage in continual reflection on their own practice to continually improve and develop their own resilience. Of the participants, 83% referenced the practice of reflection and its code frequency was 26 in the interviews and was found seven times in 36 artifacts and observations.
5. Exemplary superintendents regularly share their “why” or moral purpose with their community. When the participants shared their “why” it kept them focused on the reason for their work and gave them strength. Sharing their “why” was referenced by 96% of the participants. This theme also was the highest coded theme with a 41 code frequency in the interviews and 25 codes within the 36 artifacts and observations.

Unexpected Findings

One unexpected finding was identified this study. Though Goodwin (2018) included personal temperament as a leadership behavior that allowed the U.S. Presidents in her work to lead during turbulent times, this research did not find significant evidence

in the interviews and artifacts to support the participants' personal temperament as a key finding in their success when leading their district through turbulent times. None of the themes exceeded a frequency count of 24 or more. Though participants shared that they have a calm and even temperament, there was not enough evidence coded in the interviews and artifacts to meet the minimum requirement to be a key finding. This could be because of the difficulty of finding evidence of personal temperament in written artifacts.

The theme of being able to adjust their personal temperament to different situations or people scored the highest number of codes within the leadership behavior of personal temperament outlined in Goodwin's (2018) work. But again, there was not enough supporting evidence coded in the interviews and artifacts to make it a key finding. Participants shared that they understood that their reactions or responses to a situation has an impact on their organization. Participant 10 shared that when there is a crisis, people within the district look to the superintendent to see how they respond. People do not want to see the leader panicked. The literature also supports this. Leaders need to be decisive and make decisions under pressure (Vaid, 2015). However, the researcher was not able to observe this area of personal temperament nor was it prevalent in the written artifacts collected.

Having the personal temperament to function during turbulent times allows a leader to focus on the organization. Participants also shared that it was important to be able keep one's composure to lead during turbulent times. "I think people are looking for strong leadership and having strong convictions. . . . I think has served me well in this emergency situation," stated Participant 11. During a crisis, leaders need the skills to

handle immense pressure for long periods of time (L. Anderson, 2018). But again, the low frequency count in the research could be associated with the environment of the research. The researcher used recorded videos to observe research participants. Though personal temperament did not receive the level of frequency in the interviews and artifacts to be a key finding in the research, it was part of the behaviors superintendents relied upon to lead successfully during turbulent times and could be the topic of further research.

Conclusions

As a result of the key findings, the following conclusions were reached regarding the leadership behaviors exemplary superintendents use to lead their districts during turbulent times.

Conclusion 1

Exemplary superintendents must build effective communications systems creating regular two-way communication flow within the community to successfully lead with moral purpose during turbulent times.

Ten of the 12 exemplary superintendents provided evidence as to how regular communication was a leadership behavior that helped them lead during turbulent times. Eleven participants also discussed how regular communication needs to be two-way to make sure the district navigates successfully during turbulent times. The superintendents in this study shared the various modes of communication they use for the two-way systems during the turbulent times created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Superintendents need to be credible role models who practice what they preach and make principled and fair choices that can be observed and emulated by others while using frequent, two-way

communication to define ethics and create moral codes for the organization and infuse the organization with principles that will guide the actions of all employees (M. E. Brown & Treviño, 2006; M. E. Brown et al., 2005; Kaptein, 2019; Treviño et al., 2000).

The experiences of the participating superintendents also showed that systems needed to be in place and part of the culture of the district prior to turbulent times to be effective during the crisis. Eliadis (2019) discussed that communication must be clear and provide up-to-date information openly. An effective leader creates a culture of communication at all levels within the organization. Participants shared how they used town hall meetings via Zoom, e-mailed video messages, posted all meeting recordings on their websites, Youtube, and set up meetings with all stakeholders individually to make sure they were accessible and that they heard from all stakeholders. Superintendents with a command of data and strong communication skills are able to respond to and reframe the discussions regarding public education (Harvey, 2019). Each of the participants that provided their experiences of leading during the pandemic also had artifacts publicly available that supported that work.

The interviews, observations, and artifacts supported the following:

1. Exemplary superintendents who were able to successfully lead during turbulent times had set up regular two-way communication systems within their districts that allowed them to provide and receive information from all stakeholders in their districts.
2. Exemplary superintendents had two-way communication systems in place prior to the pandemic which allowed them to more successfully navigate the pandemic and serve their students.

Conclusion 2

It is crucial for exemplary superintendents to actively build trusting relationships in their community to lead effectively through turbulent times.

Ten of the 12 participants discussed how building relationships within their district and community was part of the success they experienced when leading during turbulent times. Of the codes in the theme of building relationships, 70% were also part of the developing trust theme. Eight of the 12 participants provided evidence of developing trust that also supported their success. Research on servant leadership grounds the idea of trust in the humanistic characteristics of listening, empathizing, healing, being aware, persuading, committing to growth of people, which are all part of building relationships as a leader (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). The literature was supported by the artifacts provided by the superintendents. Participants shared how they were intentional in connecting with all employees and parent groups in their districts, which resulted in supportive relationships.

Participant 6 discussed, “I think from a leader standpoint, the most critical thing about leading during crisis is you have built relationships and these folks see you as credible and when you talk to them that they trust you.” Bird and Wang (2013) found that those superintendents with strong relationships have built strong district communities and experienced a high level of success. The relationships the participants talked about allowed them to keep their students at the center of the work as their districts faced different levels of lockdown when the pandemic broke out in March of 2020. Those relationships also allowed them to navigate very difficult situations facing their districts.

Building relationships prior to facing turbulence is critical and must be in place prior to that in order for those relationships to help with the success of the organization. Building the necessary relationships and coalitions within a school district requires political skill and an understanding of the system (Hill & Jochim, 2018). Hill and Jochim (2018) discussed how political skill allows a successful superintendent to identify the key areas and groups in which coalitions need to be developed, both inside and outside of the district. This was further evidenced by the longevity of the superintendents who participated in this study. The tenure of the 12 participants in their current superintendent position was 6.33 years. The average tenure in California is 3 years (Riddell, 2018). This tenure is evidenced in supporting the success of the superintendents in this study.

The interviews, observations, and artifacts supported the following:

1. Exemplary superintendents who were able to successfully lead during turbulent times had worked to build relationships from the beginning of their tenure with all stakeholders in their district and community.
2. Exemplary superintendents who have built strong relationships in their communities have been able to successfully lead their district during turbulent times.

Conclusion 3

It is imperative for superintendents to be collaborative, which includes listening to and valuing the opinions of others, to understand what is best for the collective interest of their people.

Eighty-eight percent of the participants favorably identified their experiences of collaboration, listening, and valuing opinions contrary to their own and how that approach of leadership has equated to their success. Participant 6 explained it this way:

“Collaboration is a big part of our work, and the thought is that to be a collective, if you include the most marginalized, those on the edges, everybody else will come along with it.” Collaboration skills are an important component of the skills leading to the overall success of superintendents (Henrikson, 2019). Superintendents in the study spoke of how it is important for those within the system to see the leader’s willingness to collaborate and that importance needs to be communicated in the context of success for the district. Collaboration was important not only to implement reforms but also to elevate the status of the superintendent within the organization (Paulsen et al., 2014).

Superintendents talked about making sure they seek input from others that is in opposition to their own position and modeling the incorporation of those views into the discussion. Participant 7 shared intentionally surround themselves with people with different views to challenge their thinking and to value a culture of collaboration. Superintendents who have been able to focus on creating a district culture of collaboration and collective learning have not only been successful when leading through crisis but also have seen success in student outcomes (Schechter, 2015). As public education has come under a higher level of public scrutiny, collaboration has become necessary for superintendents to implement change (Björk et al., 2014). Building a culture of collaboration and valuing the opinion of all stakeholders helps to ensure attention to the collective interest when leading during turbulent times.

The interviews, observations, and artifacts supported the following:

1. Exemplary superintendents who were able to successfully lead during turbulent times had intentionally worked to build a culture of collaboration and inclusion with all stakeholders in their district and community.

Conclusion 4

It is essential for exemplary superintendents to engage in continual reflection on their own practice to continually improve, develop their own resilience, and be successful in leading through turbulent times.

Again, under this conclusion 88% of the participants described the role that reflecting on their own practice played in both their success as a superintendent and the development of their resilience. The practice of self-reflection created connections for the participants to all of the major findings outlined in this chapter: “Good leaders do self-reflection and are always aspiring to get better and continuously finding opportunities to do so,” stated Participant 11. Self-reflection, seeking out new learning, and building strong relationships all contribute to the resilience of leaders who are working through turbulent times (Levey & Levey, 2020). It is important for superintendents to reflect and find ways to improve their practice and their work within their districts.

Participant 10 shared that oftentimes leaders get caught in a trap where it is okay to make a mistake but not acknowledge that something did not turn out as well as they thought it would. The same participant stated that the reflection piece is important when working to communicate, be honest, be transparent, and be vulnerable. Leaders need to be able to call into question their own choices and commitments because this is a way to be open to challenges facing organizations (Johnsen, 2018). This level of reflection practiced by the superintendents in the study not only allowed them to learn from the practice but keep sight of the bigger picture to help focus and build resilience.

Participant 8 discussed their practice of journaling. It not only helped them learn and grow, but it helped them realize that issues in the moment, and that when reflected upon were not as damaging as first perceived. Reflecting on one's own practice helped participants keep sight of the bigger picture and stay focused on it. Participants 7 and 1 both explained they got to decide what an event meant if it did not have any meaning in and of itself, they decided, and taking time to reflect on events, allowed them to decide how to communicate how the event was defined. Reflection and keeping sight of the students who were served helped frame the crisis. Thus, keeping sight of the bigger picture allowed the participants to respond and adapt to turbulence, staying resilient throughout the crisis. Resilience is made up of both mindset and behaviors. Successful leaders publicly model the habits they use to build the mindset of resilience (Kim et al., 2019). When the superintendents discussed their own reflection, it was part of their leadership mindset and practice.

The interviews, observations, and artifacts supported the following:

1. Exemplary superintendents who reflect on their own practice are able to continually improve their own leadership practice and successfully lead during turbulent times.
2. Reflecting on their own practice allowed the superintendents to also develop their own resilience during turbulent times.

Conclusion 5

Superintendents must regularly share their “why” or moral purpose with their community to lead effectively during turbulent times.

All of the participants in either the context of their moral purpose or concern for the collective interest discussed their experiences of sharing their “why” with their

district and community. This sharing was not only part of the success they experienced during turbulent times but part of the practice of leading a school district. Leaders have the opportunity to define ethics and create moral codes for the organization and infuse the organization with principles that will guide the actions of all employees and are aspects of leading by a moral purpose (M. E. Brown & Treviño, 2006; M. E. Brown et al., 2005; Kaptein, 2019; Treviño et al., 2000). This literature illustrates the importance of a superintendent sharing their why with the community of the district. Participant 7 contended,

If you know what your core values are, what is your true north, and you're willing to stand up for those, then you can. People know what that is, what they are, and they will understand when you make the decisions.

During turbulent times sharing their why continues to be a regular practice for the superintendents in the study.

The moral purpose of leaders can be the driving force for their vision of their organization and the adversity they face (Marques, 2017). The participants shared experiences during their tenure where it was crucial to remind their community of their why. Participant 2 explained that when a crisis was raising the tension within their district, they would always ask the most important question, "What is best for our kids?" They continued to share that question and it often would calm and refocus the dialogue. At the essence of leadership itself is being moral and promoting a vision for a better organization, which can be seen as a moral duty (Ndalamba et al., 2018). The moral duty is at the core of the why for the participants and is what keeps them centered when situations get difficult. Participant 6 stated, "In order to achieve what I think is best for

students in our organization, and I have strong core values and beliefs around equity and social justice. And that's going to be a driver for me."

When the pandemic hit and schools were closing their doors, districts faced one of the toughest challenges in recent history. Participants expressed that it was their why that helped them make the tough decisions in the turbulence of that time. Servant leadership is connected to the desire to create a more caring and better society (Andersen, 2018). Participant 1 shared,

We're gonna die on the hill for our students because they're being abused, they're being left at home, they're being malnourished, they don't have a place to do their work and you know our parents who are essential workers that are living in poverty, the parents are gonna go to work anyways and the kids were at home by themselves.

It was their "why" that got them and their district moving to serve kids during the pandemic. It was their "why" that also gave them the strength to keep leading during turbulent times.

Participant 6 shared that during the pandemic, they have had to stick to their guns, even when people were accusing them of not caring. They had to say that they do care; it was the care and love of their students and doing what is best for them had to come first. They also shared that they start every communication with their why. M. E. Brown and Treviño (2006) identified the positive impacts of moral leadership on followers within the organization. Their research found that moral leadership resulted in ethical follower behavior, prosocial behavior within the organization, decreased negative follower behavior, and a higher level of productivity, follower satisfaction, and commitment. This

literature identifies the importance of sharing their why as leaders and the impact it can have. Participant 7 stated, “I don’t think I’ve ever compromised my values, but I think you know, back to the things that are happening with the pandemic, politically or around the equity work, and I know I am doing the right thing.”

Implications for Action

This research provided insight into how exemplary superintendents use the leadership behaviors of moral purpose, concern for the collective interest, personal temperament, and resilience to lead their districts during turbulent times. The findings of this study, in addition to supporting literature on leadership and leading in the current volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, will deliver a richer understanding of the leadership behaviors and approaches superintendents can apply to lead their districts. The following implications from this study provide actions to enhance the leadership skills of individuals and groups by describing the strategies that exemplary superintendents use when successfully leading public school districts and managing the complexity of a human organization:

1. Superintendent professional development programs, such as the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Superintendents’ Academy and American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Aspiring Superintendents Academy for Leaders, need to include this research as part of their program content to build leadership knowledge and confidence in leaders and aspiring superintendents. Learning how exemplary superintendents use the leadership behaviors evidenced in the research would help them develop behaviors in their own practice to prepare for the inevitable turbulence they will face in the superintendent position.

2. School districts with internal leadership development programs must include content from this research related to the specific leadership behavioral strategies that have been used by leaders during a crisis in hopes of developing the practices that allowed participants to be successful during the crisis.
3. University and county-sponsored administrator preparation programs and related organizations, such as the California Association of Professors of Educational Administration (CAPEA), need to use this research as part of the course content for school administration courses to ensure that each participant has the foundational leadership understanding to effectively work with stakeholders during turbulent times. Leaders who are prepared with knowledge and understanding of leadership philosophy and leadership behaviors may demonstrate leadership skills that enable them to navigate the complex nature of a superintendency and especially to successfully lead during turbulent times.
4. Consulting firms and professional organizations that offer mentoring for new or aspiring superintendents must encompass the elements of effective leadership as part of their mentorship programs and curriculum, including prompts for discussion related to effective leadership behaviors needed to lead a district during turbulent times.
5. Superintendents and board members must participate in training in such programs as those offered by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to enhance their understanding of essential leadership behaviors and the effective strategies they can use to work with stakeholder groups in their district during turbulent times. The research findings could be presented as a seminar topic at CSBA events.

6. Superintendent search firm consultants must use this research with school boards to inform them on how exemplary superintendents have navigated turbulent times and consider hiring criteria or interview questions related to leadership behaviors necessary to lead during turbulent times in prospective candidates, which may contribute to the successful placement of superintendent candidates in communities that may have experienced frequent challenges in recent years.
7. The researcher will submit article proposals to professional organizations, such as ACSA or AASA, for conferences at the local, state, or national level.
8. The researcher will work with thematic members to submit articles to professional periodicals such as ACSA's *EdCal*, ASCD's *Educational Leadership*, and AASA's *School Administrator*.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the research conducted for this study, additional research should be conducted to further explore leadership behaviors and strategies used by superintendents and other school leaders to lead during turbulent times. Additional research is recommended in the following 10 areas:

1. This study focused on four leadership behaviors described in Goodwin's (2018) book. This study did not produce conclusive evidence on how superintendents lead during turbulent times using their personal temperament. Additional research, specifically on the elements of the personal temperaments of exemplary superintendents, should be done. The study could determine which elements of personal temperament can be developed to assist leaders in handling a crisis and how to go about doing that.

2. Exemplary superintendents in this study identified the importance of communication systems. Additional research should be conducted on specific two-way communication systems superintendents used during turbulent times to effectively manage the continually changing status produced by county health departments. The research could assist school districts in developing effective communication in advance of experiencing turbulent times.
3. This study found that building trust was an effective leadership behavior used by superintendents with 10 out of the 12 providing evidence. Further research should be conducted on how superintendents rebuild trust after a crisis like an extended labor strike.
4. Though 10 of the 12 participants provided evidence about the need to be accessible and present in their districts during a crisis, additional research is needed. How do superintendents of large districts work to be present and accessible to their community? The research could focus on districts with student populations of 15,000 or greater, where accessibility might be more difficult.
5. The superintendents in this study referenced how continual communication contributed to their success during turbulent times. The continual communication allowed the participants to keep their community informed during the crisis. Therefore, a study on effective systems of communication and measuring the impact of that communication would be beneficial. The research would allow leaders to understand which forms of communication are the most effective in reaching all stakeholders

6. The thematic dissertation team conducted studies with a variety of participant populations such as naval captains, army first sergeants, industrial production managers, and public school superintendents. A meta-analysis of the thematic dissertation findings should be conducted to determine the similarities and differences of leadership behaviors outlined in these studies. It would also allow themes to be determined across the different organizations included in the original research studies.
7. President Barack Obama said the world is suffering from an empathy deficit. Modeling empathy toward others was a theme under the research question relating to how exemplary superintendents lead using their personal temperament. Additional research focusing on empathy as a leadership behavior and its impact on successful school leadership would be beneficial. The study could identify specific actions taken by school leaders that are seen as empathetic.
8. Under the leadership behaviors of resilience, there was a theme of avoid dwelling on mistakes. Additional research on how superintendents lead their districts past mistakes made by the leadership team or school board would be beneficial. Mistakes that impact an entire district can often lead to turmoil. This research could identify how superintendents or school leaders accepted responsibility and led beyond those mistakes.
9. A theme of resilience was identified in this research. Additional research to identify elements of an effective support system would help superintendents navigate the stress associated with positions during turbulent times.

10. A replication study should be done in other states to find similarities with how superintendents outside of California successfully lead during turbulent times.
11. A replication study should be done to collect data from California districts smaller than 1,500 students to find how superintendents of these districts successfully lead during turbulent times.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

I close this chapter with concluding remarks and my reflections on the process of conducting this research. Earlier in my career, I saw the step to a superintendency as part of my natural leadership progression in my public education career. After a 4-year stint as an assistant superintendent of human resources, I accepted a position at the county office of education. This step gave me a new perspective on school leadership and the time necessary to appreciate, from a distance, the tremendous work superintendents have had to do during this pandemic. Prior to 2020, many school districts had already been recovering from tragedies like wildfires, union strikes, and the loss of student life. These turbulent times made the thematic, which was started in June of 2019, interesting to me as I was mapping out my next steps professionally.

The interviews were both incredibly informative and inspiring. Through the superintendents' lived experiences, I was able to see the incredible work they were doing and how much they were basically on their own during the pandemic. The superintendents illustrated the importance of the work they do and how with the right person in the role great things can happen for kids. The evidence they provided also confirmed some of my own understanding of the necessary leadership behaviors to be successful in the role. This also reinforced the value of the research study and the

importance of adding the findings to the body of research to support educational leaders when doing their job. Lastly, it made me realize that their work is necessary, important, and will be part of my leadership journey as I continue to work to leave my mark on public education and the work for equity and social justice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Script and Protocol

My name is Jason Lea. I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am a part of a team conducting research to discover and describe behaviors that exemplary leaders practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times. Doris Kearns Goodwin in her book, Leadership in Turbulent Times argued that there is a commonality of behaviors that effective leaders use during turbulent times. These behaviors help leaders succeed in situations where others have failed and allow them to overcome hardship. Four behavioral elements emerged as critical to leading in turbulent times: personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and moral purpose. Through my research, I hope to begin answering crucial questions regarding the behaviors that guide leaders successfully through turbulent times.

Our team is conducting approximately 40 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully, will provide a clear picture of behaviors that exemplary leaders practice to lead their organizations through turbulent times and will add to the body of research currently available.

Incidentally, even though it appears a bit awkward, I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this is to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating exemplary leaders will be conducted pretty much in the same manner.

Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview, you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy, I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Okay, let's get started, and thanks so much for your time.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

The first element we will be looking at is Moral Purpose.

Definition of Moral Purpose:

Leaders who conduct themselves with moral purpose are legitimate and credible role models who practice what they preach and make principled and fair choices that can be observed and emulated by others. They use frequent, two-way communication to define ethics and create moral codes for the organization and infuse the organization with principles that will guide the actions of all employees.

Interview Question #1: In their jobs, organizational leaders often face ethical dilemmas.

Roland (2020) defines an ethical dilemma as “a complicated situation in which one must make a difficult choice or decision in the face of conflicting morals or the values one uses to determine the difference between right and wrong.” As a leader, how do you provide opportunities to your followers to voice their concerns and thoughts about ethical dilemmas confronting the organization?

- What do you do to keep the lines of communication open?
- How do you create an atmosphere of trust so your employees feel comfortable about expressing concerns or calling attention to problems in the organization?

Interview Question #2: Can you share a story about a time when you had to make a difficult decision and your integrity was on the line?

- What guided you in making that difficult decision?
- How do you ensure your employees know how to make difficult decisions?

We will now move on to the second element, Collective Interest.

Definition of Collective Interest:

Collective interest refers to prioritizing outcomes, actions, and decisions to benefit the greater common good rather than strategizing to produce self-serving advantages or outcomes.

Interview Question #3: Research shows leaders who lead their organization through turbulent times make the concern for the collective interest a priority. How do you assess and remain focused on the collective interest of your organization as you guided the organization through turbulent times?

- Are there things you do to keep the collective interest in your mind, and in the minds of others within the organization?

Interview Question #4: How do you prioritize the collective interest when it conflicts with your own sense of security or your own professional self-interest?

- Tell me about a time when you have experienced this conflict?
- What do you do to lead your organization when you are feeling this conflict?

The 3rd element we will be looking at is Personal Temperament.

Definition of Personal Temperament

The prevailing mood pattern or characteristic level of emotional excitability or intensity of an individual.

Interview Question #5: Can you describe your personal temperament?

- Can you share a story where your personal temperament played a role in your leadership position during turbulent situations?
- What were the elements of your personal temperament in that situation that helped or hindered a positive outcome/resolution?

Interview Question #6: What strategies do you use to adapt your temperament in different situations? For example, how might your temperament change in a turbulent environment compared to an everyday environment?

- Can you describe a situation in which you had to control your temperament to bring your people through a turbulent situation to achieve an important goal?

And finally, the last element we will be researching is resilience.

Definition of Resilience:

The ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, or more successfully adapt to actual or potential adverse events.

Interview Question #7: Can you share a time where you needed to absorb and recover from the adversity of an unsuccessful event? What strategies did you use to bring out your own resilience?

- How have you increased your resilience in tough times to overcome events that you have failed from as a leader?

- How have you demonstrated your resilience as a leader to your staff members within your organization?

Interview Question #8: As a leader how do you increase your organization's resilience in handling setbacks and in meeting important project goals?

- What strategies have you found to be effective in building resilience in your team members?
- What evidence do you have that your people are resilient in challenging times?

APPENDIX C

Brandman University Institutional Review Board

Research Participant's Bill of Rights



BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

INFORMATION ABOUT: How exemplary Public School Superintendents lead through the turbulent times.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Jason A. Lea

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jason A. Lea, a doctoral candidate from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of the study is to discover and describe behaviors that exemplary public school superintendents practice to lead their districts through the turbulent times using the leadership attributes of personal temperament, concern for the collective interest, resilience, and moral purpose.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will include an interview with the identified student investigator. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will be scheduled via a Zoom conference call at a time of your convenience. The interview questions will be confidential. Each participant will have an identifying code, and names will not be used in the data analysis. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

I understand that:

- A. The researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying code safeguarded in a locked file drawer or password protected digital file to which the researcher will have sole access.
- B. My participation in this research is voluntary. I may decide not to participate in the study, and I can withdraw at any time if I so choose. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.
- C. If I have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Jason A. Lea via email at jlea@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at (707)975-0099, or Dr. Julia Hadden (Chair) at jhadden@brandman.edu.
- D. No information that identifies me will be release without my separate consent, and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of data is to be changed, I will be informed and consent re-obtained. These are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.
- E. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, 949-341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

ZOOM Recording Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: How Exemplary Public School Superintendents Lead Successfully through the Turbulent Times.

4828 BURLINGTON STREET

SANTA ROSA, CA 95405

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Jason A. Lea

I authorize Jason A. Lea, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my ZOOM interview. I give Jason A. Lea and all doctoral candidates associated with this thematic study, permission, or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription services, and the identifier redacted information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal or presented at meetings and/or presentations. I will be consulted about the use of the Zoom recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any rights or royalties, or other compensation arising from or related to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator – Jason A. Lea

Date

APPENDIX F

Request to HR Officers for Research Participants

SUBJECT: Request for Research Participants for Jason Lea's Dissertation or Assistance with Dissertation Research Interviews

Dear ,

As you may know, I am currently working on my doctorate at Brandman University in Organizational Leadership, and I was hoping you could help me by participating in the research participants for my dissertation on "How Exemplary Superintendents Lead Successfully through the Turbulence Times". I am looking for superintendents to interview who meet the following requirements:

- Have been serving in their position for a minimum of 2 years in the same district during a crisis period that occurred within the past 5 years
- Lead a district with an enrollment of 1500-3000 students.
- The participants also have been recognized for their exemplary service by their local community leaders, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), or California School Boards Association (CSBA).

This will be important research that will help leaders and their organizations be more effective in handling future crisis as well as managing in the current turbulent environment. I would be happy to share my results with you to use in (districts)'s leadership development planning. All data collected will be shared anonymously, and no individuals or organizations will be mentioned.

I am hoping to do my interviews in January of 2021, but I would like to line them up as soon as possible so I am ready to go when I am given approval. The interviews will take approximately 1 hour and will be done remotely via ZOOM. I will send the interview questions in advance so the participants can prepare.

I am hoping you will be willing to participate. Perhaps you may know of others who might meet the participation criteria. I would be happy to contact them myself or if you are more comfortable, you can ask them before forwarding me their name and contact information. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your assistance with my dissertation.

Best regards,

Jason Lea