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Resiliency among secondary teachers serving at-risk populations: a phenomenological study

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RESILIENCY AMONG SECONDARY TEACHERS SERVING AT-RISK POPULATIONS: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Lisa Brooks

January, 2019

Eric Hamilton, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago.

Isaiah 25:1

To my grandmother, Beatrice Johnson-Greenlea, throughout your life you were a pillar of strength in our family and a role model of perseverance, love, and resilience.

To my mother, Estella Brooks, thank you for continuously supporting me 110%. Your unwavering love and belief in my abilities continues to propel me forward.

To the myriad of K-12 educators who continue to support and champion at-risk students – meeting students where they are and encouraging students towards success by setting high standards and lovingly holding them accountable - you, resilient teachers, are my heroes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally, my doctoral work has been a labor of love dedicated to teachers. While completing my doctorate, I've continued my work as a high school English teacher. Currently, I experience every symptom, sign, cause, and effect of teacher burnout. Yet, I remain resilient. Which leads to my research (teacher burnout and teacher resiliency) and my platform – Supporting and Championing K-12 Teachers. My experiences and my education have made me a life-long advocate for educators in the trenches fighting to remain anchored and balanced and fighting to assure children have a righteous education. I can stand on my new knowledge-base and let my experiences guide me as I stand in solidarity and support of every struggling teacher who stays the course, every struggling teacher who leaves the field, and every teacher be they resilient or not who strives to make a difference in the lives of children.

VITA

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study sought to understand the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations and contrast the lived experiences of resilient teachers with those of burned out teachers. The purpose of this study is to glean common themes and attributes of resilient teachers working in high-stress environments which will help current and future teachers and administrators combat workplace stressors and teacher burnout by understanding coping skills and/or modifying behaviors and mindsets.

Secondary educators of at-risk populations have an almost impossible job educating adolescents. The vocation is filled with stressors: increased amounts of paper-work, lack of administrative support, high-stakes testing, un-manageable students. These stressors cause many teachers to experience burnout and/or leave the profession (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010). However, within schools, there are those resilient teachers who continue to remain positive elements of the school culture and educate students (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda, 2009). This investigation strove to understand the commonalities of these teachers and the potential to bring that knowledge to the professional lives of their peers.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

–Colossians 3:23-24

Educating children is a demanding endeavor (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Good teachers strive to meet the demands of all educational stakeholders: students, school administration, parents, faculty and staff. Over the years, the individual workload and responsibilities of classroom teachers has increased and continues to do so. According to Byrne (1998), when job demands increase without sufficient support or resources, stress-levels increase. When teacher stress increases over time, teacher burnout is the result (Farber, 2000). Burnout is a disorder characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished individual achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). For teacher burnout, the negativity that teachers express towards students, peers, and administration is considered detachment and loss of personal identity, and reduced personal accomplishment that is marked by the feelings that their jobs are meaningless along with the act of rating themselves as poor teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher burnout is a problem with costly effects for institutions as well as individuals. Each year millions of new teachers enter the profession and millions of teachers leave the profession. "After just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers leave teaching altogether" (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 148). "Nationally, the average turnover for all teachers is 17 percent, and in urban school districts specifically, the number jumps to 20 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics" (Kopkowski, 2008, p. 1). This costly *revolving door* affects all educational stakeholders. According to the Alliance for Excellent

Education (2005), "for individual states, cost estimates range from $8.5 million in North Dakota to a whopping half a billion dollars for a large state like Texas" (p. 1). Financially strapped districts spend significant portions of their budgets constantly recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers while students are continually taught by inexperienced teachers - rarely getting the benefit of what a seasoned teacher brings. This is especially prevalent in urban or low-performing schools.

Teachers are also affected. "In particular, inadequate support from the school administration, student discipline problems, limited faculty input into school decision-making, and to a lesser extent, low salaries, are all associated with higher rates of turnover" (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 501). An estimated "30 to 35% of American teachers are dissatisfied strongly with their profession and 5 to 20% truly are burned out" (Farber, 2000, p. 675). Farber (2000) proposes three types of teacher burnout: worn out, frenetic, and underchallenged. Worno ut teachers when confronted with high-stressors and little reward or appreciation, give up and perform their jobs in a cursory or indifferent manner. When confronted with high-stressors, frenetic teachers work harder and harder seeking increasing goals to the point of exhaustion. Underchallenged teachers find no challenge within their work and find their profession dull, tedious, and boring.

Because teacher burnout and attrition are multi-faceted problems not easily solved, resilient teachers who have been able to withstand mounting pressures or negative work environments while continually educating children at a high standard must be analyzed. Teachers with the resilience to defy the odds and persevere against burnout might give valuable insight into solutions. Brunetti (2006) observed, "a necessary condition … for continued productive work in the inner-city classroom – was the teachers' resilience" (p. 821). Teacher resiliency is the "ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions" (Bobek, 2002, p. 202). Resiliency is an indispensable skill set for

teachers facing adverse situations in their classrooms and larger school environment (Bobek, 2002).

Howard and Johnson (2004) asserted that there are three attributes or qualities that resilient teachers employ: agency, a strong support system, and competence/sense of achievement. Educators with "a pervasive sense of agency – a strong belief in their ability to control what happens to them (the opposite of which is fatalism or helplessness)" (p. 409) are able to nimbly recover from setbacks or problems. Resilient educators also have strong support systems consisting of friends and family as well as supportive administrative teams and co-workers. "What was particularly interesting in this group of teachers was their unanimous claim of strong support from colleagues and school leadership" (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p. 412). Finally, resilient teachers believe they are wholly competent in their work and are impacting the lives of their students.

One item that can either enhance or threaten teacher resiliency is technology integration. Like other industries, technology within a school environment is meant to assist practitioners, ease workloads, and allow for flexibility of both information exchange and knowledge acquisition. For educators, technology integration can feel like a hindrance due to the additional time required to learn new or unfamiliar hardware and software, equipment and connectivity issues, and educational programming which is in constant flux. Conversely, technology integration builds teacher resilience when teachers are allowed to practice and integrate technology by learning from one another, collaborating, and building community. Once teachers have the confidence and the know-how to successfully utilize available technological tools, teacher stress and burnout may be assuaged as teachers find new and convenient ways to communicate with stakeholders, to drive instruction, to present information, to assess students, and to analyze data.

This dissertation is a study of the characteristics, habits, and practices of resilient secondary teachers who educate at-risk students – comparing and contrasting the resilient teachers' lived experiences with those of burned out teachers. The study will examine how the resilient teachers combat workplace stressors and teacher burnout while educating children.

Purpose

This study investigates the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations and contrasts the lived experiences of resilient teachers with those of burned out teachers. The study employs a qualitative design with a descriptive approach and phenomenological methodology.

This study explores attributes, experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient teachers working in high-stress environments while also looking at the experiences and behaviors of burned out secondary teachers as a point of comparison. Two aims of the study are to determine best practices and coping skills to combat workplace stressors to better support current and future teachers and administrators.

Research Question

This study addresses the following question: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators?

Significance of Topic

Educating all segments of the K-12 population is a considerable, lofty goal. Having enough capable, competent, and willing teachers is key to continuing to realize this goal. Teachers must be able to not only navigate problematic students, administrative issues, never-ending paperwork, stakeholder demands, over-crowded classrooms, and lack of resources - but also persevere. Therefore, it is important that resilient teachers, those who persevere in high

quality classroom teaching and make gains with students be studied. Research is needed which identifies and clarifies the characteristics of resilient teachers as well as posits manageable steps other educators can adopt to become more resilient.

Theoretical Framework

Due to the taxing nature of educating students within under-served populations, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a framework for positive organizational change is ideal for this study. It is well-suited for promoting and building resilience within secondary educators. The foundational premise of Appreciative Inquiry is that organizations do not have issues that must be managed or solved; instead, organizations offer a wealth-spring of strengths that when highlighted and tapped into have the power to create positive, powerful transformations (Copperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Rooted in positivity, Appreciative Inquiry taps into the hearts and minds of participants in the change process by continually asking questions regarding what is working, what could be, and what should be. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) contend that "human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about, and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated" (p. 9).

Solving problems vs. Appreciative Inquiry. The traditional action plan for addressing problems or developing organizational change is to find root causes of the problem, develop solutions, and implement modifications or new initiatives. Conversely, because the traditional change process is laborious and sluggish, usually results in limited thinking, and elicits frustration and opposition (Copperrider & Whitney, 2005), Appreciative Inquiry concentrates on "a rigorous organization-wide discovery and analysis of the positive core ... a root cause of success analysis" (p. 12). Table 1 illustrates the differences between traditional problem solving and the process of Appreciative Inquiry.

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Table 1

From Problem Solving to Appreciative Inquiry

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Felt need; Identification of the problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of what is
↓	↓
Analysis of causes	
↓	Envisioning what might be
Analysis and possible solutions	
	↓
↓	Dialoging what should be
Action planning (treatment)	
↓	↓
Basic Assumption: An organization is a problem to be solved	Basic Assumption: An organization is a mystery to be embraced

Note. Adapted from *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (p. 13), by D. L. Cooperrider and D. Whitney, 2005, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Copyright 2005 by the authors. Adapted with permission.

Shifting from solving problems to AI creates a new paradigm that educators can utilize to bolster or inject positivity and resilience into their school settings. Questions such as: How can we improve? What systems work best? How can we connect with all stakeholders? can be addressed through a lens of positivity and cooperation.

The Appreciative Inquiry process. There are four components of the AI process: discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The discovery phase involves brainstorming and generating ideas regarding what organizations do best. Stakeholders develop and communicate their perspectives by brainstorming elements of the organization's positive core, developing questions to tap into affirmative foundational aspects, interviewing as many stakeholders as possible, and sharing narratives of success and positive outcomes. The

discovery phase allows participants to reflect on their own best practices and connect and dialogue with others within their organization focusing on positive change and growth.

> Potential rests unfulfilled until it is manifested through human discourse – given form in language, words, and ultimately actions. Human potential, situational potential, organizational potential, and community potential – strengths, capacities, abilities, and talents – remain implicit until "spoken into life." (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010, p. 14)

Educators seeking resilience may begin this process in small groups such as departmental meetings, or ideally the discovery phase of AI could be implemented whole-school either at the beginning of a school year or at the close of a school year for implementation the following school year.

The dream phase develops a new or revised shared vision and purpose. Once an organization has discussed and generated the qualities and practices that bring positive outcomes and success, the organization must create a shared vision which includes both the positive aspects that have been uncovered along with hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow.

> Appreciative leadership focuses on the future. On a personal level, Appreciative Leadership creates powerfully positive images in the form of aspirations and goals and works to realize them. It is disciplined, able to focus on strengths and transcend distractions to stay on the path of integrity. On a global level, Appreciative Leadership ensures that today's decisions, actions, and resources are mindfully used to support the well-being of generations to come. (Whitney et al., 2010, p. 179).

The design phase asks participants to create or redesign an organizational structure which best serves the new vision and purpose. Organizations use positive examples from the past to co-create a new organizational model which meets current and future needs. Educators can work

through the design phase individually or in small groups - focusing on what teachers value and appreciate - to redesign curriculum, lesson planning, classroom rules and procedures, school rules, rewards and consequences, departmental events, and school-wide events.

Finally, the destiny phase generates avenues for sustainability by maintaining "momentum for ongoing positive change and high performance" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16). Once the ideal situations have been designed, appreciative organizations now provide a structure for participants to continue to create, realize, and maintain a positive organizational methodology.

Theories undergirding Appreciative Inquiry. Five principles form the foundation of AI: constructionist principle, simultaneity principle, poetic principle, anticipatory principle, and positive principle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Constructionist principle. Our reality as we perceive it. It is socially built or constructed through the use of language to communicate (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Simultaneity principle. Nothing happens in a vacuum. When we generate questions, we also create new possibilities and new worlds. Inquiry, research, and change agency inextricably modifies self-perceptions as well as world-views (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Poetic principle. Literature is an apt metaphor for an organization. The narrative of an organization is constantly changing and evolving. Any aspect of the human experience – elation, indifference, drive, apathy, efficacy, redundancy - can be studied with the hopes of improving and making positive changes (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Anticipatory principle. Creating a vision for a positive future is a key element of success. The vision creates the future outcome. Beginning with a vision and working inductively, great changes can be created, implemented, and maintained (Kelm, 2005).

Positive principle. A positive outlook and attitude must be maintained in order to enact lasting positive change. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) explain, "Building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together" (p. 53).

Educators are constantly and consistently put upon to achieve gargantuan goals with over-crowded classrooms, with few supplies, and little support. Asked to do more with less, teachers are asked to not only educate but socialize and parent all students present in their classrooms - whether or not students are enthusiastic, combative, or apathetic. Teachers need an avenue to begin to see or remember the positive aspects of their profession. Thus, Appreciative Inquiry implements change by beginning with the "positive presumption that organizations, as centers of human relatedness, are alive with infinite constructive capacity" (Copperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 3).

Operational Definitions

Burnout. Burnout is a disorder characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished individual achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996).

Teacher resiliency. "A quality that enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks" (Brunetti, 2006, p. 813).

Key Definitions

At risk. "Any child who is unlikely to graduate, on schedule, with both the skills and self-esteem necessary to exercise meaningful options in the areas of work, leisure, culture, civic affairs, and inter/intra personal relationships" (Cox & Sagor, 2013, p. 1).

Core subject-area. Math, science, social studies, and English are considered the core areas which are taught within all elementary and secondary curriculums

Secondary educator. Educators who teach grades 7-12.

Teacher attrition. The condition of teachers choosing to leave their current district and migrate to another one or to leave the teaching profession altogether.

Key Assumptions

This phenomenological study is based on several assumptions. First, the study assumes that the educators identified as resilient actually possess these qualities. The study also assumes that the semi-structured interviews will provide useful data and information. Further, the researcher assumed that participants provided honest responses, observations, and reactions as the interviews were voluntary. Finally, it assumed that the lived experiences of the study participants will align with other resilient secondary teachers within the district, state, and the larger educational context.

Limitations of the Study

This phenomenological study contains several limitations. The pool of resilient teachers was chosen using purposive homogenous sampling. Purposive homogenous sampling allows for the researcher to choose participants based on the researcher's own judgments. Thus, teachers whom the researcher knew to be resilient were asked to participate in the study. This technique may invite researcher bias. Researcher bias was addressed and limited by researcher bracketing and the addition of a participant pre-screening questionnaire. Also, because the researcher has worked within the participants' school districts and knows the participants personally, participants may not have answered the interview questions accurately and honestly. Finally, this study may have limited external validity due to its small scale of nine participants.

Summary

This study seeks to glean the characteristics and common themes and attributes of the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient teachers working in high-stress environments as compared to teachers suffering with burnout. The study employs a phenomenological methodology with semi-structured interviews. The study assumes that respondents and interviewees will be honest and forthcoming with answers. The study is limited by the small number of participants and the researcher's personal connection to them. The study hopes to help current and future teachers and administrators combat workplace stressors and teacher burnout by developing new coping skills and/or modifying behaviors and mindsets using methods already employed by resilient teachers.

Organization of the Study

This qualitative study is organized into five chapters. After introducing the problem, purpose, research question, and significance, Chapter 1 concludes with the theoretical framework, key definitions, assumptions and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 begins with an overview and definition of the problem of teacher burnout. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature encompassing causes and effects of teacher burnout, methods to assuage teacher burnout, teacher resiliency, and job crafting.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology for data collection including purpose, design, rationale, population, and sampling. Protection of human subjects, request for site approval, instrumentation and data collection procedures are also included. Chapter 3 concludes with analytic techniques, validity, reliability, and overview of the design plan.

The results of the study are encompassed in Chapter 4. Qualitative data from interviews and observations is coded and analyzed. The research question is addressed and a visual representation of the data is included.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by presenting findings, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

–Galatians 6:9

This study investigates how some secondary teachers who serve at-risk students remain resilient despite numerous stressors and pitfalls such as large class sizes, continually increasing responsibilities, technological issues, and unsupportive administration. By understanding how these teachers have garnered resiliency and remained resilient, struggling teachers plus administrators may gain insight and techniques for building personal resilience and developing a resilient educational workforce. In the following review, the context for this study is provided via a synthesis of relevant, current literature on the impact of teacher burnout and attrition, teacher resiliency, and positive psychology. The following guiding questions provide an organizational framework for this chapter:

1. What are the effects of teacher burnout?
2. What attributes define resilient teachers?
3. How can positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry aid teachers in becoming resilient?

Literature Selection Criteria

To develop the following survey of the literature regarding teacher burnout, teacher attrition, teacher resiliency, positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry, a variety of scholarly databases and E-journals such as EBSCO, Ebrary, ERIC, Project Muse and ProQuest were utilized. Databases were accessed via the Pepperdine University Library System. The Pepperdine Library System afforded for the search of peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Relevant, print books, e-books, and textbooks were also consulted. Relevancy was ascertained by

considering timeliness, established methodologies, and subject-matter related to teacher resiliency and positive psychology.

What Are the Effects of Teacher Burnout?

Teaching is "one of the most stressful occupations" (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, as cited in Brackett et al., 2010, p. 406). Job dissatisfaction, work-related stress and occupational burn-out are noted problems within the educational workforce. Educators consistently report issues with high-stakes testing, student disciplinary difficulties, little support from administration, sub-standard wages, and lack of respect (Kopkowski, 2008; Nam, 2015). Decreased productivity, health risks, loss of sick-time, and high attrition levels are all by-products of a dissatisfied work-force (Byrne, 1998). These situations are detrimental to teachers, students, and administrators.

Teacher perceptions. Within the arena of education, K-12 teachers are known as having high-stress occupations with low salaries, and few extrinsic rewards (Parker-Pope, 2008). According to Gabriel (2005) author of *How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader*, "student achievement begins and ends with the quality of the teacher, the instructional program, and its leadership" (p. 124). Most new teachers begin their careers as "eager neophytes [who] burst into their classrooms confident they will touch their student's lives and inspire them to learn" (Woods & Weasmer, 2002, p. 186). Unfortunately for many educators, this wide-eyed enthusiasm quickly wanes and is replaced with negativity and fatalism (Howard & Johnson, 2004).

In Byrne's (1998) study, *Teacher as Hunger Artist: Burnout: Its Causes, Effects, and Remedies*, One anonymous teacher describes his/her frustrations:

> This is how they look at you: With empty eyes, angry eyes, knowing eyes and eyes that
> seek understanding that eludes them. They are saying many things at once, much of it
> contradictory. They are saying I want to learn and I don't want to learn, tell me to sit
> down and don't tell me to sit down, I want you to like me and I hate you .... They are

looking at you, the teacher, waiting to fail, waiting for you to fail.... Nothing you have

done, no class you've taken, no course load you've endured, no job you've worked is as

hard as teaching these children. You ask yourself, "Why am I doing this and when can I

quit?" (Shapiro, as cited in Byrne, 1998, p. 86)

Burnout defined. Gabriel (2005) claims, "It is expected that leadership roles will

change, shift, and evolve over time" (p. 4). Teachers are tasked with developing the academic,

emotional, social and cognitive abilities of each child. Other demands include helping students

plan for post-secondary education and become self-sufficient. When new teachers do not receive

the proper feedback and support from the administrative team or cannot readily point to evident

student success and learning, feelings of doubt, negativity, and decreased personal satisfaction

occur.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that over three million teachers are

currently employed educating children ("Fast facts: Back to school," n.d.). Also, according to

the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the national average for teacher

turnover is 16%. Therefore, slightly less than a half million teachers left their position at the end

of the 2014-2015 school year (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2012).

Features of teacher burnout. Byrne (1998) surveyed high school and community

college educators who reported the following symptoms: feeling powerless while trying to teach

and make the educational environment amiable for students, dreading lesson plan creation, the

plaguing feeling that there will be little to no return on one's investment, depression, little desire

to report to work, exhaustion, hatred, dreams of a vocational change, acrimony, disinterest,

boredom, memory loss, frustration, diarrhea, dread, mal du monde, feeling of running as fast as

one can and getting nowhere, listening to rose-colored solutions to entrenched problems.

These symptoms express a theme of despondency and despair (Byrne, 1998, p.) and relay a vicious cycle of frustration, negative emotions, physical ailments, and absenteeism. After several years of teaching, Nam (2015), author of *Why I'm Calling It Quits After Six Years as a Teacher,* explained her departure from the profession:

> All I know for sure is that teaching can be depressing. It's depressing when you plan an entire unit only to find that your class set of books won't come in on time because of school bureaucracy. It's depressing when you plan an epic lesson and it tanks miserably with a class of apathetic students. It's depressing when a student confides that she is pregnant, her boyfriend dumped her, and she's afraid to tell her parents. It's most depressing when half of your class has their heads down because a boy was killed in gang violence over the weekend. (p. 1)

Nam's experience is unfortunately replicated within the work experiences of many teachers. Byrne (1998) relayed that

> Many … teachers give up the profession … because they feel unable to cope with the personal problems of students who must deal with street violence, drug use, and broken homes and may be more in need of social workers than teachers. (para. 9)

Causes of teacher burnout. Across the literature, the causes of teacher burnout are a long but consistent list: mounds of paperwork, increasing class size, unruly students, dilapidated working conditions, low pay with few rewards, lack of collegiality, and lack of administrative support (Farber, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, 2010). Gabriel (2005) argued, "When there is no meaningful professional development, or teachers don't reflect on their practices, they stagnate or they stunt their own growth. Their zeal for the job dulls and they only go through the motions" (p. 114).

School settings/Work environments. The conditions of teachers' work environments are reflective of their social and emotional well-being relative to their jobs. Farber (2000) reported that schools with the tendency to develop or produce stress in teachers are:

- Large urban schools with large student to teacher ratios that are dilapidated or filthy and desperately need additional support staff and materials,

- Schools that are immensely authoritative with no leadership teams,

- Schools without social support structures for teachers and without administrative support of educators' efforts.

Perceived lack of administrative support. Another consistent report regarding teacher burnout is teacher's perception that school administration was unsupportive. Byrne (1998) reported that "respondents overwhelmingly felt that the greatest single cause of their burnout was the disregard they sensed from superordinates" (para. 15). Comments by respondents included:

- "No support from immediate supervisors; no feedback, except negativity, from assistant principals."

- "Dealing with an inefficient bureaucracy."

- "Feeling of impotence while being ordered by superiors to empower students."

- "Seeing inferior educators being rewarded."

- "The lack of understanding of children's special needs on the part of those who write policy."

- "The mixed messages from the administration, unclear goals, lack of support or sensitivity. Too much emphasis on paper trails and number crunching. Administrators wish to turn teachers into clerks; they want teachers to teach primarily to tests."

- "Administrators, those who are supposed to be in charge of the building and to make things easier for the other professionals, often simply shrug their shoulders when faced

with supply, staffing, or student disciplinary problems and blame these problems on the very bureaucracy which they are supposed to represent" (para. 15-16).

Educational reform. The focus on educational reform nationally was believed to be a phenomenon that would assuage the issues that contribute to teacher burnout. However, the educational reform movement "has had little – or even at times a negative – impact on the prevalence of teacher stress or burnout" (Farber & Ascher, as cited in Farber, 2000, p. 676). And with the current wave of school reform, teachers have felt even more pressure to achieve increased results with less resources and increasingly heterogeneous classrooms. "Thus, many clinicians continue to treat teachers … for problems of stress and burnout" (Farber, 2000, p. 676).

Lasky's (2005) article, "A Sociocultural Approach to Understanding Teacher Identity, Agency and Professional Vulnerability in a Context of Secondary School Reform," studied the effects of secondary school reform initiatives on teachers' ability to educate and positively affect the lives of their students . With the primary research site being one urban school typical of the surrounding schools within the area, Lasky collected data using both surveys and interviews. Surveys delivered data regarding the school context, and interviews allowed for thorough, detailed examinations of professional identity, vulnerability, and agency.

Regarding teacher identity, Lasky (2005) found that experienced teachers noted changes within their profession due to new and changing reform practices – from a team-oriented, familial approach of "…we're in this together…" to an autocratic, managerial approach of "…there's no one to take care of you, you've got to watch your back …" (p. 905). Several interviewees also noted that the good teachers – those willing to stand up for their beliefs and go the extra mile for students - were leaving the profession; and, many of the newer teachers (who accept the new reform mandates) don't have the same heart and dedication or only have plans to

remain in the classroom long enough to receive credentials for the next rung on the professional ladder.

The teachers interviewed believed they had a two-fold purpose - to teach the curriculum and to address the whole child by providing a safety net of support. Their sense of job satisfaction was firmly rooted in the idea that they were making a difference in the lives of children. Unfortunately, the reform standards caused an increase in workload: administrative paperwork increased, other responsibilities took away teaching time, work demands encroached on personal time, and non-teaching duties increased. As the teachers began to adhere to the reform mandates, they felt they had less time to devote to connecting and building trusting relationships with students by being vulnerable and blending their personal and professional selves. One teacher explained the dichotomy between changing educational standards intended to help children and teachers' inclination to spend time assisting students in their development and caring about them on a deeper level.

> So the kids are feeling pressure – vulnerable if you will – because they feel their marks are gonna be lower. And they have many concerns. And the teachers are doin' their best, but again, year after year, one new course after another. And it's really tough on the kids, and it's tough on the teachers. But, the kids have more to lose. You feel for the kids, you do your best, but the kids still may be short changed in the end. Both parties are under pressure all right. And tempers can be frayed, and certainly, it's a more difficult situation in which to build trust with kids, or trust with anybody. Simply because you don't have time to reflect, to change things, to explore, you know, "why aren't you doing so well?" "I just got thrown out of my house" (Lasky, 2005, p. 911).

Effects of teacher burnout. Educators who are most susceptible to teacher burnout are under 40 secondary teachers full or idealism or passion regarding their profession who also have a tendency towards being affected by external events rather than inner emotions or signals (Farber, 2000). Burnout attacks the experienced teacher around the seventh year, again in the tenth year, and as time moves forward, burnout either attacks sporadically or becomes a continual, persistent malady (Byrne, 1998).

The effects of teacher burnout are social, emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual, and intellectual (Byrne, 1998).

Emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is a corner-stone of teacher burnout. Because teachers work with children, they must regulate their emotions much more than other professions. "Teachers … experience intense, emotion-laden interactions on a daily basis and have a great number of emotional demands compared to most other professionals" (Brotheridge & Grandey, as cited in Brackett et al., 2010, p. 406). "The stress and emotional demands associated with the teaching profession can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion, cynical attitudes about teaching, reduced feelings of personal accomplishment, and lower job satisfaction" (Brackett et al., 2010, p. 406).

Teachers become disabled or impaired practitioners as they try to cope with organizational and systemic problems, continued and increased stress as well as emotional and physical exhaustion. "Learning and the joy of learning rarely happen because if a person is drowning herself, she doesn't have the will to teach someone else how to swim" (Byrne, 1998, para. 27).

Methods to assuage teacher burnout. Suggestions for alleviating teacher burnout within individual teachers are basically the same as "those for any stress-related disorder: relaxation, meditation, and exercise; time management; seeking alternative sources of

satisfaction; strengthening coping skills; and enhancing social support" (Farber, 2000, p. 676).

These suggestions are problematic because although they may work for some educators, the

systemic problems within education are not being addressed by these remedies. "These

suggestions do not address the strong phenomenological perception of 'inconsequentiality'

among those who feel burned – the sense that their efforts on their job are not met with

commensurate rewards, satisfactions, or fulfillment" (Farber, 2000, p. 676).

  School leadership. A change that must occur to lessen teacher burnout is to create a

leadership culture of shared responsibility. Teachers want to be included in the decision-making

process (Byrne, 1998; Brown, Finch, MacGregor, & Watson, 2012). "Supportive and shared

leadership is the phenomenon when 'school administrators participate democratically with

teachers sharing power, authority, and decision making" (Hord, as cited in Brown, Finch,

MacGregor, & Watson, 2012, p. 3). As educational professionals, teachers want to be a part of

the solution. "If the top down system of administration is abandoned in favor of policy decided

by all the constituent elements of a school community including supervisors, teachers, parents,

and students, a more harmonious atmosphere based upon individual responsibility will prevail"

(Byrne, 1998, para. 23). Gabriel (2005) offers strategies for becoming an effective teacher

leader. Gabriel explores the internal and external rewards and responsibilities of teacher

leadership. In his text, he provides practical positive advice to encourage teachers to become

effective and powerful teacher leaders inside of the classroom. Gabriel claims, "Leaders are both

teachers and learners" (p. 4). In his text, Gabriel outlined 15 leadership qualities of an effective

teacher leader. Teacher leaders possess principles, honesty and ethics, organization, intuition,

empathy and sympathy, altruism, accessibility, resourcefulness, fairness, acceptance,

vulnerability, progressiveness, decisiveness and incisiveness, and intelligence.

Psychotherapy. Farber (2000), a psychologist, reported three case illustrations in which his clients' burnout was helped through psychotherapy. Each client was diagnosed with a different type of teacher burnout (worn-out, classic burnout, and underchallenged). Farber advocates that each type of teacher burnout should receive a different course of treatment tailored to the individual teacher.

> Manifestations of this disorder vary considerably from one subtype to the next and … treatment … should be tailored to reflect the specific stressors encountered, the specific accomplishments experienced, and the specific nature of the individuals' character, history, needs, and goals. (p. 688)

Thus, educators seeking psychotherapy should seek out therapists who are empathetic and responsive – walking clients through alternative thought processes which are affirming and not fatalistic (Farber, 2000).

Innovation and technology integration. Being innovative and adaptable are hallmarks of being a resilient teacher (Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012; Montminy, 2016). Technology integration is one proactive way to alleviate teacher stress and burnout and enhance teacher resiliency. Lack of technology integration within a school or classroom contributes to teacher stress and burnout in two ways: teachers feel pressure and anxiety to utilize new hardware and software on which they are unfamiliar and have had little to no training, and teachers who may be familiar with current hardware and software may have little insight or professional development regarding how to adequately leverage new technology within their curriculum or current classroom proceedings (Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, & Sendurur, 2012; Kopcha, 2010).

Because of our ever-changing technological landscape, teachers (both new and experienced) do need to stay abreast of new techniques and applications which can both assist

student learning and make teachers' jobs easier. Innovation and adaptation are hallmarks of a resilient teacher workforce. Montminy (2016) asserts that innovation is needed when answering new challenges because if we always faced similar issues, we would always know how to easily proceed. "The types of challenges that stress us are the ones we've never been faced with before so we don't know how to handle them - and that's precisely why resilience requires creative thinking and innovative behavior" (p. 146).

One of the major missing elements of K-12 technology integration and innovation is teacher training/professional development.   Both pre-service and in-service educators must have continual, consistent and relevant training and professional development that focuses on technology integration.

> Relevant literature shows that effective professional development related to technology integration: (a) focuses on content (e.g., technology knowledge and skills, technology supported pedagogy knowledge and skills, and technology-related classroom management knowledge and skills), (b) gives teachers opportunities for "hands-on" work, and (c) is highly consistent with teachers' needs. (Hew & Brush, 2007, p. 238)

Although a teacher experiencing job-related stress or burnout may initially see additional professional development as an unneeded drain on his/her limited time, gaining new knowledge directly applicable to classroom responsibilities would ultimately aid in alleviating stress by restoring valuable time and creating new avenues for assisting and assessing students (Pierce & Cleary, 2016).

Howard and Gigliotti's (2016) qualitative study "Having a Go: Looking at Teachers' Experience of Risk-taking in Technology Integration" argued that not only do teachers' apprehensions regarding technology integration settle around uncertainty about skillfully utilizing technology and opinions regarding teaching with technology, but also reluctance to use

technology is related to teachers' feelings about taking risks and trying new things within their classrooms. Data was collected via "three years of interview, focus group, and classroom observation data….as part of major four-year mixed-methods study of a large-scale secondary school technology initiative in Australia, the Digital Education Revolution in New South Wales" (Howard & Gigliotti, 2016, p. 1352). The theoretical framework combined affect heuristic and appraisal theory to analyze one teacher's risk-taking and exploration of technology integration to identify dimensions of doubt and risk.

Howard and Gigliotti's (2016) 3-year study focused on one secondary history teacher, Emma. Despite initially expressing little interest in integrating technology, Emma utilized computers for administrative responsibilities and accessed an interactive white board a few times a week. She felt confident completing familiar responsibilities yet uncomfortable utilizing laptops or other available technology. Although Emma had a positive attitude and valued experimentation, when she tried to use technology within her classroom, she inevitably ran into small technical glitches that she didn't know how to troubleshoot. Ultimately, she would ask her students for help – wasting valuable class time. Technical glitches were the perceived threat that created teacher anxiety, and getting help from the students was the coping mechanism.

Emma had "a positive affective response to experimenting and changing in teaching, not technology use" (Howard & Gigliotti, 2016, p. 1358). Emma enjoyed varying instructional methods and engaging students with technology; however, she did not believe that technology was allowing for significant academic gains with students. This suggests that when teaching goals and change or experimentation are congruent, teachers are happy, and these feelings allow for low perceived risk (Howard & Gigliotti, 2016). Therefore, teachers who are positive, creative, problem solvers (resilient teachers), will be happy and experience reduced stress and anxiety when technology integration is perceived as a low risk activity.

During year two, Emma gained more confidence using technology and began to take more risks with curriculum and student products. She also cultivated better coping mechanisms: asking the school's technology specialist for help as well as preparing the technological aspects of lessons ahead of time – loading websites and programs onto the interactive white board in the morning before the school day began. As Emma increasingly utilized technology, her beliefs regarding student learning shifted. She saw students learning from technology-based projects and expressed happiness and satisfaction regarding student outcomes. Two complaints arose as technology integration increased: lesson preparation was time consuming and online learning tools were unreliable due to limited bandwidth. Emma coped by having non-digital options for times when technology proved problematic. Again, Emma proves her resilience by persisting, by collaborating with other educators, and by remaining flexible and adaptable.

Year three, Emma reported feeling a high level of confidence integrating technology although she acknowledged there was still much she did not know. She continued to take risks – assigning projects using software or programs that she was unfamiliar with, and she felt no anxiety. Howard and Gigliotti's (2016) study proves that not only can technology integration assist in building teacher resiliency, but also resilient teachers (risk-takers) can thrive within a robust technological environment.

Communities of practice. Another way to assuage teacher fears and uneasiness regarding working with technology is through a mentorship or buddy program centered on technology integration. "Teachers who learned to integrate technology with a mentor more easily overcame barriers such as finding time to integrate technology, learning to troubleshoot problems with technology, and learning to integrate technology into an actual classroom setting" (Franklin et al., as cited in Kopcha, 2010, p. 177). Because of the benefits of technology communities of practice, both new and experienced teachers must be required and encouraged to participate.

Junger's 2016 book *Tribe*, explains examples of social resilience, communities coming together to face adverse social, political, and environmental situations (Adger, 2000), and posits that societies with high levels of social resilience have significantly stronger buffers against stress than communities with lesser amounts of resilience. "In fact, social resilience is an even better predictor of trauma recovery than the level of resilience of the person himself" (Junger, 2016, p. 103). Thus, it is wise for teachers to work together and form groups to develop and enhance technological skills – ultimately bettering themselves and their students.

Digital technology/Learning technology. From laser discs to CD-ROMs to interactive whiteboards to on-line content and mobile applications, tech. businesses - both small and large - have attempted to provide educational organizations with beneficial learning tools that assist teachers and appeal to students while keeping pace with dynamic technological advances. According to The New Media Consortium (NMC) Horizon Report: 2015 K-12 Edition, which investigates emerging technologies for their possible influence on and application in K-12 educational settings, there are seven categories within educational technology:

1. Consumer technologies: applications and tools that were created for business, personal, or home use, which can also be beneficial in educational settings. Google Suite (formerly Google Apps) is one example. Initially created to assist businesses and home users, Google Suite later added Google for Education (formerly Google Apps for Education) to assist and train educators and their students.

2. Digital strategies: these strategies are not technological advancements, rather "ways of using devices and software to enrich teaching and learning, whether inside or outside the classroom" (p. 34).

3. Enabling technologies: transformative technologies which make existing hardware and software easier to manage or more beneficial.

4. Internet technologies: "techniques and essential infrastructure that help to make the technologies underlying how we interact with the network more transparent, less obtrusive, and easier to use" (p. 35).

5. Learning technologies: applications, technology, and online resources created specifically for the education sector.

6. Social media technologies: online social networks have permeated all sectors allowing for "new ideas, tools, and developments coming online constantly" (p. 35).

7. Visualization technologies: ranging from presentation tools and applications to visually analyzing data, "these technologies are a growing cluster of tools and processes for mining large data sets, exploring dynamic processes, and generally making the complex simple" (p. 35).

Virtual (online) learning. There has been a steady increase in online or virtual offerings for K-12 students. "As of 2010, at least 27 states had at least one entirely full-time, publicly funded online school, including high schools and schools serving pre-kindergarteners through 12th grade" (Clemmitt, 2013, p. 208). Students and their parents may choose to have students work from home taking all their classes online, or students might complete some classes online during the traditional school day.

Blended learning. Blended learning marries online content with traditional classroom instruction. Students can receive the benefits of self-paced or individualized online instruction along with the guidance and assistance that only a classroom teacher can provide. "In many cases, blended learning paves the way for other approaches — including competency-based models — that enable personalized learning, promote skill mastery, and inform new roles and responsibilities for teachers" (The New Media Consortium [NMC], 2015, p. 16)

Barriers to technology integration. Once a school or district has mandated increased technology integration, the organization must be cognizant of barriers to the technology plan and develop ways to navigate these barriers. Kopcha (2010) and Hew and Brush (2007) compiled the following barriers:

- Lack of time – most teachers are already pressed for time, and many see learning a new technology as another time-consuming task

- Access to resources – not having enough fully functioning computers, and devices; malfunctioning software and/or licensing problems; internet connectivity issues all cause great frustration for teachers

- Attitudes and beliefs – teachers may hold negative beliefs about technology

- Professional Development – many teachers lack the knowledge and skills to use technology within their curriculum, lesson plans, and classrooms

- Culture – school climate and norms may have a negative impact

Hew and Brush (2007) also included the following institutional barriers:

- Leadership – school administration may be unsupportive; teachers want to be a part of the decision-making process (Byrne, 1998; Brown, Finch, MacGregor, & Watson, 2012). "Supportive and shared leadership is the phenomenon when 'school administrators participate democratically with teachers sharing power, authority, and decision making" (Hord, as cited in Brown, Finch, MacGregor, & Watson, 2012, p. 3). As educational professionals, teachers want to be a part of the solution. "If the top down system of administration is abandoned in favor of policy decided by all the constituent elements of a school community including supervisors, teachers, parents, and students, a more harmonious atmosphere based upon individual responsibility will prevail" (Byrne, 1998, para. 23).

- Bell schedules – the amount of time within each class period may hinder tech. heavy lessons.

- School planning – school may attempt to integrate technology without a strategic plan.

Although specific to technology integration, these barriers are universal issues that contribute to both teacher burnout and teacher attrition.

Path analysis. The barriers and factors that limit technology integration (lack of time, limited resources, attitudes and beliefs, professional development, and culture) are inter-related problems and concepts. Path analysis is one way to analyze the barriers and extrapolate to what extent they inter-relate. "Path analysis is an advance statistical technique for examination of dependent and independent variables to reveal the relative effects of each variable on the other variables in the model" (Inan & Lowther, 2010, p. 139).

Looking at factors and barriers to tech. integration, Inan and Lowther (2010) used the following variables to create the path model:

- Age

- Years of teaching

- Computer proficiency

- Computer availability

- Teacher's beliefs

- Teacher's readiness

- Overall support

- Technical support

- Technology integration

Inan and Lowther (2010) found that "the eight variables hypothesized to impact technology integration in the model explained 56.4% of the variance of teacher's technology integration" (p. 144). Thus, there are also various unexplained reasons as to why educators are reluctant to utilize or embrace technology.

Also, Inan and Lowther (2010) found three key variables which positively affected technology integration: teachers' readiness, teachers' beliefs, and hardware/software accessibility. "This finding suggests that the higher the value of these variables, the higher the teachers' technology integration" (p. 145). This information can be valuable when training new teachers, pairing new teachers with mentors, and developing ways to assuage teacher burnout and build teacher resilience.

Strategies for overcoming barriers. Hew and Brush (2007) determined five categories for overcoming tech. integration barriers:

1. Develop a shared vision and technology integration plan: developing a shared vision allows educators to imagine and visualize what can be, and the integration plan provides the steps to reach the goal. Aligned with Appreciative Inquiry, developing a shared vision provides a pathway for teacher buy-in. A resilient teacher remains motivated and enthusiastic (Mansfield et al., 2011), and a shared vision allows this positivity to be bolstered.

2. Find ways to accumulate additional resources: creative thinking and creative problem-solving are crucial to overcoming this barrier; sharing equipment, fund-raising, and grant writing are a few options.

3. Change attitudes and beliefs: providing the vision, plan, and support assists with changing attitudes. The negative attitudes associated with teacher burnout may begin to change as teachers experience the benefits of including technology within their practice.

4. Conduct professional development: the additional knowledge and skills gained will allow teachers to feel comfortable using technology in their classrooms as well as bolster positive changes in attitudes and beliefs

5. Rethink assessments: teachers may use applications or software such as Google Docs or Turnitin.com to easily access and assess student work, and meticulously formatted state test questions can be developed and presented via technology such PowerPoint, Prezi, Keynote, or Emaze. Decreasing the amount of paper a teacher is responsible for is a great way to assist with decreasing stress. Also, as teachers become more familiar and agile with technology, the confidence and resilience increase.

Resilient teachers may encounter technology integration barriers; however, they find ways to adapt and navigate around them. Consistent with teacher resiliency traits discussed below, teachers who had successfully integrated technology within their classrooms cited a positive attitude, willingness to learn, administrative support, and concern for students as the greatest enablers of their technologically enhanced pedagogy (Ertmer et al., 2012).

What Attributes Define Resilient Teachers?

Although a myriad of researchers has explored the areas of resilience and teacher resilience, a single, standardized definition for teacher resiliency is elusive (Brunetti, 2006; Mansfield et al., 2011; Tait, 2008). Commonalities across the literature define the resilient as individuals who are able to quickly respond to adversity with positivity and optimism. Dr. Zelana Montminy (2016), author of *21 Days to Resilience: How to Transcend the Daily Grind, Deal with the Tough Stuff, and Discover Your Strongest Self* describes the resilient as people who see challenges as opportunities and uncover inner fortitude when faced with obstacles or conflicts.

A classic example of resiliency is the plight and resolve of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ who initiated the early Christian Church. Hunted by the Romans and persecuted by the Jewish

religious court, Christians were tortured, fed to the lions, and put to death. However, Jesus' disciples such as Mathew, Mark, Luke, and Paul spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and established churches despite the difficulties that they encountered. Although these early teachers faced threats no current practitioner would expect, their level of commitment and tenacity are hallmarks of a resilient mind-set.

Teacher resiliency has been described not only as a trait or characteristic or a set of strategies, but also as a complex process or a skill set. Brunetti (2006) defines resilience as a trait that causes educators to continue committing themselves to educating children despite suboptimal conditions and continuing obstacles. Personal strengths which contribute to teacher resilience include: genuine concern, intrinsic motivation, dedication, endurance, enthusiasm, effervescence, emotional intelligence, and bravery. There are also skill sets which are linked to teacher resiliency. Seeking help, proactive problem solving, accepting failure, bouncing back, and developing supportive social structures are all skills which allow educators to persevere and persist despite numerous challenges. Pedagogy associated with resilience include utilizing a variety of teaching strategies, building positive relationships with students, teacher self-reflection, continued professional development, high-level of teacher effectiveness, and confidence in teaching abilities (Mansfield et al., 2012).

Situated within a particular time period – before, during, and after desegregation - Polidore's (2004) dissertation entitled, *The Teaching Experiences of Lucille Bradley, Maudester Hicks, and Algeno McPherson Before, During, and After Desegregation in the Rural South: A Theoretical Model of Adult Resilience Among Three African American Female Educators,* utilized historical biography to conduct ethnographic fieldwork involving three resilient African-American women educators. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed to present a "Theoretical Model of Adult Resilience in Education" (Polidore, 2004). Resiliency traits

included optimism, change-oriented, morally and spiritually centered, flexibility, deep commitment, internal locus of control, supportive relationships, and belief in education. Congruent with the definitions and characteristics of resiliency introduced earlier within this chapter, Polidore (2004) adds to the literature by creating a theoretical model specifically focused on resilient educators rather than resilient individuals in general.

Due to the complex nature of teacher resiliency, Mansfield et al. (2012) developed "a higher order framework through which dimensions of teacher resilience may be more broadly attended to …. The advantage of such a framework is its capacity to show the overarching and overlapping dimensions of teacher resilience" (p. 361). The researchers used four dimensions: emotional dimension, motivational dimension, social dimension, and profession-related dimension. Traits and skills not previously mentioned include: from the emotional dimension – managing emotions, self-care, coping with stress, not taking things personally, from the motivational dimension – setting achievable goals, from the social dimension – strong communication skills, and from the profession-related dimension – flexibility and adaptability. The Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resilience (see Figure 1) is worth analysis because it conveys the complexities related to remaining effective as an educator.

Teachers' career cycle. Understanding the Teacher career cycle is another way that educators can foster resilience. The career cycle model "consists of eight stages: preservice, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit" (Fessler, as cited in Lynn, 2002, p. 179). Knowing in advance the ebb and flow of his or her career path will give educators a road map of what to expect.

Committed to students

Doesn't take things personally

Profession-related dimension

Emotional dimension

Bounces back Has a sense of humour

Is organised, prepared and manages time **Is flexible and adaptable**

Copes with job demands/ stress Manages emotions

Has effective teaching skills **Reflects**

Cares for own wellbeing Enjoys teaching

The resilient teacher …

Is positive and optimistic

Solves problems **Persists**

Builds support and relationships Likes challenge

Seeks help and takes advice **Focuses on learning and improvement**

Has confidence and self-belief Maintains motivation and enthusiasm

Social dimension **Motivational dimension**

Has strong interpersonal and communication skills

Sets realistic expectations and goals

Figure 1. Four dimensional framework of teacher resiliency. Reprinted from "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff: Understanding Teacher Resilience at the Chalkface," by C. Mansfiled, S. Beltman, A. Price, and A. McConney, 2011, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28, p. 362. Copyright 2011 by Elsevier Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

The Preservice stage includes teacher training within a university or college and school campus professional development at the beginning of the school year. "Typically a teacher who changes positions within a profession … or who changes professions completely … will find herself back in the preservice career phase" (Lynn, 2002, p. 180).

The Induction stage includes the beginning years of teaching. Teachers become acclimated to their school, school culture, community, and other stakeholders. "During the induction period new teachers strive for acceptance by students, peers, and supervisors and attempt to achieve comfort and security in dealing with everyday problems" (Lynn, 2002, p. 180). This is a tenuous stage for many teachers. "The National Commission on Teaching and

America's Future proffers … numbers, estimating that one-third of all new teachers leave after three years, and 46 percent are gone within five years" (Kopkowski, 2008, para. 4). New teachers seek acceptance from all stakeholders yet rarely find it. This leads to teachers feeling isolated and unsupported. The resilient teacher would bypass the pitfalls of this early stage by seeking mentors and being flexible and open to new strategies within the classroom.

The Competency Building stage involves the educator working to improve his/her teaching abilities, strategies, and methodologies. "Teachers in this stage are receptive to new ideas, attend workshops and conferences willingly, and enroll in graduate programs through their own initiative" (Lynn, 2002, p. 180).

The Enthusiasm and Growth stage is an out-crop of the competency building stage as teachers are highly effective yet continue to grow professionally. "Teachers in this stage love their jobs, look forward to going to school and to interacting with their students" (Lynn, 2002, p. 180).

The Career Frustration stage occurs due to job dissatisfaction. "Frustration and disillusionment with teaching characterize this career stage, and teacher burnout is common" (Lynne, 2002, p. 181). This is the stage that a resilient teacher would try to avoid by utilizing coping skills, peer relationships and support, and job-crafting. If educators are aware that this stage of the career cycle is possible, they can prepare for it in advance. Thus, teacher burnout can be a malady that is conquered. "It also may be a temporary state if someone overcomes it through the career" (Chang, 2009, p. 197). A resilient teacher might bounce back by developing and maintaining networks with colleagues, cultivating work-life balance, or furthering their education and training. "Teachers at career frustration might return to an enthusiastic and growing state if they engaged in professional development that was revitalizing" (Fessler & Christensen, as cited in Chang, 2009, p. 197).

Career stability includes teachers maintaining or renewing growth. Teachers in this stage are committed to educating children. However, some teachers in this stage may stay the course but complete their jobs in a cursory way (Lynn, 2002). "According to Maslach (1976), besides experiencing emotional exhaustion … teachers who burn out tend to become more indifferent to the people they serve or to their colleagues. Maslach described this syndrome as cynicism or depersonalization" (Chang, 2009, p. 197). This cynicism and depersonalization might cause an educator to just go through the motions by marginally completing tasks and dealing with students, peers, parents, and administration in a cursory way. However, a resilient teacher - knowing that there is a potential for this sort of pessimism and disconnect – could offset these emotions by forming relationships with students and parents, sharing classroom responsibilities with students (when appropriate), and seeking help from fellow teachers and administration. Further teachers in the Career Stability stage may also begin to plan for the last stage of Career Wind-down and Exit as a means of coping with cynicism and depersonalization. Planning for the next stage might garner a renewed outlook – especially if the educator plans to transition to different position within the educational arena.

Career Wind-down and Career Exit are the final two stages of a teaching career. Teachers wind-down as they prepare to leave classroom positions. These stages may lead to transitions to other positions within the education sector, retirement, or a completely different career path (Lynn, 2002). Many educators welcome the end of their teaching career with feelings of great accomplishment having made positive contributions to the education and development of students as well as the larger community. Others look forward to a career wind-down and exit in order to pursue different goals and aspirations either within education arena or in unrelated fields and interests. Finally, there are those who unwillingly move into these final teacher career cycle stages due to workplace conflicts, undesirable new duties or job changes,

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illness, or life changes. No matter the cause, a resilient teacher would look upon these final

stages as an opportunity for growth believing that "[e]very single outcome in our lives improves

once we begin to think positively about our present and our future, including our resilience"

(Montminy, 2016, p. 80).

Figure 2 further illustrates the multi-dimensionality of a teacher's career. Personal

aspects as well as the work environment can both hinder and help an educator's trek through

his/her career.
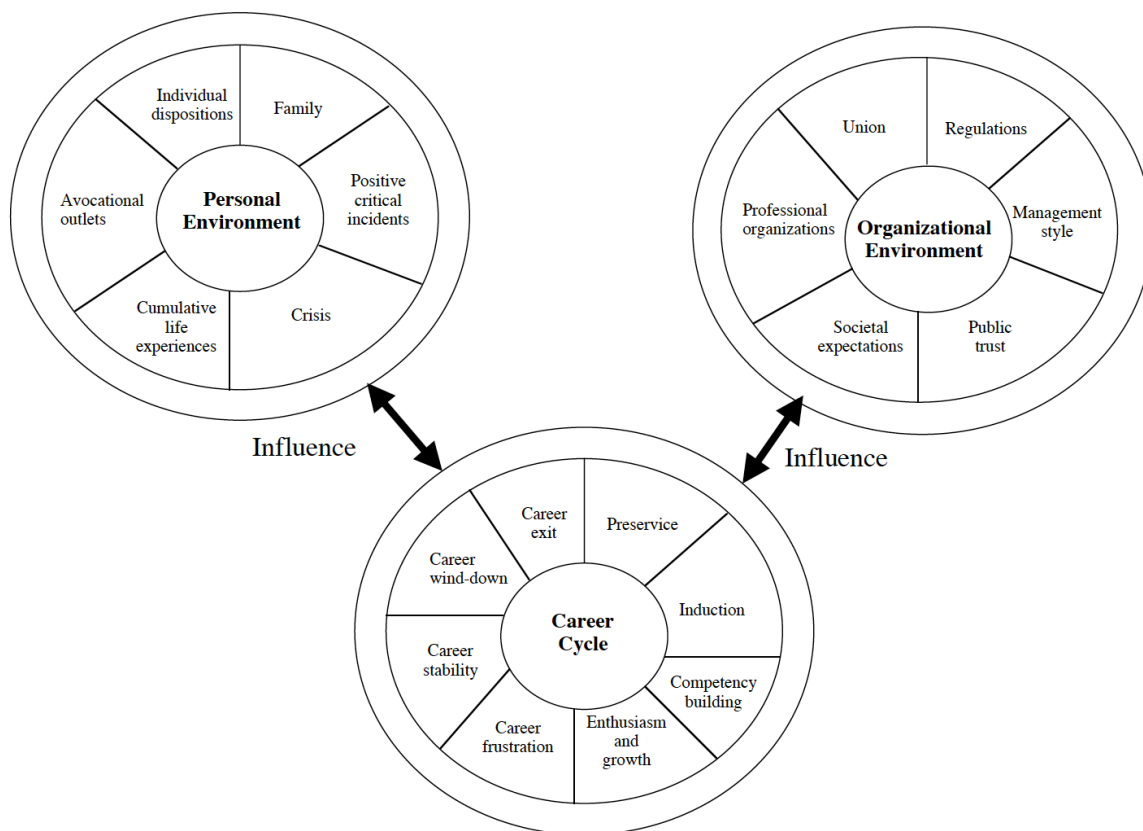
Figure 2. Teacher career cycle and environmental influences. Reprinted from "The Winding Path: Understanding the Career Cycle of Teachers," by S. Lynn, 2002, *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 75*(4), p. 180. Copyright 2002 by Routledge. Reprinted with permission.

Mentoring/learning communities. Another source of teacher dissatisfaction is the

feeling of isolation as teachers go about their daily activities singularly working with students

within the confines of their classrooms. "Current research shows that this sense of isolation can

be lessened by establishing meaningful learning communities within schools and between schools and universities" (Danielson, 2002, p. 183).

Traditionally, mentoring consists of a novice teacher paired with an experienced one in which the seasoned teacher imparts knowledge, assists, and gives advice to the new teacher. This model has been shown to be successful with supporting and retaining novice teachers. However, both the new and the experienced can learn from one-another and pairing experienced teachers with other experienced teachers is also beneficial. "Current thinking … points to the reciprocal benefits enjoyed by both veteran and novice teachers. A mentoring relationship can also be one between two veteran colleagues" (Danielson, 2002, p. 184).

Flexibility. A resilient teacher aptly responds to change by utilizing flexibility and a willingness to adapt. A key component of resilience is the ability to adjust to a given situation - not allowing perceived negatives and concerns to get in the way of persevering. Montminy (2016) explains that we usually think about the physicality of flexibility – doing stretches or yoga poses. However, being flexible in our thought processes allows us to cope and handle situations more affectively. Careers which require creating prodigious goals and executing monumental gains such as organizational change management, education, and social entrepreneurship rely on a flexible, resilient workforce to exact change and positive results.

According to Dees' (2001) article, "*The Meaning of 'Social Entrepreneurship,'*" social entrepreneurs create change within society by embracing a mission to establish and maintain social value, identifying and continuously pursuing new opportunities which edify the mission, immersing in a system of perpetual innovation, adaptation, learning, boldly executing with little concern for the current state of resources or the lack thereof, and communicating heightened accountability to both the clientele served as well as the results achieved. For example, social entrepreneur, Muhammad Yunus' work tackling huge, complex problems such as poverty,

malnutrition, and contaminated water by taking small steps which greatly impacted individuals, their families, and communities can be emulated to create change for teachers' and their work environments (Yunus & Weber, 2010).

Sarah-Marie Hopf, Partnerships Manager for Ashoka U. as well as a Program Advisor for the Designing for Social Innovation and Leadership (DSIL), UN Mandated UPEACE Centre for Executive Education is another example of flexibility and resilience. What's most stricking about Hopf is the prolific amount of work she accomplished within a relatively short amount of time. In Cambodia, Hopf developed partnerships with local entities, interviewed over 70 people and worked on human centered design, supported a storytelling initiative, and developed and wrote curriculum to launch an online executive education program – all within less than one year. Hopf's clear sense of purpose and sense of urgency is an inspiration for any educator who aspires to become resilient and effective. Thus, a resilient teacher will look for ways to exact purpose and change within his/her educational surroundings. "When teachers are empowered as agents for change, they become 'active agents rather than passive workers'" (Feimen-Nemser & Floden, as cited in Woods & Weasmer, 2002, p. 186).

The future of productively working within an educational system and culture depends on innovative strategies that allow educators to freely orchestrate and participate in curriculum development, classroom work environment, collaboration amongst colleagues, classroom management, and creative problem-solving. Morgan's (2014) book, *The Future of Work: Attract New Talent, Build Better Leaders, and Create a Competitive Organization,* posits that future employees will require seven principle factors for their work environments: (a) environment flexibility, (b) work customization, (c) information sharing, (d) innovative methods of communication, (e) opportunities to lead, (f) ability to move between being knowledgeable and learning new things, and (g) learning and teaching as needed. Morgan's futurecasting provides

an optimal goal for educational organizations. Resilient teachers presently use an entrepreneurial spirit and innovation to capture and create aspects of these seven principles of the future employee within their current work environments. Thus, it is important that resilient, innovative teachers are studied to provide leadership and guidance for 21st century educators.

Job crafting. Job crafting is one way that educators can begin to take the reins within their duties and responsibilities. Job crafting is "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work…" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, as cited in Wrzesniewski, 2003, p. 297). Workers can make changes to the amount of time spent on a task, whether to take on new (unassigned) responsibilities or tasks, and which co-workers they build relationships with and/or learn from. Job crafting can work for almost any profession.

A second form of job crafting educators can utilize to decrease stress and cope within their workplace is through making environmental changes. Making small changes with a workspace can offer big returns. Employees may not realize that the sights and sounds surrounding them at work can either enhance or detract from their workday. "The perceived supportiveness of environmental conditions is dependent on the individual's awareness of the environment as a potential coping resource and the ways in which he or she uses environmental conditions in achieving one or more restorative outcomes" (Gulwadi, 2006, p. 504).

A way must be found to bring stability, health/wellness, and the ability to thrive and find meaning in work to all who value it. "Because work dominates our psyches and social lives, we must attempt to understand the forces it generates, shaping society and channeling individual behavior" (Wrzesniewski, 2003, p. 297).

Thriving and being resilient and happy within one's work is no small feat. However, the benefits are well worth it. There are myriad steps that can be taken to create situations where

people find their occupation meaningful. However, underlying issues surrounding job stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction are not easily remedied.

How Can Positive Psychology and Appreciative Inquiry Help Teachers Become Resilient?

Positive psychology. Born in the late 1990s, positive psychology has brought an important change to the field of psychology. Unconcerned with psychological deficits yet focused on what makes human beings flourish or exceed expectations (Mather & Hulme, 2013), positive psychology departs from "traditional psychology's focus on what makes people unhappy and how they can return to 'normal'" (Achor, 2010, p. 9).

The term "positive psychology" might sound or appear trite or trivial to some; however, positive psychology pulls ideas from established, traditional religions, ancient Greek philosophers, and contemporary authors and thought leaders. Even more importantly, tenets of positive psychology have been empirically tested and validated (Achor, 2010).

Seligman (2011), the father of positive psychology and the author of *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being – and How to Achieve Them*, initially defined positive psychology as authentic happiness theory in which happiness could be analyzed as three aspects of living: the pleasant life, the engaged life, and the meaningful life. The pleasant life encompassed all things individuals did to please themselves: eating, getting a massage, having sex, etc. The engaged life centers around being fully engaged or absorbed in an activity – so much so that one loses track of time and forgets about everything else. The meaningful life is about attending to something larger than oneself. Having a purpose outside of self – religion, family, political affiliation, environmentalism, etc. – allows one to be happy via hope, altruism, spirituality, gratitude.

Through time, experience, and analysis, however, Seligman (2011) amended his definition of positive psychology:

I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness, that the gold standard for measuring happiness was life satisfaction, and that the goal of positive psychology was to increase life satisfaction. I now know that the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing. (p.)

Table 2 contrasts authentic happiness theory with well-being theory. It should be noted that most of the measures and goals associated with well-being theory are also resiliency characteristics.

Table 2

Authentic Happiness Theory vs. Well-Being Theory

Authentic Happiness Theory	Well-Being Theory
Topic: happiness	Topic: well-being
Measure: life satisfaction	Measures: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment
Goal: increase life satisfaction	Goal: increase flourishing by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment

Note. Reprinted from *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being- and How to Achieve Them* (p. 39), by M. Seligman, 2011, London, UK: Nicholas Brealey Publishing. Copyright 2007 by Martin Seligman. Reprinted with permission.

Well-being theory. According to Seligman (2011), happiness is a thing and well-being is a construct. A thing is measurable and thus can be operationalized. A construct is made up of different parts, and each part is measurable. Thus, there is no need to try to define *well-being*. Instead, each part of the whole is operationalized: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment. Seligman (2011) uses three criteria to justify each aspect of well-being: (a) it contributes to well-being, (b) people pursue it for its own sake, and (c) it is exclusive and measured independently of the other aspects.

The happiness advantage. Unlike Seligman who has transitioned away from using the word *happiness* as an analytical tool for positive psychology, researcher Achor (2010), author of *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work*, has gleaned seven actionable and proven motifs which forecast actualization and accomplishment.

1. The Happiness Advantage: Our brains can be positive, negative, or neutral. Brains that are positive have an advantage over brains that are negative or neutral. Fortunately, our brains can be reset to capitalize on positivity to increase productivity and achievement.

2. The Fulcrum and the Lever: Our mindset determines how we interpret our world. Our success or failure is predicated on how we think. We do have the power to change our mindset, or fulcrum, towards positivity or optimism which supplies the power, or lever, to increase fulfillment and success.

3. The Tetris Effect: Our brains respond to patterns. If we are consistently concentrating on negative, stressful patterns, we set ourselves up for failure. We can reteach our brains to notice patterns of possibility to take advantage of the many opportunities set before us.

4. Falling-Up: In response to setbacks, stress, and problems, our brains create or revise pathways as a coping mechanism. After an adverse experience or situation, the brain creates three mental maps: The first replays the current negative situation. The second generates continued negative consequences surrounding the current problem. The third path leads to a better and stronger person due to experiencing a setback and rebounding. The third path, falling up instead of falling down, is resilience.

5. The Zorro Circle: When challenged, sometimes we respond emotionally and perhaps spin out of control. To regain composure and control, begin with small, manageable goals and slowly add larger and larger aspirations to your circle.

6. The 20-Second Rule: Lasting change involves willpower to stay the desired course. Unfortunately, willpower depletes over time causing goals for positive change to wane. When we lose the will to continue forward and instead track back to familiar, negative habits, we need to make small time and energy adjustments to regain momentum. The 20-Second Rule involves using the path of least resistance as an advantage against resuming bad habits by making desired goals easily accessible. For example, if the goal is eating more fruit and vegetables, place a bowl of fruit within 20 seconds reach of your eating area and prepare vegetable snacks ahead of time while placing junk food in the back of the pantry or another more laborious location.

7. Social Investment: Developing social connections and positive relationships is one of the most important parts of creating happiness.

When combined, these seven principles assisted Harvard students and numerous other business leaders, employees, and educators conquer difficulties, overcome negative behaviors, gain efficiency and productivity, maximize opportunities, reach aggressive goals, and fulfill their potential (Achor, 2010).

The foundational premise of Achor's work is that happiness comes before success or personal fulfillment. We must first choose to employ an optimistic, positive, happy mentality, and then we suddenly see hidden opportunities, surpass goals, achieve more, and succeed often.

Appreciative Inquiry. Developed in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is both a way of behaving in the world and a way of seeing the world. Like positive psychology, AI "is both a worldview and a process for facilitating

positive change in human systems" (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2017, p. 1). By concentrating on what works and what allows people to thrive within their work or organizational environments, AI offers a framework for positive organizational change management.

As discussed in Chapter 1, AI includes four phases: discovery, dream, design, and destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The discovery phase involves brainstorming and generating ideas regarding what organizations do best. The dream phase develops a new or revised, shared vision and purpose. The design phase asks participants to create or redesign an organizational structure which best serves the new vision and purpose. Finally, the destiny phase generates avenues for sustainability by maintaining "momentum for ongoing positive change and high performance" (Copperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16).

The four phases of AI are congruent with positive psychology's Well-being Theory. Discovering what works well within an organization aligns with positive emotion and engagement. Dreaming what could be aligns with engagement and meaning. Both designing what should be and charting a new destiny encompass all five of the Well-being Theory measures: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment.

Although little has been written regarding incorporating AI within primary and secondary school systems, Mather and Hulme (2013), editors of *Positive Psychology and Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education* link the two concepts and extol the advantages of using both to support students because both concepts assist in the formation of healthy, productive, and thriving people. These concerns are universal throughout the educational arena. Therefore, AI and positive psychology can be used to exact change within any K-12 system.

"…Appreciative Inquiry works by generating six essential conditions in an organization that together liberate or unleash personal and organizational power (potential)" (Copperrider &

Whitney, 2005, p. 56). The six freedoms of AI are: Freedom to Be Known in Relationship,

Freedom to Be Heard, Freedom to Dream in Community, Freedom to Choose to Contribute,

Freedom to Act with Support, and Freedom to Be Positive (Copperrider & Whitney, 2005).

These freedoms are consistent with teacher resiliency. Building positive, supportive

relationships; strong communication skills and emotional intelligence; concern for and

commitment to students; ability to solve problems; positive and optimistic are all characteristics

of teacher resiliency that correlate with the AI freedoms.

AI is rooted in telling positive, powerful stories. Teachers (both new and experienced)

can be asked positive, open-ended questions which assist in creating a new vision. Educators

will be asked questions such as: When you were in school, who was your favorite teacher and

why?; Describe your best day of teaching or best lesson – what happened?; What's something

you have accomplished that you are proud of – explain? Part of being on a successful team is

sharing what works so that the whole team can improve.

Although AI focuses on positivity, there are dissenting views regarding its effectiveness.

Rogers and Fraser (2003), authors of *Appreciating Appreciative Inquiry*, caution that AI is only

useful and valuable when astutely applied within the right context. Thus, AI - although effective

in many situations – may not be universally appropriate for leadership or change management.

Rogers and Fraser (2003) posit the following limitations and possible risks to AI

implementation:

- Spurs unrealistic and dysfunctional perceptions, points of view, and actions.

- Encourages unjustified optimism.

- Encourages evasion of known problems.

- Glosses over substantive problems which allows those in power to hide issues.

Rogers and Fraser (2003) do acknowledge that AI is quite useful when the purpose is to identify strengths and not to identify unknown issues. AI can be successful at determining both unknown and known strengths and developing the courage to attend to previously identified dilemmas (Rogers & Fraser, 2003). Problems within the educational arena: teacher attrition, teacher burnout, teacher and student absenteeism, lack of parental involvement, lack of school leadership, are widely known. Therefore, Appreciative Inquiry can be a great tool to uncover and develop strengths within all educational stakeholders to find new ways to address persistent problems.

Other dissertations on teacher resilience. Grizzle's (2010) dissertation, *An Exploration of Factors Influencing Effective Teachers' Decisions to Remain in Urban School settings*, is an embedded-case study which investigated why effective teachers chose to remain in urban schools and analyzed the influence of resiliency, teacher retention, and efficacy on their decision. Fourteen study participants were chosen via criterion reference sampling linked to National Board Certification and administrators' appraisal of traits of competent urban teachers gleaned from relevant studies. Data were collected via "focus group and individual interviews and supplied archival data" (Grizzle, 2010, Abstract). Findings indicated a correlation between resilience and retention, yet cautioned that they are not interchangeable. Thus, resilience should not be the only factor utilized to create teacher retention programming.

Findings also indicated that professional development which focused on teacher self-reflections, pedagogy, and student success were important factors for teacher resilience and retention. These finding are consistent with Gabriel (2005), who argued that teachers lose their enthusiasm for teaching when there is lack of purposeful professional development and little focus on teacher self-reflection. Grizzle's study adds to the literature by linking teacher resiliency and teacher retention within urban areas. Because teacher attrition is highest amongst

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urban school teachers (Kopkowski, 2008), studying what allows effective urban-area educators to continue teaching is important.

By focusing on the lived experiences of resilient teachers educating at-risk students, this dissertation will delve deeper into individual characteristics and personal accounts which bring forth resilience within secondary teachers.

In Hamilton's (2012) qualitative dissertation entitled *Investigating Resilience, Self-efficacy, and Attribution Theory in Relation to Teacher Retention,* case study methodology was utilized to find factors which kept North Carolina Teaching Fellows in the classroom beyond the closing of their contract. The study also looked at Attribution Theory and its influence on teaching fellows who remained North Carolina teachers for 10 years or more and the relationship between teacher resiliency, efficacy, and retention.

Three elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and three high school teachers were participants in the study. Individual cases were analyzed and then cross-analyzed with the other cases. Internal and external factors plus resilience caused fellows to decide to stay. Attribution theory was significant for self-efficacy related to lasting endurance within the educational field. Teacher efficacy, teacher retention, and teacher resilience were inter-related in each case.

Hamilton's (2012) study enhances current research by linking teacher efficacy, retention, and resilience. Teacher efficacy and resilience are related and enhance one another, and both bolster teacher retention (Tait, 2008).

This dissertation will focus on teacher resiliency and ways that it influences teacher efficacy and impedes teacher attrition.

Merrill's (2013) dissertation, *Teacher Resilience in High-Poverty Schools: How Do High-Quality Teachers Become Resilient?*, is a qualitative study which explores how Teach for

America (TFA) Corps Members became resilient while teaching at-risk populations. Data was collected using an internet survey with 72 participants and personal interviews of 14 TFA teachers and nine former TFA teachers. Teaching experiences of corps members who left the classroom after fulfilling their initial obligations were compared with the teaching experiences of corps members who decided to remain in the education arena. Findings showed little difference in the teaching experiences of those who left and those who chose to stay. However, most of the TFA corps members who left attribute their departure to teacher burnout.   Reasons for leaving included bureaucracy and administrative issues – which is consistent with researchers Byrne (1998), Farber (2000), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007, 2010).

By looking at a particular sub-set of teachers (TFA Corps Members) and examining both why some stayed and others left, Merrill (2013) creates a clear picture – within a controlled sample - of the reasons for both teacher resiliency and teacher burnout.

This dissertation will add to the body of research by using a case study to delve into the practices and beliefs of resilient educators and provide reliability and validity for findings by confirming data with both teachers who profess to being burned out and with successful administrators.

Through narrative life story, Moe's (2014) dissertation, *What is the X-Factor? Teacher Longevity in Urban Districts,* investigated intrinsic aspects – including resiliency – which allowed educators within urban districts to continue teaching. Twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from elementary, middle, and high school settings. Participant selection criteria included having five or more years of experience and being recommended by principals, researcher's professional contacts, or researcher's personal contacts.

Congruous with Polidore's (2004) Theoretical Model of Adult Resilience in Education,

findings showed that teacher motivation was derived from connecting with previous students and believing in educational equality. Educators persevered by optimistically accepting challenges, being analytical, and being untroubled by change.

This dissertation will focus specifically on the resilience of secondary educators working with at-risk students. Experiences and traits which develop and bolster teacher resilience will be analyzed. Other intrinsic aspects will be explored, such as optimism, perseverance, flexibility, and innovation, that directly lead to a teacher resiliency.

Groundwater's (2016) dissertation, *Thriving with Social Purpose: A Phenomenological Investigation of Resilience and the Role of Life Meaning in Teacher's Decision to Remain in the Teaching Profession*, looked at the influence of resilience on the choice of three mid-career educators to continue teaching. The study's theoretical framework included Motivational Systems Theory and Ford & Smith's Thriving with Social Purpose. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and analyzed using phenomenology.

Findings showed that being optimistic, tenacious, goal oriented, and emotionally intelligent are all keys to resilience. Also, believing in the importance of social purpose is the catalyst for life meaning. Social purpose includes cultivating relationships and sense of belonging, and a larger social framework which includes personal purpose and goals.

Groundwater (2016) contributes to the research surrounding teacher resiliency by linking resilience with life purpose. The literature does convey that commitment and a sense of purpose are important to maintaining a resilient mindset (Brunetti, 2006; Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005; Mansfield et al., 2012; Montminy, 2016).

This dissertation will include purpose and commitment as traits of resiliency as well as explore the process and strategies for becoming resilient.

Conclusion

Being a resilient educator is a multi-faceted endeavor (Mansfield et al., 2011). Teaching, at any level, is more than simply presenting content. Stakeholders make both reasonable and unreasonable demands upon educators. Demands on teachers' time, intellect, and emotions can be draining and stressful. Stress and exhaustion may lead to teacher burnout and attrition. One dimension for correcting this problem involves developing and supporting teacher resiliency.

This review of literature concentrated on three guiding questions:

1. What are the effects of teacher burnout?

2. What attributes define resilient teachers?

3. How can positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry aid teachers in becoming resilient?

Teacher burnout includes feelings of exhaustion, depersonalization, detachment, pessimism, and lack of personal accomplishment regarding teaching, rapport with students, administration, and fellow co-workers. Teacher burnout not only affects the practitioner, but also has a negative ripple effect on students, curriculum standards and goals, academic achievement, and fellow teachers and staff. Teachers attribute their burnout to numerous factors including bureaucracy, lack of administrative support, discipline issues, problems with infrastructure, lack of supplies, high-stakes testing, and large class size. The students themselves and low salaries rank at the bottom of the list of reasons for teachers' job dissatisfaction.

Ultimately, burnout, if unchecked, leads to teacher attrition. Teacher attrition may be in the form of formally resigning and seeking a different teaching environment or transitioning to a new career. Unfortunately, there are also burned out educators who continue to come to work but are mentally and emotionally absent each day.

Although not a panacea for the ills that seem to plague many of the educational systems which serve at-risk students, teacher resilience offers educators an opportunity to strengthen their own resolve if they want to purposefully remain in the classroom and make gains with students.

Researchers attending to teacher resiliency are a small group. A set definition for teacher resiliency has yet to be solidified. Resilience involves rebounding from tough situations and seeing challenges and setbacks as opportunities for growth. Thus, the qualities or traits of a resilient teacher include: emotional intelligence, creative problem-solving, committed to the teaching profession, intrinsically motivated, purpose-driven, sense of humor, flexible, creative, and nurturing. These traits might be what a resilient teacher already possesses; however, the goal is to not only identify or bolster the innate resiliency traits of some educators, but also to build and heighten these traits in novice or struggling teachers.

Finally, positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry are the underlying framework for developing a resilient educational workforce. Based, in part, on religion, philosophy, and current writers and thought leaders, positive psychology reminds us to begin our endeavors or goals with a positive mindset which will ultimately lead to success. Choose first to be happy; then, you are in a posture to receive and achieve.

Along with positive psychology, Appreciative Inquiry provides the actionable steps to create change. By choosing to look at what works and brings accomplishment, organizations and educational entities can devise a plan to generate more uplifting and productive experiences. Appreciative Inquiry allows stakeholders to identify the positives (discover), create a new vision or shared purpose (dream), develop a new work structure which supports the dream (design), and pattern a structure which will maintain the shared purpose and momentum.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided the analysis of relevant literature and research regarding teacher burnout, teacher attrition, teacher resilience, positive psychology, and Appreciative Inquiry. The chapter sought root causes and methods to alleviate issues. Sources were reliable and valid and included peer-reviewed journals, articles, books, eBooks, and textbooks. Chapter 3 will explain the methodology chosen for this study as well as the steps required to conduct this study.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

–Proverbs 16:9

This chapter provides the framework for the design and methodology of this phenomenological study. The purpose of the study along with the research question, research design and rationale will be explained. Chapter 3 also outlines the population, sampling method, sample and response rate as well as instrumentation (including sample interview questions), data collection procedures, and analytic techniques.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations and contrasted the lived experiences of resilient teachers with those of burned out teachers.

This study explored attributes, experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient teachers working in high-stress environments while also looking at the experiences and behaviors of burned out secondary teachers as a point of comparison. Two aims of the study were to determine best practices and coping skills to combat workplace stressors to better support current and future teachers and administrators.

Restatement of Research Question

The research question for this study was: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators?

Researcher's Role

This study's investigator has been a secondary educator for the past twenty years and currently teaches 11th grade AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). Previously, the

investigator taught secondary English for 19 years and has always served at-risk students. . The researcher has worked in four different school districts located in rural, suburban, and urban areas and has experience as a Content Team Leader, curriculum writer, and educational consultant.

The researcher began her career loving her job and loving the work she was doing with students. However, as the years passed, teacher burnout began to set in. The stress of high-stakes testing, student discipline issues, demands on her personal time (staying late, professional development on weekends, and grading papers and writing curriculum at home) began to take a toll on her mental and physical well-being. The investigator's teacher burnout symptoms included exhaustion, detachment, and the perception of the lack of personal accomplishment regarding teaching, Her health began to decline, and she developed an ulcer and frequent migraines.

Even though the researcher was burned out, she never stopped believing in her students and the importance of a quality education. The researcher held her students to a rigorous standard and gave students the tools to achieve. Further, no matter where she worked, she always developed relationships with her fellow teachers and endeavored to work as a team – even if it was a team of only two or three. Thus, the investigator's resilient teacher traits included having effective teaching strategies, building support and relationships, and focusing on learning and improvement. Looking back, the researcher knew that she was burned out but never considered that she was resilient.

The investigator's experiences as a secondary teacher have led her to this research. She'll always err on the side of believing in educators, supporting teachers, and building support networks to allow teachers and students to succeed.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative study delved into the lived experience of resilient teachers in contrast to burned out teachers. Yin (2016) proposes "five features which distinguish qualitative research, including its specialized types, from other forms of social science research" (p. 9).

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives, in their real-world roles

2. Representing the views and perspectives of the people … in a study

3. Explicitly attending to and accounting for real-world contextual conditions

4. Contributing insights from existing or new concepts that may help to explain social behavior and thinking; and

5. Acknowledging the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone

Because the study sought to understand the experiences of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations in contrast to burned out teachers, a phenomenological approach was utilized. Phenomenology allows for comprehensive conclusions to be drawn by offering "a descriptive, reflective, interpretive, and engaging mode of inquiry from which the essence of an experience may be elicited" (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 67). Phenomenological reflection is guided by four existential principles: "temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), and relationality or communality (lived human relations)" (van Manen, as cited in Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 68).

Population

This study involved nine subjects: seven resilient secondary teachers who educate at-risk students within an urban school setting and two burned out teachers who also educate at-risk students within an urban school setting. Subjects were chosen from a pool of 15 resilient teachers and five burned out teachers. Both the resilient teacher pool and the burned-out teacher

pool consisted of experienced secondary teacher-leaders who were known by both their peers and the researcher to be either resilient or burned-out. This group of teachers was considered for the study and approached to participate. Subjects who met the criteria and were willing to participate joined in the study.

Resiliency is defined as repeated positive adaptation in the face of adverse situations (Yonezawa, Jones, & Singer, 2011).   Burnout is a disorder characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished individual achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996).

Sampling Procedure

Purposive homogeneous sampling was used to collect data for this phenomenological study. According to Yin (2016), purposive sampling involves deliberately choosing participants who "will yield the most relevant and plentiful data" (p. 93). Yin further explains that although a purposive sample might not be a representative sample, it is important to incorporate sources which may deliver views which may contradict the majority of subjects.

Homogeneous sampling aims to employ participants who share similar traits or attributes (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).   The goal is to draw out insights and opinions from a specific group with specific characteristics.

The inclusion criteria for data collection were:

- Certified secondary (7-12) educators who teach at-risk student populations

- Teaching experience of 10 or more years within a core subject

- Two or more years of leadership experience within their role as a teacher

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to data collection, participants were provided and asked to sign a consent document which outlined the subject and aims of the study, their voluntary participation, and researcher

contact information for questions and concerns. Confidentiality was maintained by utilizing pseudonyms for proper names and removing cover sheets. Participant data and responses and field notes were confidentially handled by electronically transcribing and electronically saving field notes and saving recordings of observations using encryption software. Hard copies of consent forms and field notes are being kept for five years in a secured, locked file cabinet in a secured location. Deception will not be needed within this study.

There were minimal risks for participation in the study: psychological as participants may have to recall difficult or stressful situations and social as other faculty and staff not included in the study might disagree with the participant being a part of the study. The benefits included providing educators with examples of effective actions and interactions which stave off teacher burnout and produce teacher resiliency within the educational environment.

There was no remuneration, and because neither the participants nor researcher received monetary compensation for the research, there was no conflict of interest. Copyright clearance and licensing was not needed as the researcher developed her own data collection instruments.

IRB Process

This study adhered to all guidelines and requirements regarding the protection of human subjects. Pepperdine University policy instructs "…that all research involving human participants must be conducted in accordance with accepted ethical, federal, and professional standards for research and that all such research must be approved by one of the university's Institutional Review Boards (IRB)" (Pepperdine University, Protection of Human Subjects, 2018, p. 6). When reviewing and conducting research, "Pepperdine University is guided by the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report" (Pepperdine University, Protection of Human Subjects, 2018, p. 6).

As required, the study design and plan were submitted to the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval via an exempt review application. IRB clearance was obtained before data collection began.

Eliminating Bias

To eliminate or reduce bias, the researcher created a screening tool to establish whether subjects met the definition of teacher resilience. Howard and Johnson (2004) assert that there are three attributes or qualities that resilient teachers employ: agency, a strong support system, and competence/sense of achievement. The purpose of the screening tool was to both validate subject participation as well as bolster interpretation and analysis.

Prescreening Questionnaire:

Read the following statements. Choose the response that best describes you.

1. I have the power to make changes within my classroom.   Y/N

2. I influence my students and colleagues.   Y/N

3. I change negative situations within my work environment.   Y/N

4. If troubled due to workplace issues, I have a support network to consult.   Y/N

5. I collaborate with other teachers.   Y/N

6. I positively impact the lives of my students.   Y/N

7. Through my teaching and influence, my students are able to learn and grow. Y/N

Instrumentation

Recorded semi-structured interviews were employed for this study. Teachers were interviewed to document the teachers' actions and interactions with stakeholders (Table 3).

Table 3

Instrumentation

Variables	Data Sources	Respondents
Variable 1: behaviors/actions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout	Data source: Recorded semi-structured Interviews	Respondent 1 Respondent 2 Respondent 3 Respondent 4
Variable 2: social interactions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout	Data source: Recorded semi-structure interviews	Respondent 1 Respondent 2 Respondent 3 Respondent 4

Sample Interview Questions:

Pre-interview Statement: Every profession has both positive and negative aspects; this interview will focus on problems and/or difficulties and innovative strategies you may have used to overcome them.

1. What are some of the best attributes of your job? Please explain.

2. What do you consider the most sustainable strategies for maintaining vibrancy in your work into the future?

3. How do you maintain a balance between your professional life and personal life? Please explain your answer.

4. What are some of the issues you find to be stressful or problematic regarding your job as an educator? Please explain.

5. Do you feel supported in your role as an educator? If so, in what ways. If not, how do you manage this lack of support?

6. How have you handled or navigated through these problems?

7. Describe the types of relationships you have with colleagues, administration, and students.

8. Are there work-place relationships that have assisted you in working through problems or stressors? If so, please describe at least one of them.

9. Are there work-place relationships that have diminished your capacity to do your job effectively? If so, please describe at least one of them.

10. When you have a work-related experience that you consider especially taxing or stressful, what sorts of things do you do to manage these situations?

11. Have you experienced what is often called teacher burnout? If so, what steps did you take to alleviate it? If not, what do you believe are the reasons why you have avoided teacher burnout?

12. Do you use available technology to assist you in working with students and attending to your other duties? If so, what tools do you use and what do you like most about them?

13. What technological tools are on your wish list? Why? What types or forms of professional development would you like to have to enhance your technology integration? Explain.

Data Collection Procedures

During a one-month period, data collection occurred either in person or via phone. The sampling frame consisted of current certified, experienced (10 or more years) classroom teacher leaders teaching a core subject (English, Math, Science, Social Science) to at-risk students. Purposive homogeneous sampling was used.

Before research began, participants were provided and asked to sign a consent document which outlined the subject and aims of the study, their voluntary participation, and researcher contact information for questions and concerns. Subjects were then sent an online pre-screening questionnaire.

Data was collected during a one-month window. Each teacher was interviewed once –
with the caveat that follow-up interviews may be needed for clarification of ideas and data. Each
teacher was interviewed for up to 45 minutes.

Analytic Techniques

Three bodies of analysis were utilized to ascertain the lived experiences of resilient
secondary teachers and make recommendations for current and future educators:

1. Analysis of the study data

2. Reflections and feedback from experienced secondary educators struggling with
   teacher burnout

3. Overall analysis and perspective of the researcher

Data was abstracted by bracketing previous ideas and knowledge using a written
memo. The themes and commonalities that emerged were categorized. Data was analyzed by
using a recursive process of reading, writing, reflecting, and examining spaciality, corporeality,
temporality, and communality (Richards & Morse, 2013) in order to catalog factors which bring
forth or support/enhance resiliency within secondary educators.

Teacher behaviors and actions (variable 1) were analyzed by reading and re-reading
interview transcripts and looking for commonalities and themes. Data was synthesized and
summarized through writing and re-writing.

Social interactions (variable 2) were also analyzed by reading and re-reading interview
transcripts. Common themes and phenomena which emerged were cataloged, synthesized and
summarized through writing and re-writing.

Trustworthiness

Establishing whether data and its interpretations are valid and reliable across various
sectors has been a persistent issue for qualitative researchers. Scholars question whether

qualitative researchers can remain objective, reliable, and valid in their quest to delve into human experience and ways of living. Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggested a paradigm shift away from the traditional reliability and validity measures of quantitative research towards the concept of trustworthiness. Generating research data which can be trusted involves four categories: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability.

Credibility is comparable to internal validity. Credibility assures that the aims of the study match the data collected and the data analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest six techniques to ensure research credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks. This study utilized prolonged engagement and member checks. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) define prolonged engagement as spending an adequate amount of time in the field to comprehend or grasp the cultural environment, community, or circumstances being studied. The researcher was also a teacher who taught alongside most of the participants, either previously or during the time of the study. Therefore, the researcher was thoroughly oriented to the context, culture, and phenomenon. Member checks were achieved by giving each participant an electronic copy of his/her interview transcript for approval and feedback.

Transferability corresponds to external validity and checks the applicability of the research results to other contexts. Lincoln and Guba (1986) propose thick descriptive data to address the applicability of qualitative results. This study included thick descriptive data of the participants, procedures, results, and analysis.

Dependability corresponds to reliability, and conformability corresponds to objectivity. Both dependability and conformability rely on triangulation and an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Although this study does not use triangulation, other researchers should be able to apply

an audit trail to replicate this study by following the design plan, data collection procedure, and data analysis technique.

Finally, Morse (2015) offers a dissenting view regarding utilizing Lincoln and Guba's (1986) trustworthiness terminology suggesting that qualitative researchers "return to the terminology of mainstream social science, using *rigor* (rather than trustworthiness), and replacing dependability, credibility, and transferability with the more generally used *reliability*, *validity*, and *generalizability*. Table 4 is a summary of Morse's recommendations for establishing rigorous qualitative research. Morse's recommendations correspond with Lincoln and Guba's assertions and with the trustworthiness/rigor strategies employed within this study.

Table 4

Summary of Recommendations for Establishing Reliability in Qualitative Inquiry

Strategy	Reliability	Comments and Caveats
Development of a coding system and inter-rater reliability	Only for semi-structured interview research	Coding system and codebook are essential
Member checks	Does the researcher understand/interpret the participant correctly?	In text: As a reliability issue, if you do not understand what is going on, your analysis is unstable and cannot be repeated to get the same results.
Thick description	Provides opportunity for seeing replication/duplication	Interviews overlap, and therefore, verify the data set internally.
Peer review debriefing	Not usually a reliability issue, except for team research	
External audits	Do not ensure reliability Not routinely used	Problematic – too late to fix identified concerns

Overview of Design Plan

- File expedited review application to Pepperdine University IRB.

- Correct IRB application modifications.

- Receive final IRB approval.

- Schedule interviews with study participants.

- Conduct study data collection.

- Transcribe, code, and analyze data collected; categorize themes and commonalities.

- Write draft of Chapter 4.

- Finalize Chapter 4.

- Write Chapter 5.

- Schedule Final Oral Defense.

Summary

Chapter 3 restated the purpose and research questions for this phenomenological study, along with definitions and rationales for a phenomenological study. Chapter 3 also described the study's methodology: research design and rationale, population and sampling procedure, protection of human subjects, and IRB process. Finally, instrumentation, data collection procedures, analytic techniques, and trustworthiness were outlined and explained.

The study results will be explicated in Chapter 4. The data will be analyzed and presented in narrative form. Other representation of data may include, charts, graphs, figures, and tables. The study's research question will be addressed and answered.

Chapter 5 will conclude this dissertation with a summary of the findings, implications and a discussion of recommendations for further research.

Chapter 4: Results

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor is not in vain.

–1 Corinthians 15:58

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations and contrast the lived experiences of resilient teachers with those of burned out teachers. In order to achieve this purpose, a phenomenological approach was employed. Chapter 3 outlined this study's methodology, and this chapter presents and analyzes the data obtained from participant interviews.

Research Participants

Nine participants were interviewed for this study. They were selected using purposive homogenous sampling and met the following criteria:

- Certified secondary (7-12) educators who teach at-risk student populations

- Teaching experience of 10 or more years within a core subject

- Two or more years of leadership experience within their role as a teacher

Of the nine interviewees, 88% were female; 55% were African-American, and 45% were White. Core subjects represented included English, Science, History and Special Education. Participants had an average of 19 years of experience. Leadership roles included: Team Lead, Dean of Students, Mentor Teacher, Campus Site Coordinator, and Cheer Sponsor. Table 5 depicts the participants' demographic data.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Race	Subject Taught	Education	Years of Experience	Leadership Role
Participant 1	F	AA	English	Master's	18	Team Leader
Participant 2	F	W	History	Master's	28	Cooperating Teacher
Participant 3	F	W	English	Bachelor's	15	Curriculum Writing
Participant 4	M	W	Science	Bachelor's	10	Department Chair
Participant 5	M	AA	English	Doctorate	20	Dean of Students
Participant 6	F	AA	English	Master's	18	Campus Site Coordinator
Participant 7	F	W	History	Bachelor's	10	Cheerleading Coach
Participant 8	F	AA	Special Ed	Bachelor's	39	Mentor Teacher
Participant 9	F	AA	Special Ed	Bachelor's	10	Team Lead

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher used purposive homogenous sampling to identify 15 potential participants. Beginning in February 2018, the researcher either requested in person or text teachers from her professional circles whom she believed to be either resilient or burned out. Ten teachers agreed to participate, and ultimately nine were interviewed. Once the teachers agreed to participate, the researcher emailed the informed consent form and link to the pre-screening questionnaire. Pre-screening questionnaires were completed prior to the interviews. The face-to-face, phone, and on-line video interviews ranged from 18 to 44 minutes and were conducted from February 2018 to March 2018. Following the interview process, each participant received a copy of his/her interview transcript via email to check for accuracy and to approve.

Data Analysis

Upon interview completion, qualitative data analysis began. Coding, the process of reading and re-reading interview transcripts in order to identify important concepts and themes, was utilized. The coding process was as follows:

1. The researcher read each transcript underlining important or main ideas.

2. When the researcher noticed a theme or pattern, she chose a color to represent that particular theme and highlighted or circled corresponding portions of each transcript.

3. For each interview question, the researcher tallied how many participants responded in a similar way.

4. Responses that were similar for a majority of participants, were deemed high frequency indicators.

5. For verification, the researcher reread participant responses and tallied high frequency indicators for a second time.

6. Participant responses which were repeated within several interviews but not by the majority were also noted.

7. The researcher reread transcripts and high frequency indicators to find and notate emerging themes.

8. Emerging themes were written separately, double-checked, and connected to specific quotations from participants.

Findings

This study's research question was: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators? The variables for this study were (a) behaviors/actions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout, and (b) social interactions

regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout. The theoretical framework for the study was Appreciative Inquiry.

A pre-screening questionnaire was used to verify that participants were resilient. All nine respondents were deemed resilient (only) or both resilient and burned out. Seven teachers answered seven out of the seven pre-screening questions in the affirmative and were deemed resilient (only). The teachers who self-identified as burned out answered six out of the seven questions in the affirmative and were deemed both resilient and burned out. Participant 1 answered "No" to pre-screening question 1: I have the power to make changes within my classroom. Participant 4 answered "No" to pre-screening question 5: I collaborate with other teachers. Therefore, seven out of the nine participants were resilient (only) and two of the nine participants were both resilient and burned out.

Each of the 13 researcher developed interview questions correspond to the research elements reviewed above. These 13 questions were used to facilitate the interview process. Table 6 frames the research elements and their relationship to the interview questions.

Table 6

Research Elements and Connected Interview Questions

Research Element	Connected Interview Questions
Theoretical Framework: Appreciative Inquiry	1. What are the best attributes of your job? Please explain.
	2. What do you consider the most sustainable strategies for maintaining vibrancy in your work into the future?
	6. How have you handled or navigated through these problems?
	13. What technological tools are on your wish list? Why? What types or forms of professional development would you like to have to enhance your technology integration? Explain.

(continued)

Research Element	Connected Interview Questions
Research Question: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators?	4. What are some the issues you find to be problematic regarding your job an educator? Please explain.
Research Question Variable 1: behaviors/actions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout	3. How do you maintain a balance between your professional life and personal life? Please explain your answer. 10. When you have a work related experience that you consider especially taxing and stressful, what sorts of things do you do to manage these situations? 11. Have you experienced what is often called teacher burnout? If so, what steps did you take to alleviate it? If not, what do you believe are the reasons why you have avoided teacher burnout? 12. Do you use available technology to assist you in working with students and attending to your other duties? If so, what tools do you use and what do you like most about them?
Research Question Variable 2: social interactions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout	5. Do you feel supported in your role as an educator? If so, in what ways. If not, how do you manage this lack of support? 7. Describe the types of relationships you have with colleagues, administration, and students. 8. Are there work-place relationships that have assisted you in working through problems or stressors? If so, please describe at least one of them. 9. Are there work-place relationships that have diminished your capacity to do your job effectively? If so, please describe at least one of them.

Upon analysis of interview transcripts and field notes, 13 high frequency indicators developed from 11 of the 13 interview questions. Statements were deemed high frequency indicators when five or more of the nine participants voiced similar statements. The interview

questions, corresponding high frequency indicators, and frequency of statements are summarized

in Table 7.

Table 7

Interview Questions, High Frequency Indicators, and Frequency

Interview Questions	High Frequency Indicators	*n*
1. What are some of the best attributes of your job? Please explain.	… to positively impact a student's life…. Being another adult … able to listen and advise… being a member of that student's support system.	8/9
2. What do you consider the most sustainable strategies for maintaining vibrancy in your work into the future?	Being creative, flexible, and willing to change things up	5/9
3. How do you maintain a balance between your professional life and personal life? Please explain your answer.	I leave the job at the job. I give myself a time that I am leaving the school and when I'm going home, and I honor that.	9/9
4. What are some of the issues you find to be stressful or problematic regarding your job as an educator? Please explain.	Administration has a lack of interest in what goes on in the classroom. The people who are making our decisions are making decisions for themselves but not for the betterment of teachers and students.	7/9
5. Do you feel supported in your role as an educator? If so, in what ways. If not, how do you manage this lack of support?	Yes and no, I feel supported by my team of colleagues who are often in the trenches with me. From administration, you get mild support – building support – support with resources and stuff. But that intellectual support really doesn't come. I lean on my coworkers and reach out to them for support.	5/9

(continued)

Interview Questions	High Frequency Indicators	*n*
7. Describe the types of relationships you have with colleagues, administration, and students?	Colleagues: It's one of mutual respect. We support one another. We're just there if somebody needs a hand. We're always willing to help out.	6/9
	Administration: With leadership, I try to keep it professional.	5/9
	Students: With students, I try to keep it genuine, but professional because in all instances they need to know you really care.	8/9
8. Are there work-place relationships that have assisted you in working through problems or stressors? If so, please describe at least one of them.	Absolutely. Relationships with coworkers are definitely what get you through the stressors … having someone that understands what's going on.	8/9
9. Are there work-place relationships that have diminished your capacity to do your job effectively? If so, please describe at least one of them.	Yes, it [the incident] strained our relationship.	8/9
10. When you have a work-related experience that you consider especially taxing or stressful, what sorts of things do you do to manage these situations?	Let it go, cut your losses, do what you have to do, and just hope for a better day the next day.	7/9
11. Have you experienced what is often called teacher burnout? If so, what steps did you take to alleviate it? If not, what do you believe are the reasons why you have avoided teacher burnout?	I've most assuredly experienced teacher burnout. If we did not have summers or breaks, I don't think I could stay in this field.	8/9
12. Do you use available technology to assist you in working with students and attending to your other duties? If so, what tools do you use and what do you like most about them?	Yes, I definitely enjoy integrating technology and I almost think it's … a must now days.	8/9

Emergent Themes

Through coding and data analysis, eight themes emerged. The themes are presented and explained here along with representative quotations from participants.

Theme 1: Resilient teachers have a passion for supporting students both academically and personally. Eight of nine participants professed a love or passion for teaching students and helping them grow.

Participant 3 stated: "I love working with teenagers. I'm always curious about what they're thinking and how they figure out problems." Participant 6 stated:

One of the best attributes would perhaps be to help positively impact a student's life in an area that's outside just academics. Being another adult. Being able to listen and advise. Being a member of that student's support system. And being able to celebrate the ah-ha moments when a kid actually is able to grasp a concept.

Participant 7 stated: "The kids in general. I like working with them…. The kids – [we] are able to build relationships with them, and they are very positive, in most cases, and I enjoy that, outside of teaching." Participant 9 stated:

I enjoy teaching the children I enjoy sharing information with them or presenting it to them in a way that they either haven't thought of it before … making it interesting for them, to make them interested in the subject matter so they want to continue learning and getting more information.

Theme 2: Resilient teachers maintain a clear boundary between professional and personal life. All of the study participants discussed a personal commitment to keep their work life separate from their personal life.

Participant 1 explained: "I've grown to the point where I don't take my work home. I used to do that and became burnt out very quickly, so now it's very seldom I would even address anything work-related at home."

Participant 5 explained: "just drawing the boundaries. When it's family time, it's family time. … discipline, not to intertwine both of them is a key." Participant 6 explained:

I leave the job at the job. I truly did adopt an all I can do is all I can do attitude, and I

truly did adopt the attitude that there is a time and a place for everything. And, when I'm

at work, I'm on my A game at work, but at 3:45 I'm off.

Participant 7 explained: "I try to … get the things I need to do … done before I get home,

and when I go home, I focus on family. I try not to take work home with me, which means that I

have to stay a little later to get things done.

Theme 3: Being creative, nimble, and enterprising allows resilient teachers to

effectively impact student learning. Five of the nine participants mentioned staying abreast

of new techniques and being creative within the classroom to keep students engaged. Participant 2

said:

I think that as a teacher, I have to come up with new strategies. … I have to learn how to

use technology. We are teaching a different generation than I taught in the 80s and 90s

and 2000s. So I think just my part is, I have to do a better job of not being complacent

and getting something that's gonna catch their attention.

Participant 3 said:

… I'm always changing … to reflect what I think is going on with their culture, their

group …. I change things up. I may change a process in how they turn something in. I

may change the room around or just change the posters on the wall.

Participant 4 said:

Well, I do a lot of creative projects. I try to do a lot of open-ended multiple correct

answer kind of projects to where kids can kind of tackle the issue the way that they see

fit. I try to bring in as much creativity as possible so they can personalize their work to

themselves and take pride in it …. I'm a creative person; I like art a lot. I find it

appealing to see what these kids come up with, what they create.

Participant 6 said:

I am a music lover, so music is a part of everything I do. I do a lot of different eclectic

music choices to make kids even ask, 'What is that?' Music unifies people. Sometimes

even when you don't understand the words, but the rhythm, the beat, et cetera helps to

connect….

Participant 9 said:

You have to keep it fresh and use new ideas. As educators we all have toolboxes of

things that we use, stuff that we know is going to work. But you have to … go back and

revamp it because some of it just needs a freshening up. We have to make everything

diversified because we have so many learners, so you have to make sure you're doing

something that appeals to everybody.

Theme 4: Resilient teachers perceive a disconnect between the day to day working

lives of classroom teachers and the administrative arm of secondary education. Seven of

the nine participants spoke about administration making decisions which affect both teachers and

students without consulting teachers or asking for their input. Participant 2 responded:

I feel like in education the people who are making our decisions are making decisions for

them but not what is for the betterment of teachers and students. … I can deal with the

children. I love teaching. I love my co-workers.. I can deal with all that but when the

district office is making decisions, and they have no idea what's going on in the

classroom. And that's everywhere I've taught.

Participant 5 responded:

Administration has a lack of interest in what goes on in the classroom. … [They are]

trying to get through administration requirements without due consultation with teachers.

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Administrative oversight or lack of oversight or just interference with the smooth running

of the school.

Participant 6 responded: "The administration is so hell bent on maintaining relationships

with students and parents that they oftentimes step on the back of the person who's doing the

most work, and that's the teacher." Participant 9 responded:

District and campus politics. One of the things is teaching to the test instead of always

teaching the students the skills and information they need to be productive and that's

going to be useful for them going forward. … It's the focus from a district level and

even on the campus level for performance. It's so high on the test that some of the

students, sadly, they get caught up and lost in the shuffle.

Theme 5: Resilient teachers perceive that when there is support from

administrators, it is inconsistent and/or banal. Seven out of nine participants commented that

the level of administrative support they received depended on where they happened to be

working, or administrative support was ineffective or immaterial. Participant 1 commented:

I feel supported, and that depends on what campus you're on. It's all about being on

certain campuses, under certain leadership. The leadership that I'm with now, yes, I do

feel supported. I haven't always been able to say that about all of the leadership that I've

been under.

Participant 3 commented:

I think, over the years, I've experienced both. Most of the schools I've worked in in the

past, they were large departments and you kind of got lost in the numbers. … Here, there

are times where I feel like "Ok, they get me, we're working together, we're doing what

we need to do." Then there are times where it's like my opinion doesn't matter.

Participant 4 commented:

No, I don't feel I get any support from administration. … At my other district, I had much

better relationships with administrators. They did a lot better job of going around and

talking to teachers on the regular and seeing how things were going. They would come

into your room after school and talk to you and see what's working, what's not, what can

we do. This never happened in my four years here. I've only seen [principal] on …

campus for our meetings and that's all.

Participant 5 commented:

I don't feel adequately supported. … You get mild support … building support, support

with resources and stuff. But that intellectual support really doesn't come. And for some

teachers, just giving them ... computers and stuff is not the same thing as giving them

intellectual support – which is: "You're a teacher. I know you're doing the right thing.

But, … how can we best improve what you're doing in the classroom?" That is

intellectual support. Instead of thinking: "I'm the administrator; I know how best to run

your class. These are the things that you should be doing. Go on, do it."

Participant 7 commented: "Administration here is divided. One of our administrators …

is part of, what is, the family. The other administrator is a bit more firm and sometimes …

absent."

Theme 6: Resilient teachers garner support from colleagues and family. Eight out of

nine participants spoke of leaning on colleagues and family for both personal and professional

support. Participant 2 stated:

I have a husband who supports me. I've coached softball. I've coached cheerleading.

I've kept the basketball books. He will go with me. He has done things as a part of my

… school activities. At my last school, those were some of my best friends that I still

keep in touch with, text, see when I go home. … Some of my greatest or closest or most

valued friendships have come from people I have worked with in the teaching field.

Participant 4 stated:

Relationships with co-workers are definitely what get you through the stressors,

especially a district like this where there's so many problems that affect the entire

learning community. So, it helps to know that other people are experiencing the same

problems. … Relationships with other teachers helps a lot, having someone that

understands what's going on.

Participant 6 stated:

I feel supported by my team of colleagues who are often in the trenches with me. And,

we understand and identify with the frustrations, but also the successes. We find a way to

develop a team atmosphere and kind of vibe off one another. … I also am supported and

validated by my family. They see all that goes into this job, and they respect that. I truly

can say that my husband does respect what I do and tries his best, especially when he sees

that I've had a particularly rough day, to try to make the evening hours a little more

pleasant. That's my support system.

Participant 7 stated:

We support one another. If someone's having a bad day, … I'll bring their kids into my

classroom. We're just there if somebody needs a hand. We're always willing to help

out. Being a small campus, it makes it easier because we're like family.

Theme 7: If workplace issues become exceptionally tense or difficult, resilient

teachers use various coping mechanisms to combat teacher burnout. Eight out of nine

participants spoke of taking breaks (both short term and long term), taking the high road, or

moving on and letting go when confronted with persistent workplace problems. Participant 1 responded:

> I take a break from the field. … I've taken several breaks. It's just something about knowing you're not under the pressure to go back to the same situation kind of relieves your stress until you can … regain your thoughts and come up with a system or some type of method that's going to work for you if you choose to go back into the field.

> Participant 2 responded:

> If we did not have summers or breaks, I don't think I could stay in this field. I used to think … summer break is for students. But it's not. It's for teachers. So, I definitely wouldn't be in this field if I had to work more than 180 days. … I've never really experienced it [burnout] to the point I would quit. I've experienced it to the point where I have to have a break, or I'm going to go mad.

> Participant 3 responded:

> … I just couldn't handle what was going on at the school and how I was handling it [personal life issues], so I felt like it was in my best interest to stop teaching. I stopped teaching high school for … two school years. … When life settled down and I felt like I was in a good place mentally, that's when I returned to teaching.

> Participant 4 responded:

> After a certain amount of time, I'm going. I gotta do my personal stuff. I try to be careful … my first couple years teaching you do over give and you get burnt out because you realize we were at school 60, 64 hours this week. That's just way too much. … I'll just make myself go home early and try to decompress because you definitely need that …. It gets to a point where I just gotta go home. I gotta get away. I just try to be nice

[when conflict arises], and if I feel like there's a problem or an issue, I tend to just ignore it.

Participant 5 responded:

I just break it down into manageable parts and just do it. Maybe it's just the culture of the school district that I'm in. But, you just invest more time and energy, and you end up having to do the same thing again. So, I just … cut your losses, do what you have to do, and just hope for a better day the next day. It is always best to just avoid it [conflicts]. Just stay the nice guy. Say you're sorry and move on. Just apologize and move on.

Participant 9 responded:

I would periodically pop up in the counselor's office because she always had a little Zen music playing, and she had a little fountain in her office and sometimes I would just go in there and take a little 2 minute woosah just to kind of regroup. … The nurse … had a little area … I would disappear on my conference period … to lay down for 20 minutes. I said I just need to go there … to be in some quiet. Around testing time, it was always stressful for everyone on campus. To help downplay some of that and release it, I had my little stress balls. As I'm moving around the classroom talking to students, I'm squeezing my stress balls…. Also, blowing bubbles. I had bubbles in my classroom. I would literally walk around and blow bubbles in my classroom. The simple act of blowing bubbles relieved so much tension and stress out of me.

Theme 8: Resilient teachers use a myriad of technological tools to make their jobs easier, enhance instruction, and reach students. All participants were proponents of technology integration and used multiple tools to aid in effective classroom instruction. Participant 1 explained: "I use computers more now simply because it's their future, and

technology is what the new generation will be working with more than the past generation."

Participant 4 explained:

> Absolutely, I use a lot of technology. … I love the ability of them [students] to be able to research things on the fly. … I can have them do a five minute little pre-research on it before we talk about it and see what they can pick up on ... and correct their misconceptions from reading an article.

Participant 5 explained:

> Working with students, I think Google apps are becoming very easily accessible. … I'm able to open up documents from students, share documents with students, and sometimes even edit their documents in real time. I think that has been really good so the students can actually … know that you know that they are working on their paper instead of just playing.

Participant 7 explained:

> I use a ton of tools but I use Google Classroom. There are so many applications that fit and work together with Google Classroom. It helps me to be more organized. It helps me to keep up with student work. I'm not very good with paper, so the workload in Google Classroom I find to be less stressful because it's all there. Kids can't say, "I turned it in" when they really didn't because it's right there. So that's been a huge help to me transitioning to a paperless classroom.

Participant 9 explained:

> I definitely enjoy integrating technology, and I almost think it's a must now days because the students are so used to it. … I like to incorporate the students coming up and using the smart board …. It's not just me up there constantly talking and doing a sit and get. I

want them to be interactive because … if they're using the technology and getting stuff in

multiple ways, they're going to retain it better.

Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resiliency

Discussed in Chapter 2, Mansfield et al.'s (2012) Four Dimensional Framework of

Teacher Resilience: "a higher order framework through which dimensions of teacher resilience

may be more broadly attended to" (p. 361) depicts the multi-faceted nature of teacher resiliency.

The four dimensions (profession-related, emotional, social, and motivational) as well as several

of the traits within each dimension directly correlate with the findings and emergent themes of

this study.

Although the Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resiliency (Mansfield et al.,

2012) was not used as a guide or exemplar for data collection or data analysis within this study,

it is important to note consistencies across the literature to further validate this study. Figure 3

displays the framework along with emphasis added for the traits that correlate with this study.
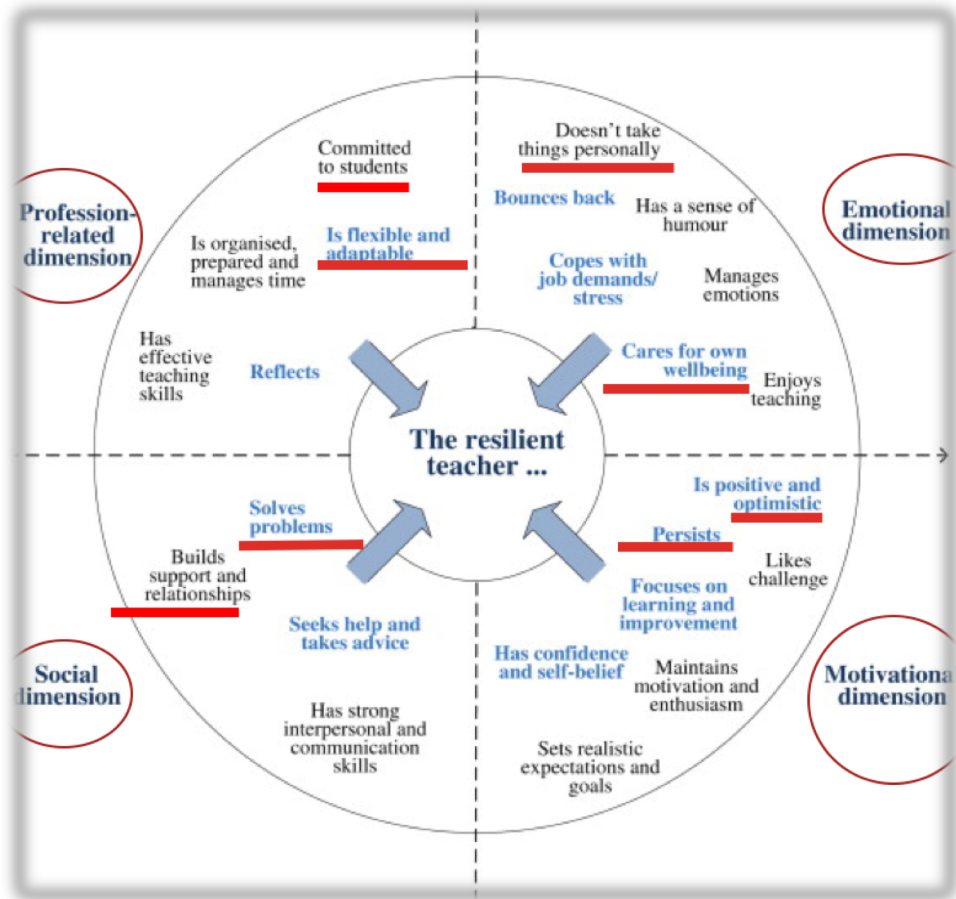
Figure 3. Four dimensional framework of teacher resiliency. Adapted from "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff: Understanding Teacher Resilience at the Chalkface," by C. Mansfiled, S. Beltman, A. Price, and A. McConney, 2011, *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28,* p. 362. Copyright 2011 by Elsevier Ltd. Adapted with permission.

Summary

This chapter included research participant demographics, the data collection procedure, data analysis, and findings. After the researcher used coding to analyze the data collected, eight themes emerged:

1. Resilient teachers have a passion for supporting students both academically and personally.

2. Resilient teachers maintain a clear boundary between professional and personal life.

3. Being creative, nimble, and enterprising allows resilient teachers to effectively impact student learning.

4. Resilient teachers perceive a disconnect between the day to day working lives of classroom teachers and the administrative arm of secondary education.

5. Resilient teachers perceive that when there is support from administrators, it is inconsistent and/or banal.

6. Resilient teachers garner support from colleagues and family.

7. If workplace issues become exceptionally tense or difficult, resilient teachers use various coping mechanisms to combat teacher burnout.

8. Resilient teachers use a myriad of technological tools to make their jobs easier, enhance instruction, and reach students.

Chapter 5 will conclude this study by interpreting the research findings and discussing recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for future study.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.

–Proverbs 3:5-6

Overview of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the lived experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary teachers working with at-risk populations in contrast to burned out teachers. The study employed a qualitative design with a descriptive approach and phenomenological methodology. This study addressed the following question: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators? The variables were behaviors and actions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout and social interactions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout. Teacher resiliency was defined as "a quality that enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks" (Brunetti, 2006, p. 813). Teacher burnout was defined as a disorder characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished individual achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996).

Qualitative data were collected using pre-screening questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The nine participants were certified secondary educators who teach at-risk populations. Participants had at least 10 years of teaching experience and at least two years of leadership experience within their role as a teacher. Data were analyzed using data coding. Coding allowed significant statements and themes to emerge. Eight themes regarding teacher resiliency and teacher burnout were identified: (a) Resilient teachers have a passion for supporting students both academically and personally; (b) Resilient teachers maintain a clear

boundary between professional and personal life; (c) Being creative, nimble, and enterprising allows resilient teachers to effectively impact student learning; (d) Resilient teachers perceive a disconnect between the day to day working lives of classroom teachers and the administrative arm of secondary education; (e) Resilient teachers perceive that when there is support from administrators, it is inconsistent and/or banal; (f) Resilient teachers garner support from colleagues and family; (g) If workplace issues become exceptionally tense or difficult, resilient teachers use various coping mechanisms to combat teacher burnout; and (h) Resilient teachers use a myriad of technological tools to make their jobs easier, enhance instruction, and reach students.

Chapter five interprets the findings by connecting each theme to the research elements outlined in Chapter 4,Table 5. Study limitations and recommendations will also be discussed.

Interpretation of Findings

The overall findings of this study are addressed as they relate to the themes and research elements outlined in Chapter 4. Findings will be connected to research presented in Chapter 2's Review of Literature.

Theoretical framework: Appreciative Inquiry. The foundational premise of Appreciative Inquiry is that organizations do not have issues that must be managed or solved; instead, organizations offer a wealth-spring of strengths that when highlighted and tapped into have the power to create positive, powerful transformations (Copperrider & Whitney, 2005). Rooted in positivity, Appreciative Inquiry taps into the hearts and minds of participants in the change process by continually asking questions regarding what is working, what could be, and what should be.

For participants, the avenues of their jobs which worked best were collaborating with other teachers, building positive relationships with students, and technology integration.

Each participant spoke of relying on peers for moral support or to assist in solving problems. Participant 7 relayed an example:

I had the flu, and I was feeling like I was getting behind…. Ms. _____ stepped up and took care of the sub for me, so I didn't have to worry about it while I was sick. And, she took care of the kids. She does that a lot.

This is congruent with the social dimension of Mansfield et al.'s (2012) Four Dimensional Framework of Teacher Resiliency. The social dimension includes:

- Solving problems

- Building support and relationships

- Seeking help and taking advice

- Having strong interpersonal and communication skills

All of the study participants shared the love they have for educating students and being a part of students' lives. Participant 8 explained:

I always was happy to see my students. I always treated each student as an individual, not so much being their friend, but looking at each student's needs. I was just a teacher that loved my students and accepted each student for who they were, regardless of their struggles or their deficits.

Participant 7 commented:

I try to get to know their [the students'] names from the beginning. I try to find something they are good at, and then I try to find something that they struggle with. I try to encourage them in both situations. By doing so, I feel as though I have created a rapport between us on more of a personal level. I always tell the kids, I'm here if they need something – that they can come to me, and sometimes they do. And, we build an even greater relationship that way.

Resilient teachers' engagement and positive interactions with students and belief in student

success corresponds with Seligman's (2011) Well-Being Theory which measures positive

emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment.

All of the study participants also discussed integrating technology into their curriculum

preparation, daily lessons and interactions with students. Educators mentioned the following

technologies which aided them in the classroom: YouTube, Kahoot, laptops, Khan Academy,

Google Chromebooks, Google Classroom, G-Suite for Education, Google Teacher Tribe, Insert

Learning, document cameras, Commonlit.org, Audible, smart boards, Achieve 3000, and

NoRedInk.com. Participant 6 said:

> YouTube is a favorite. I create YouTube channels for units … on Black History,
>
> readings, … important figures, important locales and things of that nature. Same thing
>
> for Hispanic History, for different celebrations. My YouTube channel is insane, but it
>
> does help the kids to be able to add another dimension to their learning and not just look
>
> at a book all the time.

The participants use of technology and technological tools allows teachers to work smarter, pull

students into the learning, stay organized, and stay current. The participants extensive use of

technology corresponds with the seven categories of educational technology established by The

New Media Consortium (NMC) Horizon Report: 2015 K-12 Edition, which investigates

emerging technologies for their possible influence on and application in K-12 educational

settings. The seven categories are:

1. Consumer technologies: applications and tools that were created for business,

   personal, or home use, which can also be beneficial in educational settings. Google

   Suite (formerly Google Apps) is one example. Initially created to assist businesses

and home users, Google Suite later added Google for Education (formerly Google Apps for Education) to assist and train educators and their students.

2. Digital strategies: these strategies are not technological advancements, rather "ways of using devices and software to enrich teaching and learning, whether inside or outside the classroom" (p. 34).

3. Enabling technologies: transformative technologies which make existing hardware and software easier to manage or more beneficial.

4. Internet technologies: "techniques and essential infrastructure that help to make the technologies underlying how we interact with the network more transparent, less obtrusive, and easier to use" (p. 35).

5. Learning technologies: applications, technology, and online resources created specifically for the education sector.

6. Social media technologies: online social networks have permeated all sectors allowing for new ideas, tools, and developments coming online constantly" (p. 35).

7. Visualization technologies: ranging from presentation tools and applications to visually analyzing data, "these technologies are a growing cluster of tools and processes for mining large data sets, exploring dynamic processes, and generally making the complex simple" (p. 35).

Research Question: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators? In addition to the participant shared experiences discussed throughout the Interpretation of Findings section of this study, the study participants had several other shared experiences:

- Eight out of nine participants had workplace relationships which diminished their capacity to do their job effectively.

- Eight of nine participants relayed stories of workplace politics which negatively affected them

- Eight out of nine participants have experienced teacher burnout.

Participant 6 relayed an incident with a new coworker:

> That type of maliciousness is something that I wasn't accustomed to. That was my first year on that campus, and it truly left a sour taste in my mouth. And, relations between me and that staff member have slowly begun to get to a point of being cordial because she will never be considered a friend. She's no one I can trust, but it has taken two and a half years just to get to a cordial level.

Participant 9 explained:

> Yes, I've had teacher burnout teaching special education … the behavior students for five years. I did take a break. I taught them for two years, took a break and did general ed. teaching, and then ended up going back into special education. The burnout, my stress levels got higher. I started having health issues … and eventually … I resigned at the end of the school year. I finished out my contract but resigned at the end of the school year because it stressed me out so bad that I no longer felt the joy of coming to school to educate. I was literally having to pray every day when I got out of my car to make it to the end of the school day.

Byrne's (1998) research on teacher burnout is consistent with Participant 9's account. These symptoms express a theme of hopelessness and relay a vicious cycle of frustration, negative emotions, physical ailments, and absenteeism.

Eight out of nine study participants reported experiencing teacher burnout, and nine out of nine study participants were deemed resilient (seven resilient only, two both resilient and burned out). Thus, a conclusion can be drawn that teachers may be both resilient and burned out simultaneously. Teachers, like members of other professions, experience both good and bad days within the workplace. When negative experiences and stress become overwhelming, educators may experience teacher burnout. However, when those same teachers seek help from a peer, delegate, or take short breaks, they begin to tip the scales back towards resiliency. Resiliency and burnout can be seen as two ends of the same continuum. A teacher may be completely burned out or extremely resilient, or a teacher could fall somewhere in between.

Research question variable 1: Behaviors/actions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout. Participants remained resilient and fought teacher burnout by doing the following: separating home life from work, being flexible and creative, and taking breaks. Participant 1 commented:

I have grown to the point where I do not take my work home. I used to do that and became burnt out very quickly. So now, it's very seldom I would even address anything work-related at home. I've learned to just … get done at work in the time that I'm here … even if I have to stay late, but I don't take anything home anymore.

Separating work life and home life may seem like a rudimentary solution for teachers; however, it is not easily accomplished. Teachers must make the conscious decision to leave school work at school. The workload for teachers can be overwhelming, and teachers have been known to grade papers, lesson plan, and contact parents at home, at church, at their children's athletic events, etc.

Wrzesniewski's (2003) research on job crafting coincides with the separation of the professional and personal lives. Job crafting is one way that educators can begin to take the reins

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within their duties and responsibilities. Job crafting is "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, as cited in Wrzesniewski, 2003, p. 297). Workers can make changes to the amount of time spent on a task, whether to take on new (unassigned) responsibilities or tasks, and which co-workers they build relationships with and/or learn from.

Being flexible and creative is also a hallmark of teacher resiliency. The majority of study participants spoke of being flexible, creative, and changing things up. Montminy (2016) explains that being flexible in our thought processes allows us to cope and handle situations more affectively. Careers which require creating prodigious goals and executing monumental gains such as organizational change management, education, and social entrepreneurship rely on a flexible, resilient workforce to exact change and positive results.

The majority of participants also mentioned taking breaks to alleviate stress and burnout. The type and range of breaks differed amongst participants. Some participants looked forward to scheduled breaks in the school calendar such as Spring Break, Winter Break, and Summer Break. Other participants, took small breaks within the school day. While some participants quit teaching for a period of time then came back in a new roll at a different school.

Research question variable 2: Social interactions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout. When asked to describe their relationships with peers and students, most participants described positive and fruitful relationships with fellow teachers as well as students. Participant 9 explained:

With my students, [I] have a good relationship. I'm like the classroom momma. We kind of have a parent-child relationship. They know I'm there to help them. I'm there to support them, but I push them the same way I do my children. I push them because I want … the best. I want them to be better. And, you always have some students who are

like 'Oh, I'm not good at English; I'm not good at math.' No, don't say that. Everybody

has areas they're stronger in, but you can do anything – but be the best at what it is. With

the students, it was always that nurturing yet firm relationship. They knew I wanted the

best for them…. With my colleagues, very open very team-oriented. Because we're all

on one big team, we all have one purpose to educate these students and to get them

everything they need so that they comprehend the material … so they can move on and

continue out their academic career.

Conversely, when asked to describe their relationships with administrators, most participants had

mixed, mildly negative in connotation assessments ranging from "professional" to "divided" to

"difficult yet polite" to "tense." Participant 4 stated: "With administrators, … it's a cordial

relationship, but they're nonexistent at this district."

Consistent with Byrne (1998), both resilient and burned out teachers see a gulf between

what they do every day and the administrators who are supposed to be there to assist them.

Byrne reported that "respondents overwhelmingly felt that the greatest single cause of their

burnout was the disregard they sensed from superordinates" (para. 15). Comments by Byrne's

respondents included:

- "No support from immediate supervisors; no feedback, except negativity, from
  assistant principals."
- "Dealing with an inefficient bureaucracy."
- "Feeling of impotence while being ordered by superiors to empower students."
- "Seeing inferior educators being rewarded."
- "The lack of understanding of children's special needs on the part of those who write
  policy."

- "The mixed messages from the administration, unclear goals, lack of support or sensitivity. Too much emphasis on paper trails and number crunching. Administrators wish to turn teachers into clerks; they want teachers to teach primarily to tests."

- "Administrators, those who are supposed to be in charge of the building and to make things easier for the other professionals, often simply shrug their shoulders when faced with supply, staffing, or student disciplinary problems and blame these problems on the very bureaucracy which they are supposed to represent." (para. 15)

Five out of the seven respondent comments from Byrne's study were also directly stated by participants in this study.

Recommendations

This study captured the lived experiences of nine resilient secondary educators who serve at-risk populations. The semi-structured interviews provided a glimpse into the lives of teachers who are defying the odds and remaining in the classroom despite the shortcomings of the teaching profession, which often lead to teacher burnout. Following careful analysis of the data, the following recommendations were generated to support teachers, administrators, and school districts:

1. Training and professional development for school administrators regarding soft skills, emotional intelligence, and Appreciative Inquiry

2. Team building exercises which involve administrators and teachers working together

3. Wellness training and professional development for teachers to gain or restore work/life balance

4. Increased technology budgets to allow for both 1 to 1 campuses – where every student has a device - as well as classroom sets of hardware (laptops/Chromebooks/tablets)

5. Teacher only and teacher driven Professional Learning Communities

6. Campus or district mandates that all administrators must be the teacher of record and teach at least one class.

Training and professional development for school administrators regarding soft skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Appreciative Inquiry. Because the majority of teachers not only perceive a disconnect between their jobs and the administrators they work with, but also find most administrators to be out-of-touch, unsupportive, and sometimes completely absent, school administrators have to work to learn how best to support their teachers, show that they care, and re-brand their image. Focusing training on soft skills and Emotional Intelligence can give administration actionable tools to check-in with teachers, see things from other's points of view and empathize. Appreciative Inquiry would allow both administrators and teachers to approach problems and posit solutions from a lens of valuing what is working and creating change through a shared vision.

Unfortunately, time constraints may initially prove problematic for instituting additional professional development for administrators. Administrators work a longer school year and have additional responsibilities before and after each school day. In order to solve this problem, districts could offer on-line courses or offer incentives for attending training in the evenings or on Saturdays.

Team building exercises that involve administrators and teachers working together. As mentioned previously, teachers and administrators many times see their roles as adversarial. Regularly scheduled team building exercises in which teachers and administrators work and play together allow both roles to see one another as thinking, caring human beings who can creatively solve problems.

When implementing team building exercises, it is important that both administrators and teachers understand the vision, mission, and goals undergirding these activities. If teachers and administrators have no buy-in, they may perceive the activities as trite and behave in a perfunctory manner.

Wellness training and professional development for teachers to gain or restore work/life balance. Teachers care deeply about their students, their content/curriculum, and their fellow teachers. These emotional connections cause teachers to work very hard to make gains with students and also to fix any problems they can – from cooking extra food at dinner and bringing left-overs to hungry kids the next day to buying blankets, sweaters, and coats for children whose houses have no heat to buying books, paper, pencils, pens, highlighters, and sticky notes. Thus, most teachers are over-extended and need to be reminded to put themselves - if not first- towards the top of the list.

Ultimately, teachers need to be reminded to stir a little pragmatism in with all that caring and love. The more teachers over-extend, the more burnout is allowed to creep in. According to this study's data, the resilient teachers have learned through experience to draw a line. However, this idea must be explicitly taught to teachers to perhaps avoid teacher burnout.

Unfortunately, instead of initially seeing the benefit of participating in additional professional development, teachers may see this as simply another item that encroaches on their time or wastes their time. However, promoting wellness training for teachers is an excellent opportunity for administrators to show that they care about teachers and want teachers to be operating at 100%.

Increased technology budgets to allow for both 1 to 1 campuses – where every student has a device - as well as classroom sets of hardware (laptops/Chromebooks/tablets). Technology integration benefits both educators and the students they serve. It makes teachers'

jobs easier and provides a level of interest and buy-in for 21st century students. If every student has a device he or she can use at home and every classroom has devices that students can use at school, we begin to close the technology gap that may exist within at-risk households, and all classrooms become outfitted for the technological world we live in.

Factors which may inhibit increased technology integration include budgetary concerns. Many school districts experience budgetary constraints which neither allow for every classroom to have class sets of devices nor each student to have a laptop. Schools and school districts can write grants, seek donors and sponsors, and fund raise to lessen the additional costs of supplying students with technological tools.

Teacher only and teacher driven Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This study's data reveals that most resilient teachers rely on one another for support. Teacher-centered Professional Learning Communities would give teachers an outlet to voice concerns in a safe atmosphere and seek assistance. As the idea of PLCs has become prevalent, most departments within high schools have changed from department meetings to PLC meetings. However, the meetings are still run as department meetings or faculty meetings. Thus, there is a need for teacher-centered, authentic PLCs were school and department business is not discussed – instead teachers can get the help and support they need to be successful.

Although PLCs focus on learning and collaboration, teachers may be hesitant to attend an additional meeting either after school or during their conference period when they have a myriad of other tasks to accomplish. One way to address this concern is to divide the meeting times for department meetings and PLCs. For example, department meetings would be during the first and third week of every month, and PLCs would be held on the second and fourth weeks of the month. Thus, established meeting times have been repurposed instead of extended.

Campus or district mandates that all administrators must be the teacher of record and teach at least one class. All state certified administrators were once teachers. This is the requirement for any administrator to receive a state administrative certification. However, this study's data as well as corresponding data from the literature review tells a story of administrators not understanding the plight of classroom teachers. If someone is removed from the day to day nuances of a situation, they may begin to forget what it was like in their previous role. Further, every three to five years the general attitude and make-up of a student body changes. Therefore, it would benefit all parties for administrators to not lose touch with how today's classrooms operate and how today's students learn and work.

One caveat for requiring administrators to be the teacher of record for one class during the school day is that administrators would have less time to perform their administrator responsibilities. A possible fix is to allow teachers who are working on their administrator certificate to assume the role of the administrator during the teacher's conference period.

Limitations

This phenomenological study contained several limitations. The pool of resilient teachers was chosen using purposive homogenous sampling. Purposive homogenous sampling allows for the researcher to choose participants based on the researcher's own judgments. Thus, teachers whom the researcher knew to be resilient were asked to participate in the study. This technique may invite researcher bias. Researcher bias was addressed and limited by researcher bracketing and the addition of a participant pre-screening questionnaire. Also, because the researcher has worked within the participants' school districts and knows the participants personally, participants may not have answered the interview questions accurately and honestly. Finally, this study may have limited transferability/external validity due to its small scale of nine participants.

Suggestions for Further Study

In order to continually build a thriving workforce in the education sector, research regarding teacher resiliency and teacher burnout needs to continue. Teacher shortages and teacher turnover are persistent problems that must be addressed, and providing educators (both teachers and administrators) with methods that build resiliency and inspire longevity are greatly needed. The findings of this study provide suggestions for teachers and administrators which may help by giving teachers tools to weather work-place stress and by suggesting additional training for administrators to aid in supporting teachers. The following suggestions may assist in furthering this research:

- This study conducted semi-structured interviews with nine participants. A study that employed a larger sample size may bolster the transferability and applicability of the findings.

- In this study, the researcher knew her participants. A quantitative or mixed-methods approach might limit the propensity for bias.

- The setting for this study was limited to Houston, TX. A nation-wide study or a study that included multiple regions within the U.S. might yield more robust data and greater insights.

- This study interviewed secondary teachers. Adding interviews with administrators would allow for a more nuanced picture of the problems related to teacher burnout and the solutions related to teacher resiliency.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary teachers working with at-risk populations in contrast to burned out teachers. The study utilized a qualitative design with a descriptive approach and

phenomenological methodology. This study addressed the following question: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers working with at-risk populations who are resilient to workplace stressors and teacher burnout within their role as educators? The variables were behaviors and actions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout and social interactions regarding resiliency to workplace stressors and teacher burnout. Teacher resiliency was defined as "a quality that enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks" (Brunetti, 2006, p. 813). Teacher burnout was defined as a disorder characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished individual achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996).

Results from the data collected yielded the following:

- Resilient teachers rely on peers for support.

- Resilient teachers maintain work/life balance.

- Resilient teachers are creative and flexible.

- Resilient teachers perceive a disconnect between their job and the role of administrators.

- Resilient teachers perceive most administrators as unsupportive or absent.

- Resilient teachers integrate technology to make their jobs easier and appeal to 21st century students.

Building teacher resiliency and thereby limiting teacher burnout will continue to be an important issue for state and local educational agencies. Widening national teacher shortages and periodic teachers' strikes such as those in 2018 in West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Arizona are a testament to the stressful situations and poor working conditions in which many teachers find themselves. Although teacher resiliency cannot put food on the table or buy

classroom textbooks, teacher resiliency can provide educators a renewed passion for teaching, camaraderie, and valuable coping mechanisms.

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APPENDIX A

Pepperdine University IRB Approval

PEPPERDINE

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 16, 2018

Protocol Investigator Name: Lisa Brooks

Protocol #: 16-04-241

Project Title: Resiliency Among Secondary Teachers Serving At-Risk Populations

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Lisa Brooks:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Letter

Dear [Name],

My name is Lisa Brooks and I am an Doctoral Candidate at Pepperdine University in the Organizational Leadership program. I am conducting a research study which seeks to understand the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations and contrast the lived experiences of resilient teachers with those of burned out teachers. You are invited to participate. If you agree, you will take part in the study's interview processes.

The interview process will consist of an on-line seven question Pre-Screening Questionnaire and a 30 - 40 minute interview. Unless you object, the interview will be audio recorded. I will also be taking notes during the interview.

Participation in the study is voluntary. Your identity will remain confidential during and after the study through the use of pseudonyms.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact me at ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ or ▬▬▬▬▬.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lisa Brooks
Pepperdine University
Doctoral Candidate

Informed Consent Form

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

RESILIENCY AMONG SECONDARY TEACHERS SERVING AT-RISK POPULATIONS: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

You are invited to participate in a doctoral research study conducted by Lisa Brooks, MEd and Eric Hamilton, PhD at Pepperdine University because you are a certified, secondary teacher with 10 or more years of experience who works with at-risk students, and has had at least two years of school leadership responsibilities. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for you records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient secondary educators working with at-risk populations and contrast the lived experiences of resilient teachers with those of burned out teachers.

This study will glean common themes and attributes of the experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of resilient teachers working in high-stress environments

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief 7 item, electronic questionnaire and answer 13 interview questions in which notes will be taken and audio will be recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are minimal risks for participation in the study: psychological as you may have to recall difficult or stressful situations and social as other faculty and staff not included in the study might disagree with you being a part of the study.

Risks will be minimized as confidentiality will be maintained by utilizing pseudonyms for proper names and removing cover sheets. Participant data and responses and field notes will be confidentially handled by transcribing and electronically saving field notes and saving recordings of observations using encryption software. Hard copies of consent forms and field notes will be kept in a secured, locked location.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, the benefits to society in general include providing educators with examples of effective actions and interactions which stave off teacher burnout and produce teacher resiliency within the educational environment.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not be paid for participating in this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records for this study will be kept confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigator's place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of five years. The data collected will be coded, de-identified, transcribed, and analyzed.

Confidentiality will be maintained by utilizing pseudonyms for proper names and removing cover sheets. Participant data and responses and field notes will be confidentially handled by electronically transcribing and electronically saving field notes and saving recordings of observations using encryption software. Hard copies of consent forms and field notes will be kept in a secured, locked location.
Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audio-recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating in the study. Your relationship with your employer will not be affected whether you participate or not in this study.

EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Dr. Eric Hamilton, 719-271-7965, eric.hamilton@pepperdine.edu if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPHS

□ *I agree to be audio-recorded /photographed*

□ *I do not want to be audio-recorded /photographed*

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

_____
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX D

Pre-screening Questionnaire

Read the following statements. Choose the response that best describes you.

1. I have the power to make changes within my classroom.   Y/N

2. I influence my students and colleagues.   Y/N

3. I change negative situations within my work environment.   Y/N

4. If troubled due to workplace issues, I have a support network to consult.   Y/N

5. I collaborate with other teachers.   Y/N

6. I positively impact the lives of my students.   Y/N

7. Through my teaching and influence, my students are able to learn and grow.

    Y/N

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

Pre-interview Statement: Every profession has both positive and negative aspects; this interview will focus on problems and/or difficulties and innovative strategies you may have used to overcome them.

1. What are some of the best attributes of your job? Please explain.

2. What do you consider the most sustainable strategies for maintaining vibrancy in your work into the future?

3. How do you maintain a balance between your professional life and personal life? Please explain your answer.

4. What are some of the issues you find to be stressful or problematic regarding your job as an educator? Please explain.

5. Do you feel supported in your role as an educator? If so, in what ways. If not, how do you manage this lack of support?

6. How have you handled or navigated through these problems?

7. Describe the types of relationships you have with colleagues, administration, and students?

8. Are there work-place relationships that have assisted you in working through problems or stressors? If so, please describe at least one of them.

9. Are there work-place relationships that have diminished your capacity to do your job effectively? If so, please describe at least one of them.

10. When you have a work-related experience that you consider especially taxing or stressful, what sorts of things do you do to manage these situations?

11. Have you experienced what is often called teacher burnout? If so, what steps did you take to alleviate it? If not, what do you believe are the reasons why you have avoided teacher burnout?

12. Do you use available technology to assist you in working with students and attending to your other duties? If so, what tools do you use and what do you like most about them?

13. What technological tools are on your wish list? Why? What types or forms of professional development would you like to have to enhance your technology integration? Explain.