



Working in the Pressure Cooker: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Teacher Resilience in a High Achieving School

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband Chris, always and for everything. I am eternally grateful
for your unwavering love and support.

This work is also dedicated to teachers everywhere, doing the hard work. You demonstrate your
resilience every day.

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Contents.....	5
List of Figures.....	10
List of Tables.....	10
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	11
Background.....	11
Statement of Inquiry.....	13
<i>Focus of Practice</i>	13
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	14
<i>Research Questions: Variables and Concepts Used to Investigate the Problem</i>	15
<i>Contributions to Practice and Scholarship</i>	15
Purpose Statement.....	17
Overview of Research Study Design.....	17
<i>Methodology</i>	17
<i>Research Questions</i>	18
<i>Population and Setting</i>	18
<i>Participants</i>	19
<i>Data Collection Tools</i>	19
<i>Data Analysis</i>	21
<i>Researcher Positionality</i>	22
Key Terms.....	24
Limitations and Delimitations.....	25
Assumptions.....	27
Summary.....	28
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	30

Introduction.....	30
Teacher Attrition.....	32
<i>Teacher Shortage</i>	32
<i>Educational Implications</i>	33
<i>Working Conditions</i>	35
Teacher Stress	37
<i>Stress Sources</i>	38
<i>Burnout and Compassion Fatigue</i>	39
<i>Job Demands-Resources</i>	41
Resilience	43
<i>The Construct of Resilience</i>	43
Teacher Resilience	45
Personal Factors	46
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>	47
Contextual Factors	48
<i>School Leadership and Teacher Resilience</i>	49
Gap in the Literature	52
Rationale for Research Study.....	53
Theoretical Framework.....	54
<i>Historical Foundations</i>	55
<i>Rationale for Choice of Theory</i>	57
<i>Theory Related to Study</i>	57
Summary	58
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology	59
Introduction.....	59
Methodology: Overall Research Design.....	59
<i>Type of Research Design</i>	59
<i>Research Approach and Rationale for Choices</i>	60
Research Questions.....	62
Setting and Population	62
<i>Research Setting</i>	62
<i>Population</i>	63
<i>Sample Size</i>	63
Data Collection Procedures.....	65

Instrumentation and Operationalization.....	67
Data Analysis	68
Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability	70
Ethical Issues of Study.....	72
Researcher Positionality.....	74
Summary.....	75
Chapter 4: Analysis of Data and Findings	77
Introduction.....	77
Results and Findings of the Research Study.....	78
Overview of Sampling	78
<i>Recruitment</i>	78
<i>Sampling</i>	79
Interview Process	79
Data Analysis Process.....	82
Research Question Analysis	86
GET 1: Resilience Results From Meaningful Work and Finding the Balance.....	87
<i>Subtheme 1a: Meaningful Work and Student Need</i>	90
<i>Subtheme 1b: The Struggle to Find the Balance and Support Their Own Resilience</i>	93
GET 2: Leadership Is a Source of Support More Than a Source of Stress	95
<i>Subtheme 2a: Leadership as a Source of Support</i>	97
<i>Subtheme 2b: Leadership as a Source of Stress</i>	100
GET 3: High Expectations and an Overwhelming Workload Both Support and Challenge Resilience.....	105
<i>Subtheme 3a: Holding Each Other to High Standards</i>	107
<i>Subtheme 3b: The Workload is a Result of the Expectations</i>	109
GET 4: Colleagues are Both a Great Support and a Stressor	112
<i>Subtheme 4a: Colleagues are a Support System</i>	113
<i>Subtheme 4b: Colleagues Can be a Stressor</i>	116
Conceptual Findings	117
Limitations of the Findings.....	121
Implications for Future Studies.....	123
Application of the Findings	123
Summary.....	124
Chapter 5: Contribution to Practice and Practitioner Reflection	126

Introduction.....	126
Discussion and Recommendations	126
<i>Plan for Assuming a Leadership Role for Disseminating Findings</i>	135
<i>Implications for the Future</i>	136
Personal Reflections and Shifts	138
<i>As a Scholar</i>	138
<i>As a Practitioner</i>	139
<i>As an Educational Leader</i>	140
Overall Summary	141
References.....	143
Appendix A.....	165
Interview Protocol.....	165
Appendix B.....	167
Lived Experience Description Protocol	167
Appendix C.....	168
Recruitment Email	168
Appendix D.....	169
Informed Consent Form for Research into the Experience of Teacher Resilience in a High Achieving School.....	169
Appendix E	170
Sample Analytic Memos.....	170
Appendix F.....	172
<i>Sample Table of Personal Experiential Themes from Subject Analysis (Composite Sample)</i> 172	
Appendix G.....	177
<i>Summary Table of Personal Experiential Themes</i>	177
Appendix H.....	179
Group Experiential Themes (GET) and Supporting Quotations.....	179

List of Figures

Figure 1 Vacancies and Quits in Public Education (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022).....	33
Figure 2 Teacher Stress, Burnout, and Symptoms of Depression (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022)..	38
Figure 3 Socio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)	56

List of Tables

Table 1 Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions	81
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In a time of increasing concern about teacher stress (Diliberti et al., 2021) and teacher shortages (Delarosa & Elisas, 2022), this qualitative study focused on the phenomenon of teacher resilience, specifically in a high achieving school. Applying the theoretical framework of social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a, 2011b), this phenomenological research studied teacher experiences of resilience and the leadership actions that impact resilience in a high achieving high school in the northeastern United States. This study contributes to the body of research on teacher resilience by examining this phenomenon in high achieving schools and offering suggestions for leadership actions to support teacher resilience.

Background

Teaching is consistently regarded as one of the most stressful professions in the United States (Marken & Agrawal, 2022). Teachers have experienced increased workload demands consisting of working more hours outside of the school day, having difficulty taking time off, and working additional jobs for income to meet family needs (McIntyre et al., 2017). Workload stress is a driving factor in teacher attrition (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018) and stress has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Diliberti et al., 2021). Evidence continues to build for attrition as a leading factor in widespread teacher shortages, particularly in math, science, bilingual education, and special education (Sutcher, et al., 2019). As of October 2022, 45% of all public schools in the United States had at least one teaching vacancy, and 27% had multiple unfilled positions (Delarosa & Elisas, 2022).

Taking an appreciative stance (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007) regarding teacher attrition, some researchers have focused on the teachers who stay rather than those who have left. This examination of teacher resilience, or the ability of teachers to recover from stressful

circumstances, is consistent with a focus on positive organizational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003), as resilience is a characteristic of positive organizations. There is ongoing research on resilience in schools, with studies focused on both students (Truebridge, 2014) and teachers (Beltman, 2021; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). In fact, as noted by Beltman et al. (2011), thriving is a key part of teacher resilience. While headlines may focus on teacher stress and attrition (Steiner & Woo, 2021), examination of the factors contributing to the resilience of those teachers who stay supports informed policy decisions at the local, state, and federal levels to address teacher shortages.

Leadership support has been frequently cited as being a major factor in both teacher stress (Haydon et al., 2018) and teacher resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Fox & Walter, 2022; Richards et al., 2016). The actions of leaders can establish a positive working environment through positive behaviors and positive organizational structures (Cameron et al., 2003; Cann et al., 2023). The perception of a positive working environment has been associated strongly with positive leadership behaviors (Skakon et al., 2010). Even so, given that all schools are local with unique cultures and communities, teacher perception of positive leadership behaviors may differ from school district to school district.

Teacher resilience has been studied internationally over the past two decades (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Burić et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2021). However, relatively few studies have taken place within the United States (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Additionally, many studies on teacher stress and resilience focused on high-poverty or urban schools (Garcia et al., 2019b). Although high-poverty and urban schools are worthy of study, the need for teacher resilience can be found in all school settings. While there has been an acknowledgment in the past few years about stress levels in high achieving schools (Geisz & Nakashian, 2018), research about stress

and resilience in high achieving schools has centered on the student experience rather than the teacher experience (Luthar et al., 2020b). Given the consideration that stress levels of teachers can negatively impact students (Greenberg et al., 2016), concerns about stress in high achieving schools must include studying the stress and resilience of teachers in those schools.

This qualitative research study contributes to the knowledge base of teacher resilience by focusing on the lived experiences of teachers in a high achieving school (HAS). The implication for schools and school leaders is that teacher resilience can be supported through leadership actions to contribute to a positive organizational culture. Ultimately, this research could be used to understand specific factors impacting teacher resilience and to support teacher wellbeing through leadership action.

Statement of Inquiry

Focus of Practice

As schools and educators emerged from the COVID pandemic years of 2020-2022, increased attention has been directed toward teacher stress, teacher attrition, teacher wellbeing, and a deepening shortage of qualified teachers (Fox & Walter, 2022; Steiner & Woo, 2021). However, all of these concerns predate the pandemic. In 2019, the Economic Policy Institute published a four-part series entitled “The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market” (Garcia et al., 2019a). The focus of the series was that “the teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought” (Garcia et al., 2019a, p. 1). Researchers studying teacher attrition have conducted both qualitative (Newberry & Allsop, 2017) and quantitative (Perryman & Calvert, 2020) studies of former teachers to determine the factors implicated in teacher attrition. Given the documented increase in teacher stress (Fox & Walter, 2022; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Steiner & Woo, 2021) and teacher turnover (Garcia et al., 2019a), as

well as anecdotal feedback about teacher stress on social media sites (Educators of the 603, 2023), teacher resilience is both an area of concern and a research opportunity.

Much has been written in both the popular press (Will, 2021) and in the scholarly literature (Carroll et al., 2021) about teacher stress and the impact of stress on wellbeing. There has been an increased focus on stress levels of students in HASs and the resultant impact on student wellbeing (Geisz & Nakashian, 2018). The combination of stress in the teaching profession overall and specialized stress due to high expectations and demanding work environments in HASs may lead to even greater stress levels for teachers in those environments. However, an appreciative stance as fostered by positive organizational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003) focuses on resilience, rather than stress. That is, there is much to be learned from studies involving teachers who stay in the profession under high stress situations. The intent of this research, while acknowledging and explaining the impact of stress through a review of the literature, was to assume an appreciative stance around the topic of stress and wellbeing and investigate school-level external protective factors that may support teacher resilience.

Theoretical Framework

Using the theoretical framework of social ecological theory of resilience (SETR) (Ungar, 2011a, 2011b), this study explored a contextualized approach to resilience, where individual factors and external factors interact to allow for positive adaptation. These protective factors enable positive adjustments and outcomes (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Haydon et al., 2018; Mansfield et al., 2012; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022; Prilleltensky et al., 2016). Truebridge (2014) notes the importance of three interrelated protective factors of caring relationships; high expectations; and meaningful opportunities for participation and contribution in meeting basic human needs. According to Ungar (2011b), this contextualized approach removes the individual

from being primarily responsible for their own resilience, as opposed to the popular messaging of self-care as the solution to the stresses of teaching (Klein, 2022). Ungar (2011b) emphasizes the importance of opportunity and resources of the complex and culturally relative environment in which any individual functions. The implication for schools and school leaders is that teacher resilience can be supported through leadership actions which increase the protective factors, opportunities, and resources of the teachers' environment.

Research Questions: Variables and Concepts Used to Investigate the Problem

The investigation of teacher resilience requires a positive organizational scholarship approach (Cameron et al., 2003). However, it is important that resilience not be simply characterized as a personality trait that some individuals have and some do not (Luthar et al., 2000; Truebridge, 2014). Instead, a developmental approach, where both personal and external resources can be developed and recombined as challenges appear, allows for the concept that all individuals have the capacity for resilience (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). The variables under study were the external resources available to teachers and how they can be developed. Given the location of a school setting, the common variables were external organizational resources such as school culture, leadership, and relationships with colleagues. Under the conceptual model of job demands-resources (Demerouti et al., 2001), these variables can be viewed as either job demands leading to exhaustion and cynicism or job resources leading to resilience and wellbeing. This study investigated teacher perceptions of leadership support and sources of resilience in a HAS.

Contributions to Practice and Scholarship

Teacher resilience has been studied both quantitatively (Fox & Walter, 2022) and qualitatively (Carroll et al., 2021). Quantitative research has used survey tools such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach et al., 1997) or the Teacher Subjective Wellbeing

Questionnaire (TSWQ) (Renshaw et al., 2015). However, the MBI focuses on the negative aspects involved with burnout, such as exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach et al., 1997), and the TSWQ focuses broadly on the ideas of efficacy and belonging (Mankin et al., 2018). These survey tools and the quantitative focus on cause and effect do not support the study of teacher resilience from the teacher perspective.

Qualitative research is not centered around a cause-and-effect research question, but instead explores experiences of individuals or groups of individuals and their views of the world which make up their reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This constructivist worldview is congruent with the study of a phenomenon such as resilience, as the understanding of the phenomenon is based on the experiences of those being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, a study of teacher resilience that is focused on teachers in a HAS must examine the perspectives of teachers in the aforementioned school, requiring the qualitative research design approach.

Adopting a positive organizational scholarship framework (Cameron et al., 2003) resonates with the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a), as both acknowledge the impact of environmental factors on individual experiences. For this study, those environmental factors that can be influenced or controlled by school leaders were of particular interest. Additionally, earlier qualitative studies of teacher resilience have not focused on the experiences of teachers in the high-stress environments of HASs (Luthar et al., 2020b). This study contributes to the scholarly knowledge base of teacher resilience by focusing on the lived experiences of teachers in a HAS.

By examining the lived experiences of teachers in a HAS, this research also has implications for practice. Leadership is an important component of positive organizational

structures (Cameron et al., 2003), and as such can be a support for resilience (Eblie Trudel et al., 2022) or reduce resilience (Carroll et al., 2021). This study included examination of teacher perspectives of school leadership impact on resilience, both positively and negatively. The implication for schools and school leaders is that teacher resilience can be supported through leadership actions. One result of this study was recommendations to school leaders regarding actions that support or diminish teacher resilience. This study branched into a new aspect of resilience research, and has the potential to positively impact wellbeing both within the institution under study and in other HASs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teachers' self-reporting about the factors impacting teacher resilience in a high achieving high school through a social ecological lens. In its most simplistic terms, resilience is the ability to recover from stressful circumstances. The focus of this study was on the external or environmental protective factors that impact resilience, particularly those protective factors controlled or influenced by school leadership. This identification of leadership impact equips leaders to better support teacher resilience and reduce stress and potential attrition in stressful teaching environments.

Overview of Research Study Design

Methodology

This qualitative study examined the phenomenon of teacher resilience in the context of the natural setting of a high achieving high school. This study was a phenomenology, as it studied "the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell & Creswell 2018, p. 13). It was more specifically an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is a method designed to study how people make sense of their experiences

in their own socioecological contexts (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The central research question was not a cause-and-effect question, but rather one exploring a phenomenon in context, requiring a qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As part of the qualitative design, data was collected by the researcher through semi-structured interviews. This required the researcher to be a participant in data collection, which is also part of qualitative design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The results were specific to a context or a phenomenon, and thus not generalizable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). That is, the focus of this interpretative phenomenological analysis was the teacher experience of resilience in a specific HAS, with particular attention to teacher perceptions of leadership support.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Central questions:

- What do teachers in a high achieving school report about their experiences with resilience?
- What leadership actions do teachers in a high achieving school report affect their resilience in positive ways?
- What leadership actions do teachers in a high achieving school report affect their resilience in deleterious ways?

Sub-questions:

- What do teachers in a high achieving school report as sources of stress?
- What do teachers in a high achieving school report as protective factors that support their resilience?

Population and Setting

This study took place in a 1,400-student public high school in a suburban community of 23,000 in the northeastern United States. According to the school district website, which is not cited here to protect confidentiality of the study site, over 90% of the graduates attend post-secondary school after completing high school. There is a large selection of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes available to students. Additionally, there is a robust and varied selection of over 100 extracurricular activities including sports teams, clubs, and organizations. Standardized test scores on statewide assessments are well above the state and national averages. This combination of academic and extra-curricular offerings, along with the emphasis on college preparation and acceptance, meet the established criteria for a high achieving school (Luthar & Kumar, 2018).

Participants

Participants in this study were current teachers in the researcher's school district, which meets the definition of a HAS as noted in the previous section. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling (Mack et al., 2005; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021), as all participants were able to describe and provide insight into the specific phenomenon of teacher resilience in high achieving schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants were relatively homogeneous, so that individual experiences, rather than demographic differences, were the focus of data collection (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The target sample size for a doctoral dissertation of a phenomenology is 10 (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith & Nizza, 2022), and this study included 10 participants. This sample size allowed the researcher to both hear individual perspectives about the phenomenon under study and explore the experience of each participant in depth.

Data Collection Tools

A phenomenology is a study of how things show themselves (van Manen, 2017a). According to van Manen (2017b), “the phenomenological gesture is to lift up and bring into focus with language any such raw moment of lived experience and orient to the living meanings that arise in the experience” (p. 812). This necessitates using the words and language of the participants in the study to describe the phenomenon under study. Thus, the most effective tool for data collection in a phenomenology is an in-person interview.

While van Manen (2017a) emphasized the unstructured interview, Vagle (2018) wrote that the need for an unstructured interview depends on the phenomenon, the context, and the research plan. In this study, the need to explore the specific experience of resilience as part of the central research questions and sub-questions led to the use of a semi-structured interview format (Byrne, 2023). The interviews were conducted using an interview protocol or guide as suggested by Stofer (n.d.-b) and prepared follow-up probes (Stofer, n.d.-a). The guide allowed the researcher to keep the interview focused (Roberts, 2020). While the interview questions were constructed based on the research questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Roberts, 2020), there was also a need for the flexibility Turner (2010) described as a key component of the general interview guide approach.

Seidman (2006) prescribed a three-interview series, where the first interview is life history, the second is details of the experience under study, and the third allows for reflection. This Dissertation in Practice was conducted in the researcher’s own school, where the researcher has established positive relationships with colleagues in the same environment, so an extended background interview to learn about the participants was not warranted. The first and second interview were combined, allowing for the possibility of an additional interview for follow-up and reflection. Each interview lasted 45-70 minutes (Seidman, 2006), and was conducted in a

place of each participant's choosing. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A. The interviews were recorded via Microsoft Teams using the embedded transcription feature of the software, with a backup recording using the transcription app of an Android mobile phone. Both the audio/video and the transcript served as sources of data for analysis.

An additional means of data collection for this phenomenological study was the lived experience description (LED), where participants were asked to describe their experience of resilience (Vagle, 2018), using a protocol for consistency and guidance (Seidman, 2006). The protocol for the LED can be found in Appendix B. Participants were asked to complete the LED before the in-person interviews, so that follow-up questions could be asked as needed. This is congruent with the ideographic nature of the IPA methodology, as each experience was considered individually, in depth, and completely before moving to the next participant (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Data Analysis

The use of the term "data analysis" is rejected by some phenomenologists because the idea of analysis involves separating into parts, whereas phenomenology is concerned with an experience as a whole (Peoples, 2021). However, analysis is a key component of the inductive nature of IPA (Smith, 2004). Data analysis for IPA is an iterative process, where each individual transcript is read and reread in order for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the participant's words and to determine what is important to the participant (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The experience of the participants, and their interpretation of the experience, is what is then interpreted by the researcher in IPA. Thus, the use of in vivo coding as described by Saldaña (2021), where the participants' own words are used in the development of codes, was appropriate for a phenomenology studying the actual experiences of the participants, and their

interpretation of those experiences. The researcher then converted the in vivo codes to experiential statements, which included the researcher's interpretation. The experiential statements were then clustered based on connection, and the researcher developed personal experiential themes for each participant (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). This was repeated for each participant's interview transcript and LED before moving to the next participant, reflecting the idiographic nature of IPA (Smith, 2004). Ultimately, the researcher looked for areas of both convergence and divergence across cases to build patterns of connection as well as illustrating variability from the data gathered (Nizza et al., 2021).

Thus, the data analysis was both inductive and deductive as the researcher looked for emergent themes from the teacher interviews and LEDs (Constas, 1992; Peoples, 2021) and then tied that data to the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar 2011a, 2011b). The experiential themes that emerged from the analytic coding process were specific to the context in which the study was conducted, illustrating the importance of context that the social ecological theory of resilience framework both supports and requires.

Researcher Positionality

My undergraduate degree in science and background as a classroom science teacher for nearly 30 years inform my perspective. However, the past three years of immersion in doctoral classes and scholarly literature in educational research, combined with decades of classroom experience with students and colleagues, have dislodged me from the post-positivist pedestal. As I began to read and think more deeply about the psychological construct of resilience as a dissertation topic, I realized that individual circumstances were crucial to provide meaning to people's experiences. While human beings may be biologically very similar, they are psychologically varied, and individual experiences influence that psychology. Thus, this post-

positivist biologist has become a constructivist educational researcher who used the words and experiences of teachers to construct their reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

My personal and professional interests are in leadership support of teachers through appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007) and appreciative resilience (McArthur-Blair & Cockell, 2018), but I did not make assumptions regarding what the data would reveal through thematic coding. It was important to bracket prior preconceptions and suppositions as described by Dowling (2007). That is, I needed to examine and set aside preconceptions to avoid reaching an interpretation prematurely (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016; Vagle, 2014). I also needed to consider the power dynamic of my role as a supervisor and administrator conducting this research. Participants may have felt reluctant to share their experiences of administrator actions which diminish resilience. Questions were designed to facilitate participant openness, rather than telling me what they think I want to hear. The assessment of the Institutional Review Board level of risk was minimal (CITI Program).

The theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (SETR) (Ungar, 2011a) require examination of the impact of context in the phenomenon of resilience. Examining the impact of context and social ecologies required that the researcher ask open-ended questions and examine the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, using their words to express their experiences as a source of data. The themes that emerged from data analysis reflected the participant construction of their reality, as required by the constructivist paradigm. Thus, the qualitative research methodology of a phenomenology, and specifically an interpretative phenomenological analysis, for the study of teacher resilience in a HAS as a Dissertation in Practice followed logically from both the constructivist worldview and the SETR theoretical framework.

Key Terms

Appreciative stance - using a strengths-based, as opposed to deficits-based, approach.

High achieving school (HAS) - a school characterized by “high standardized test scores, rich extracurricular and academic offerings, and graduates heading for the most selective colleges and universities” (Luthar & Kumar, 2018, p. 2).

Idiographic analysis - “starting with the detailed examination of one case until some degree of closure or gestalt has been achieved, then moving to a detailed analysis of the second case, and so on through the corpus of cases. Only when that has been achieved, is there an attempt to conduct a cross-case analysis as the tables of themes for each individual are interrogated for convergence and divergence” (Smith, 2004, p. 41).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis - a qualitative research approach “concerned with the particular experiences that individuals have and their meaning making that occurs in relation to those experiences” (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

Phenomenology - a study of “the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13).

Positive organizational scholarship - “concerned primarily with the study of especially positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members. POS does not represent a single theory, but it focuses on dynamics that are typically described by words such as *excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, or virtuousness*” (Cameron et al., 2003, p. 4).

Protective factors - “the personal strengths of individuals, the developmental supports and opportunities, and the environmental conditions and characteristics of families, schools,

communities, and peer groups that mitigate and buffer adversity and promote healthy development and successful learning” (Truebridge, 2014, p. xvi).

Resilience - “the dynamic and negotiated process within individuals (internal) and between individuals and their environments (external) for the resources and supports to adapt and define themselves as healthy amid adversity, threat, trauma, and/or everyday stress” (Truebridge, 2014, p. 12)

Social ecological - referring to the internal (such as personality traits) and external (such as environment and relationships) factors influencing an individual.

Social ecological resilience - “a set of behaviors over time that reflect the interactions between individuals and their environments, in particular the opportunities for personal growth that are available and accessible” (Ungar, 2011a, p. 14).

School leaders - those who occupy administrative (non-teaching) positions that oversee teaching staff through supervision and evaluation.

Stress - “a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being” (World Health Organization, n.d.).

Teacher attrition - “qualified teachers, leaving the profession, for other than reasons of having reached the age of retirement” (Kelchtermans, 2017, p. 962).

Turnover - “change in the number of teachers from one year to the next in a particular school setting” (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020, p. 1).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study, like all studies, was subject to potential limitations and delimitations. The nature of a phenomenological qualitative study required in-depth interviewing of a relatively small sample size (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). In addition, the response rate to requests for LEDs and interviews may have resulted in a self-selection bias of those with a particular interest or a particular story to tell. Additionally, participants were only those who had the ability and time to volunteer to be interviewed. These are inherent limitations of self-reporting; however, given that self-reporting is an integral component of an interpretative phenomenological analysis, these limitations are both acknowledged and unavoidable.

The methodology of a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis study requires a relatively homogeneous population (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021), and because this was a study of teacher resilience in a high achieving school, the general work context and work culture of the participants was very similar. I chose not to further homogenize the participants by age or gender, as the research questions focused on the phenomenon of resilience in context, rather than focusing on demographic differences in experiences. I did, however, limit participants to those with five or more years of teaching experience at the study site. That length of teaching time at the site provided participants who have demonstrated resilience through longevity and established themselves as a good fit by moving into a more permanent employment status.

As mentioned earlier, given that I have established positive relationships with potential participants as colleagues in the same environment, I chose to combine the first two interviews in Seidman's (2006) three-interview series. The results obtained by this study are specific to the context and the phenomenon, and thus are not generalizable outside of the context of this high achieving school (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

In addition to not limiting participants based on demographics, I set other intentional boundaries which acted as delimitations. The setting for this qualitative phenomenological study was a single high achieving public high school, where I am personally acquainted with the participants. I designed the interview questions, and modified them as needed over the course of the study, thus limiting external validity (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Additionally, the use of purposive sampling, while required by the methodology of a phenomenological study (Vagle, 2018), limited the number and heterogeneity of participants. Furthermore, the design of this study focused on the research question of teachers' experiences of resilience, thereby limiting perspectives on the phenomenon to that of teachers in a particular context at a particular time.

Assumptions

This phenomenological qualitative study was conducted under the assumptions of a constructivist worldview. In the constructivist paradigm, reality is interpreted based upon the experiences of the participants in that reality and meaning is subjective. The ontology of this paradigm is relativist, where multiple realities exist and meaning and knowledge are constructed through the interaction of the participants. This provides for subjectivist epistemology, where these interactions create reality and the world does not exist independently of knowledge constructed socially through these interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thus, the interactions between the researcher and participants construct the knowledge, and the researcher must be aware that their own biases, values, and beliefs have an impact on what data is collected and how it is analyzed.

This phenomenological study of teacher resilience in a high achieving school was conducted from an appreciative stance (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007) as part of positive organizational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003). Previous research has focused on attrition

(Delarosa & Elisas, 2022) and stress (Carroll et al., 2021), both of which are opposite of the positive organizational scholarship domain of resilience and thriving (Cameron et al., 2003). Studies on resilience have focused on both children (Luthar et al., 2000; Truebridge, 2014) and teachers (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Fox & Walter, 2022); however, there are limited studies on both students and teachers in the context of high achieving schools (Luthar & Kumar, 2018). Given the increasing demands on teachers post-COVID (Will, 2021) coupled with the need to support students who are identified as a high-risk group (Luthar et al., 2020a), this phenomenological study of teacher resilience in a high achieving school has increased the knowledge base of teacher resilience and provided insight for actionable steps for supporting teacher resilience in this context.

Summary

As a former classroom teacher of many years and a current administrator in a high achieving school, I recognize the need for studying the reasons teachers stay in a very challenging profession. In the past few years, there has been an increase in teachers leaving this high achieving institution for other schools or other professions, including several teachers who exited in the middle of a school year. Studying the resilience of those teachers who continue on in the profession under the current stressful conditions (Marken & Agrawal, 2022) has led to insights to support them and their colleagues.

The results of this phenomenology are important because the information and perspectives on resilience collected and analyzed are from the teachers themselves, with their voices and in their own words. The results of this study provide information to school leaders about how to best support teacher resilience, which will ultimately have a positive impact not

only on the teachers themselves, but also on the students with whom they spend their days (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Attending school is a fundamental part of growing up in America. Most people can recall fondly a specific teacher or teachers who had a positive impact on their childhood or even their future career. When a person tells another that they are a teacher, most people have a mental image of what that entails. However, the profession of teaching has changed over the past few decades. Teachers now report higher levels of stress, burnout, and symptoms of depression than other working adults (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). This level of stress is one of the factors driving teachers to leave the profession prematurely (Newberry & Allsop, 2017). Indeed, both the popular media such as the New York Times (Singer, 2020) and education trade journals such as Education Week (Will, 2021) warn about teacher stress and an imminent teacher shortage. The looming teacher labor crisis was the focus of a series of reports from the Economic Policy Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank focused on low- and middle-income workers (Garcia et al., 2019a, 2019b).

This literature review, while acknowledging the concerns about teacher stress and teacher attrition, uses an appreciative stance (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007) to focus on teacher resilience. There is a body of scholarly research about teacher attrition, including the educational impacts of teacher turnover. There is also a body of scholarly literature regarding sources of teacher stress, including working conditions, causes of stress, and causes of burnout. The job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001) is a useful conceptual model to consider the impact of both the demands of a job and the resources available when considering stress and burnout. However, consideration of positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, et al., 2003) drove the focus of this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) in a different direction. According

to Cameron (2003, p. 4), “POS [positive organizational scholarship] does not represent a single theory, but it focuses on dynamics that are typically described by words such as *excellence*, *thriving*, *flourishing*, *abundance*, *resilience*, or *virtuousness*.” This literature review begins with an examination of teacher attrition and teacher stress, but it concludes with an examination of teacher resilience. It is more relevant to the appreciative stance of the researcher to focus this literature review on why teachers stay, rather than their reasons for leaving.

The first consideration is the actual construct of resilience, which historically has been considered to be a trait, a process, and an outcome (Harms et al., 2018; Luthar et al., 2000). While resilience researchers do not always agree on a common definition, the current scholarly thinking regards resilience as a dynamic process rather than an innate trait (Beltman, 2021; Gu, 2018; Harms, 2018; Liebenberg & Moore, 2018; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022; Truebridge, 2014). While most resilience research has been focused on children (Luthar et al., 2000; Truebridge, 2014; Ungar, 2008), there is a growing body of research on resilience in adults (Harms et al., 2018; Liebenberg & Moore, 2018) and specifically in teachers (Chen & Lee, 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Mansfield et al., 2012; Mansfield et al., 2016). This literature review examines scholarly literature regarding both personal and contextual protective factors implicated in teacher resilience, considering the “fundamental basis of resilience: [d]ependable, supportive relationships in everyday settings” (Ebbert et al., 2019, p. 21). Leadership actions and relationships between teachers and leaders as described in the literature is a specific area of interest, as the focus of the DiP is regarding leadership actions which impact teacher resilience.

The theoretical framework guiding this DiP is the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a) developed from the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a). This contextualized approach to resilience decenters the individual

teacher from being primarily responsible for their own resilience (Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022; Ungar, 2011a), and provides for considerations of the dynamic interactions between contextual and personal factors in the greater macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a) as a support for teacher resilience.

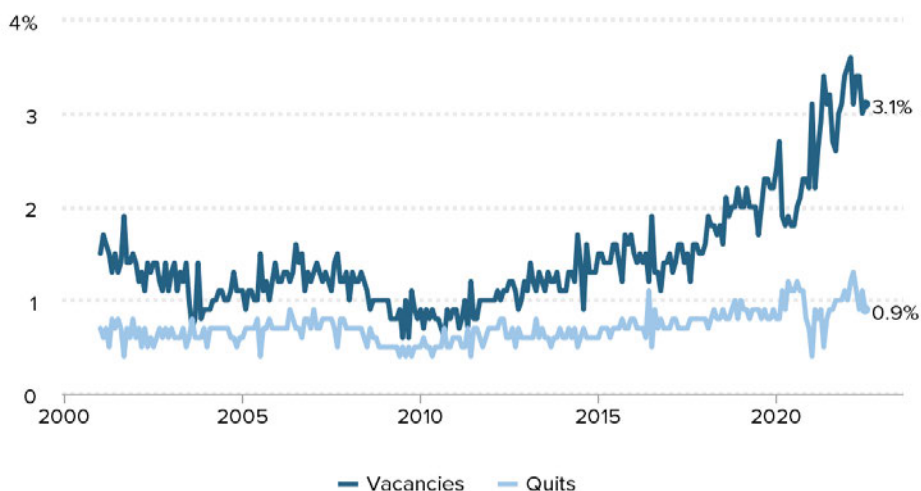
Teacher Attrition

Teacher Shortage

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was widespread concern about a looming teacher shortage (Garcia et al., 2019a). The shortage of teachers in the United States quadrupled in the five years between 2012-2013 and 2017-2018 school years, to approximately 110,000 (Garcia et al., 2019a). The factors contributing to this shortage were increasing student enrollments, decreasing pupil-teacher ratios, and teacher attrition (Sutcher et al., 2019). Early evidence from the impact of COVID-19 on the teaching profession suggests that the pandemic has exacerbated conditions leading to teacher attrition and the situation will continue to worsen (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021). Indeed, in a nationally representative survey of 1,324 public school teachers conducted by the EdWeek Research Center in February 2022, 44% of teachers indicated that they were very or fairly likely to leave the profession in the next two years (Kurtz, 2022). As shown in Figure 1, a report from the Economic Policy Institute analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data on educator Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) supports that interpretation (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022).

Figure 1*Vacancies and Quits in Public Education***High and rising vacancies and quits in public education predate the pandemic**

State and local government education vacancy and quit rates, January 2001–July 2022



Note: Data include community colleges, state colleges, and universities, and nonteaching jobs at all levels of education.

Source: EPI analysis of JOLTS data (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), Public data series accessed through the [JOLTS databases](#), 2022).

Economic Policy Institute

Note: From “*The pandemic has exacerbated a long-standing national shortage of teachers,*” by J. R. Schmitt and K. deCourcy, 2022, Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.epi.org/publication/shortage-of-teachers/>. Copyright 2022 by the Economic Policy Institute. Reprinted with permission.

Educational Implications

The increase in teacher attrition has educational implications. In some cases, early attrition has a net positive effect, such as when a teacher is ineffective or unable to deliver high-

quality instruction (Nixon et al., 2020). However, Sorensen and Ladd (2020) focused on the effects of teacher turnover on the quality of instruction as measured by teacher qualifications and class size, which they referred to as the hidden costs. They determined that turnover of qualified teachers creates a waterfall effect leading to replacement with less qualified teachers and reducing student achievement. As noted by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019), using an analysis of U.S Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Follow-Up Survey, turnover is highest in special education teachers and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) teachers, as well as in teachers of color, with the youngest and oldest teachers in each category leaving at the greatest rates. Since teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher's career (Kini & Podolsky, 2016), the increased turnover rate of both early and late career teachers has a detrimental impact on student achievement.

In addition to conferring both academic and nonacademic benefits, such as improved attendance and discipline, to their own students, Kini & Podolsky (2016) determined that more experienced teachers also confer benefits to their colleagues and to the school as a whole. As a result, chronic turnover and staffing issues can result in instability for schools and students, including impact on organizational functioning, organizational culture, and institutional knowledge (Holme et al., 2018). Indeed, Ford and Forsyth (2020) determined through a study of urban schools that schools with teacher stability benefitted through increased relational and cognitive social capital. They concluded this is a result of increased time together and shared experiences, which allows for trust in colleagues (relational capital) and development of common goals, vision, and collective efficacy (cognitive capital) to develop in the teaching force.

Working Conditions

There are various factors, both personal and professional, that result in individuals changing jobs or careers (Karalis Noel & Finocchio, 2021). In education, more than 44% of new teachers leave teaching within the first five years, and almost half cite dissatisfaction with working conditions as a reason (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Specifically, Karalis Noel and Finocchio (2021) cited lack of adequate preparation in classroom management, limited autonomy, insufficient opportunities for relevant professional development, and poor quality of leadership as primary reasons for early attrition within the first five years of teaching. In addition, these early career teachers felt increased expectations and responsibilities combined with decreased feelings of being valued professionally, resulting in misaligned expectations and an unsustainable work-life balance (Karalis Noel & Finocchio, 2021).

Newberry and Allsop (2017), studying early career teachers in Utah, determined that the most influential elements in the decision to leave were a varying combination of workload, stress, beliefs about education, lack of professionalism, negative emotions, and relationships. The mitigating factor that led to these teachers' decision to leave was a conflict in a major relationship with another adult, or the lack of relationships with other adults. Indeed, social relationships are crucial, both for "fit" in an organization and for a sense of agency (Kelchtermans, 2017). In the United Kingdom, Perryman and Calvert (2020) used survey data from five years' worth of teacher education graduates in London to understand why people are motivated to teach and their reasons for leaving the profession in the first five years. The most commonly cited reason for leaving was workload (nature, not quantity), especially as linked to performativity and accountability. The authors surmised the reasons for leaving reveal disappointment about the reality of teaching.

Working conditions, specifically lack of autonomy, standardized testing culture, and job insecurity, were also implicated in the attrition of more experienced teachers (Glazer, 2018). In Norway, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) determined that a performance goal structure (testing performance is highly valued) as opposed to a learning goal structure (student growth and learning is highly valued) resulted in more time pressure, increased workload, more emotional exhaustion, and a greater motivation to leave teaching. School climate has been indicated as a leading factor in teacher shortages across the United States, particularly in high-poverty schools (Garcia et al., 2019b). More specifically, Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) determined that working conditions are a mediating factor between teacher attrition and school demographic characteristics. Their conclusion was that student demographics are not the driving force behind teacher attrition, but the impact of working conditions, particularly school leadership, has a stronger influence on teacher attrition.

In a study of public resignation letters that have gone viral, Dunn et al. (2017) concluded that certain teachers were resigning in a very public manner to express solidarity with the education profession, take a stand against policies they perceived as detrimental to learning, and raise public awareness about the state of both teaching and learning in the United States. This lack of public awareness is supported by Harris et al. (2019), who studied perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals to identify differences in perception between these groups regarding the effect of workplace conditions on teacher attrition. The study found teacher involvement in decision-making, protection of preparation time, management of student discipline, resource availability, a supportive environment, and reasonable expectations by teachers were all areas in which there was substantial disagreement about the magnitude of these as problematic and the

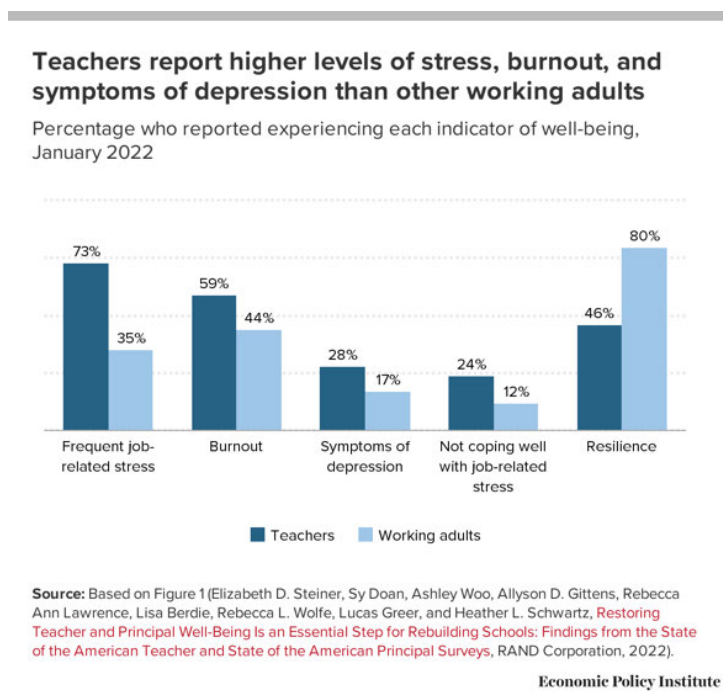
degree to which they contribute to attrition. The disconnect between teacher and principal perceptions of working conditions has implications for continued teacher attrition.

Teacher Stress

Stress is a leading factor cited by teachers leaving the profession, and that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Diliberti et al., 2021). In recognizing that stress is a major factor leading to attrition (Newberry & Allsop, 2017), a closer examination of teacher stress is warranted. A nationally representative survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center in July 2021 (Will, 2021) found that 60% of teachers say they experience job-related stress frequently or always. As noted in Figure 2, a report from the Economic Policy Institute analysis Bureau of Labor Statistics data on State of the American Teacher and State of the American Principal Surveys supports that survey data (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022).

Figure 2

Teacher Stress, Burnout, and Symptoms of Depression (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022)



Note: From “*The pandemic has exacerbated a long-standing national shortage of teachers,*” by J. R. Schmitt and K. deCourcy, 2022, Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.epi.org/publication/shortage-of-teachers/>. Copyright 2022 by the Economic Policy Institute. Reprinted with permission.

Stress Sources

Studies on teacher stress indicate that stress falls into categories of systemic, organizational, relational, and interpersonal (Carroll et al., 2021). Systemic stressors include state and national policies, also noted by Carver-Thomas et al. (2021). Organizational stressors, the most significant category, includes workload, which was determined to be an impactful factor in both stress (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021) and potential attrition (Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Relational stressors arise from interpersonal relationships with colleagues, parent expectations (Sokal et al., 2020), and needs of students (Carroll et al., 2021).

Finally, interpersonal stressors center around work-life balance and personal or family challenges (Carroll et al., 2021). Prilleltensky et al. (2016) argued that stress arises from risk factors in these categories exceeding protective factors that might be in place.

Within the larger categories, Haydon et al. (2018) specifically studied special education teachers and identified lack of administrative support (organizational), constant change (system and organizational), and student challenges (relational) as top sources of stress. These stressors take on new significance post-COVID, as findings from the January 2022 State of the American Teacher Survey (Steiner et al., 2022) indicated supporting student learning and managing behavior (relational stressors) and taking on extra work (organizational stressor) as the top-ranked sources of job-related stress. Alvites-Huamaní (2019) referred to these stressors as psychosocial factors and determined in a study of teachers from Latin America, North America, and Europe that there was a significant positive relationship between stress and psychosocial factors.

Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

As noted by Zhao et al. (2022), there is an identifiable relationship between teacher job stress and burnout. Burnout syndrome is defined by Maslach (1982) as a complex phenomenon involving emotional exhaustion, which leads to cynicism toward others, which results in decreased efficacy, or a lack of confidence in one's own professional ability. Interpersonal relationships are a key factor for burnout syndrome, with the student-teacher relationship having the greatest impact, followed by relationships with colleagues, and less impact from relationships with leaders (Rodriguez-Mantilla & Fernandez-Diaz, 2017). Considering the importance of student-teacher relationships in burnout syndrome, Madigan and Kim (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of 14 studies involving 5,311 teachers and 50,616 students to examine the consequences

of teacher burnout for students. The findings provide evidence that teacher burnout is associated with low academic achievement and lower student motivation, but not with student wellbeing. Conversely, Burić et al. (2019) found that teachers with higher levels of burnout demonstrated higher levels of negative emotions towards their students. Thus, teacher burnout is a concern for students academically and possibly emotionally (Burić et al., 2019; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Additionally, students noticed when their classroom teachers were stressed, rating them lower on a scale of social-emotional competence (SEC) (Oberle et al., 2020). Indeed, teacher burnout was a significant predictor of teacher SEC as rated by students and self-reported by teachers (Oberle et al., 2020).

In addition to burnout, which generally develops over an extended period of time, teachers may develop compassion fatigue (CF) from exposure to students experiencing trauma (Koenig et al., 2018). Compassion fatigue, referred to by Figley (1995) as the costs of caring, involves the behaviors and emotions that arise when learning about trauma suffered by someone close to a person, and the stress of wanting to help the one suffering (Yang, 2021). This is referred to as secondary traumatic stress (STS). While the origins of STS and CF are in the mental health and healthcare fields, teachers are also at risk of developing STS and CF as they work with students (Ormiston et al., 2022) given that 64% of all adults report at least one adverse childhood experience before the age of 18 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Additionally, as noted by Hammel and Truebridge (2023), the emotional and physical exhaustion of CF may not require exposure to specific trauma, but instead may result from the everyday interactions teachers experience in their caretaker role as they work with children. Indeed, Hammel (2021) reported that all teachers are susceptible to CF, which she described as “a

normal process based upon the lived experiences of the many students who are in their classroom” (p. 89).

The trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid conversion to online education increased the level of compassion fatigue in many educators (Fute et al., 2022; Yang, 2021); however, the diminished empathy and emotional exhaustion associated with compassion fatigue (Fute et al., 2022) was present long before the trauma of the pandemic (Ormiston et al., 2022). Indeed, Christian-Brant et al. (2020), in a study of 163 U.S. elementary teachers, found that compassion fatigue combined with burnout increased teachers’ intent to leave education. In addition, compassion fatigue was found to be a precursor to burnout in a case study of special education teachers (Hoffman et al., 2007). As noted by Yu et al. (2022) in a study of secondary school Chinese teachers, “compassion fatigue is a unique form of burnout that can seriously negatively impact both teachers’ development and students’ growth” (p. 1).

Job Demands-Resources

Given that stress can lead to compassion fatigue (Koenig et al., 2018) and burnout (Zhao et al., 2022) and burnout negatively impacts students academically (Madigan & Kim, 2021), it is important to examine sources of stress. The conceptual model of job demands-resources (Demerouti et al., 2001) has been used in a number of education research studies to examine both the sources of teacher job stress and the factors which are protective against job stress. In the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, working conditions are broken into two categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands are primarily related to the exhaustion component of burnout, while job resources (specifically a lack thereof) are primarily related to cynicism and inefficacy (Demerouti et al., 2001). As noted by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018), job demands such as time pressure, discipline, and low student motivation strongly predicted lower teacher

wellbeing, whereas job resources such as supportive relationships, administrative support, and school culture and values moderately predicted higher teacher wellbeing. However, what are considered to be demands and what are considered to be resources is subjective (Granziera et al., 2021).

A meta-analysis of 18 studies examining job satisfaction, burnout, stress prevention resources, and student challenges (McCarthy et al., 2016) determined that individual perceptions about the demands of teaching and the resources available are reliable predictors of teacher stress. Camacho et al. (2021) also used the conceptual model of JD-R to examine predictors of teacher burnout and found that the amount of social-emotional and professional support teachers received were the most robust predictors of burnout. This is supported by Russell et al. (2020), who determined that both job demands and job resources are positively related to burnout, with job resources having a stronger effect. This was particularly evident with new teachers whose demands outbalanced their resources. These teachers were at risk for more stress, more burnout symptoms, and less classroom control, and were less committed to teaching in the future. They also felt less prepared (Fitchett et al., 2018).

Stress was found to be a significant predictor of burnout in a study of Chinese teachers conducted under the same conceptual model (Zhao et al., 2022). In a quantitative study of 558 teachers in China utilizing data from four established scales considering job stressors, burnout, work-family conflict, and self-efficacy, job stress had a significant positive predictive effect on work-family conflict and job burnout, with self-efficacy playing a moderating role (Zhao et al., 2022). Personal and contextual factors in the JD-R model were also examined by Richards et al. (2018), who determined that while all teachers must manage stress, teacher perception of a nurturing environment as opposed to a combative and constraining environment resulted in self-

reported low burnout on a psychometric survey. Sokal et al. (2020) used the JD-R model to examine the five work demands of time management, technology, parent expectations, home/work life balance, and lack of resources. The authors concluded that when teachers are in the beginning states of burnout exhibiting high exhaustion, the best way to mitigate burnout is to reduce demands and provide selected resources. The authors also concluded that administrative support is significant at all stages of teacher burnout. This was particularly notable during the COVID-19 pandemic, where research using the JD-R model showed teachers who were characterized as over-extended (marked by high exhaustion, moderate depersonalization, high accomplishment, and limited administrative support) at the tipping point between resilience and burnout (Babb et al., 2022).

Resilience

The Construct of Resilience

The reality of teacher stress leads to the idea of resilience. Resilience is a construct with varied meanings in both common vernacular and in research. The definition of resilience has changed as research into resilience has increased over the past several decades (Truebridge, 2014). For example, Luthar et al. (2000) defined resilience as “a construct connoting the maintenance of positive adaptation by individuals despite experiences of significant adversity” (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 543). However, Truebridge (2014) questioned the inclusion of the term “significant” as too subjective, not easily defined, and part of a deficit, rather than strengths-based, model. Even while using the “significant” adjective, Luthar et al. (2000) noted ongoing concerns about resilience as a construct, including that it can be characterized as both a trait and a dynamic process, that individual subjects vary in the level of adversity and ratings of adversity are subjective, and that levels of resilience can vary over time. Indeed, Rutter (1987) wrote of

studying protective processes and interactions, rather than protective factors, when individuals are confronted with psychological risk or trauma. Current scholarly thinking establishes resilience as a process, not a trait or characteristic (Beltman, 2021; Gu, 2018; Harms, 2018; Liebenberg & Moore, 2018; Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022; Truebridge, 2014).

Much of the research on resilience in the latter part of the 20th century focused on children and their adaptation in response to trauma. Specifically, Garmezy (1993) investigated protective factors that supported the resilience of children raised in poverty, identifying self-esteem, family cohesion, and external support systems. Masten et al. (1990) noted that children experiencing chronic adversity demonstrated more resilience when they had a positive relationship with an adult, were good problem-solvers, and felt competent and valued by self or society. Werner (1989) and Werner and Smith (2001) noted similar findings in a longitudinal study on the island of Kauai, where strong family ties and external support systems that rewarded and valued the individual's competence were among the protective factors supporting resilience in children exposed to risk factors of perinatal stress, poverty, and parental psychopathology. Additionally, Benard (1991) noted the importance of social networks in the community to strengthen the family, school, and community protective factors of support, high expectations for competence, and meaningful participation to foster resiliency in children.

These earlier, seminal studies on resilience focused on the construct of resilience in children. While far more resilience research has been conducted with children rather than adults (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019), Mansfield et al. (2016), in studying adult teachers, noted that “in the context of the teaching profession, resilience may be conceptualized as a capacity, a process and also as an outcome (Mansfield et al., 2016, p. 80). Hascher et al. (2021), in an examination of how teacher wellbeing and teacher resilience are frequently used interchangeably, argued that

“teacher resilience supports the maintenance and development of teacher wellbeing” (Hascher et al., 2021, p. 416). These examples illustrate the lack of a common definition of resilience, even among researchers studying the resilience process.

Mansfield et al. (2012) presented a construct of teacher resilience that organized attributes of resilience into four dimensions: profession-related, emotional, motivational, and social. They concluded that views of resilience may change according to where teachers are in their careers, and the understanding of resilience involves considering the context. In further research, Mansfield et al. (2016) organized resilience-related factors into the dimensions of personal resources, contextual resources, strategies, and outcomes. Although the research focus was on teacher education and early-career teachers, some of these factors and categories have also been observed in more veteran teachers (Wabule, 2020).

Teacher Resilience

Considering reasons teachers stay in their profession, rather than reasons they leave, has been the focus of recent research on teacher resilience (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Mullen et al., 2021; Newbury & Allsop, 2017). Fox and Walter (2022) determined that both individual and environmental factors contributed to the sense of wellbeing in teachers, and feeling connected to the school community was a protective factor during COVID-19. Drew and Sosnowski (2019) examined the dynamic between risk factors and protective factors and proposed that teachers demonstrating resilience possessed both internal protective factors, such as a sense of purpose, and external protective factors, such as relationships with colleagues, students, and leaders, which increased resilience.

The development of a resilience mindset can result in statistically significant improvements in anxiety, stress, gratitude, satisfaction, happiness, and quality of life, with

improved interaction with students and colleagues (Chesak et al., 2019). While specific reasons for staying in the teaching profession may change over time (Chiong et al., 2017), a sense of purpose, belonging, and positive relationships support an inner motivation to teach that was the main foundation of veteran teacher resilience (Carrillo & Flores, 2018). This work echoes that of Truebridge (2014), who described the three interrelated protective factors of caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful opportunities for participation and contribution in meeting basic human needs. Indeed, being able to reappraise situations of adversity allowed teachers to restore their wellbeing and sense of commitment (Clarà, 2017). In a study of 407 teachers from Hong Kong, SAR, and China, Chen and Lee (2022) determined that teacher resilience could act as a buffer for job demands through self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, and helped to increase job resources through supportive relationships.

Personal Factors

Early research into teacher resilience demonstrated that personal qualities such as high intrinsic motivation (Beltman et al., 2011) and a sense of humor (Mansfield et al., 2012) were personal protective factors that increased teacher resilience. In addition to motivation, goal orientation was found to be a resilience factor in both English and Western research studies (Liu et al., 2018). These innate factors had a differential impact on the level of resilience novice teachers were able to build (Wang & Lo, 2022). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of support groups such as those found in families or communities (Albrecht & Hill, 2022). Self-care and self-esteem were also significant individual level predictors of wellbeing (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). In addition to having goals, motivation, and support groups, high levels of self-efficacy were significant in promoting resilience (Karakus et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2015).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy or “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193) has been demonstrated to positively impact sustained effort in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1977), which is one aspect of resilience (Harms et al., 2018). For example, Matteucci et al. (2017) investigated contextual and person-specific predictors of teachers’ sense of personal responsibility. The results demonstrated positive relations between personal (self-efficacy) and contextual (school climate) factors and teacher responsibility, and that responsibility could have a positive impact on teacher wellbeing and instructional practices. Drew and Sosnowski (2019) determined that teachers with purpose built deeper roots in the profession and demonstrated more resilience, and teachers who reframed challenges into learning experiences, embraced change and uncertainty, and drew from rejuvenating experiences were more able to draw on their own resilience. The positive association between cognitive wellbeing and school connectedness, teaching efficacy, and overall functioning in teachers was also reported by Arslan (2018). Conversely, teachers’ perceived conflict between their own beliefs and practices required by the school were associated with less job satisfaction and more burnout as they expressed lower efficacy (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019).

Additionally, Karakus et al. (2021) determined that increased self-efficacy in teachers was correlated with less intention to leave as those teachers had increased wellbeing and were more able to cope with stressors at work. Likewise, Wang et al. (2015) demonstrated that teachers who had strong self-efficacy with regard to their ability to engage students in learning reported higher job satisfaction, lower burnout, and lower quitting intentions. This relationship was supported by a meta-analysis of 33 studies of the effects of self-efficacy beliefs on

determination to stay in the teaching profession. The findings of the meta-analysis showed that teacher self-efficacy beliefs were positively related to their commitment to the teaching profession (Chesnut & Burley, 2015). Additionally, teachers with a growth mindset about their teaching, believing that their teaching ability can be developed and improved, reported more positive personal and professional wellbeing (Nalipay et al., 2022).

Contextual Factors

While teachers typically work individually in classrooms, teaching itself is a social career (Kraft & Falken, 2020). Factors that support the development of teacher resilience include adequate time to accomplish work, professional development opportunities, adequate equipment and materials, caring collegial relationships, high expectations, and opportunity for shared decision making (Richards et al., 2016). In international schools, where staff and students tend to be transitory, teacher resilience was supported through appreciation, relationships, and a sense of belonging (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). Wabule (2020), studying teachers in Uganda, concluded that while intrinsic motivation was a significant protective factor for resilience, teachers developed resilience partly through peer support. For beginning teachers, that peer support often took the form of specific and frequent mentoring (Maready et al., 2021; Prilleltensky et al., 2016). As teachers gained experience, collaboration with colleagues both reduced feelings of isolation and supported school improvement (García-Martínez et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers who benefitted from supportive professional relationships with colleagues, administrators, and students demonstrated more resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). In fact, teacher perception of being engaged with the school community was correlated to lower stress and depression, even if the engagement was not active (Lester et al., 2020). Turner et al. (2022) found that teachers providing social support to colleagues not only supported their own

wellbeing in addition to their colleagues, but also improved their own teaching practice. This was particularly relevant during the school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, where higher levels of school connectedness due to interactions with colleagues, peer and administrative support, and working with students correlated with lower levels of perceived stress and more resilience (Fox & Walter, 2022).

School Leadership and Teacher Resilience

Administrative support was mentioned in a number of studies on teacher resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Fox & Walter, 2022; Richards et al., 2016). In a review of 49 research studies conducted over 30 years, Skakon et al. (2010) found that the stress levels and affective wellbeing of leaders were associated with the stress level and affective wellbeing of their employees, in that high levels of stress and poor affective wellbeing in leaders was associated with the same in employees. Skakon et al. (2010) also found that positive leadership behaviors were associated with low employee stress and high wellbeing, although no specific leadership style was consistently associated with employee stress and wellbeing. Van der Vyver et al. (2020), in a study of teacher retention as related to the principal's leadership behavior in South Africa, found the highest overall teacher wellbeing when the principal displayed transformational leadership. Indeed, results from a study reporting teacher perception about workplace stress "highlight the importance of those in administration roles, particularly the leadership qualities they possess, in determining either the experience of stress or fostering of resilience for teachers in the workplace" (Carroll et al., 2021, p. 430).

In a series of research studies conducted in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic, Eblie Trudel et al. (2021) focused on the importance of leaders to be proactive in their awareness and recognition of elevated stress levels of staff, and to support staff through interaction and

collaboration. Further study from the same researchers suggested transformational leadership approaches which focused on ensuring sustainable workloads for teachers, including opportunities for professional development in needed skills while not adding additional pressure during the pandemic was correlated with increased resilience (Eblie Trudel et al., 2022). Additionally, gestures of appreciation and supportive relationships between teachers and leaders during the uncertainty of the pandemic increased reported resilience and sustained involvement by teachers (Eblie Trudel et al., 2022).

Even without the increased stresses of a global pandemic, leadership style can impact stress and resilience. In studying leadership in conjunction with the JD-R model, Tummers and Bakker (2021) concluded that leadership could directly impact job demands, job resources, and personal resources; could moderate the link between job/personal resources and motivation, and the link between job demands and strain; and could directly influence job crafting [proactively and positively changing job demands and resources] and self-undermining [acting in ways which increase obstacles for job performance] behaviors of employees. Indeed, Haydon et al. (2018) determined that administrative support, delineated as trusting relationships, collaborative decision-making, clear communication, and having a clear mission and vision, was one of the top four protective factors mitigating teacher stress and supporting wellbeing. Research by Carroll et al. (2021) supports this conclusion, as poor communication from leaders, poor collaboration between leaders and staff, and frequent changes in policies and procedure contributed to teachers feeling devalued and more stressed, and was a primary determinant of decreased wellbeing. The authors concluded that “leadership positions in the school hold substantial power in determining the culture of both the working and learning environment” (Carroll et al., 2021).

Bukko et al. (2021) conducted case study research in a school identified as a high-trust school to identify supportive actions from the principal which could counter job stresses. Implications of this study included the need to consider trust-building behaviors as part of ongoing professional development. The authors concluded that increasing the level of trust between teachers and the principal may act as a buffer to the challenges presented by educational reforms and increase teacher self-efficacy. Similarly, an Israeli study of teachers in an educational leadership program considered their perceptions of school principals in promoting teachers' wellbeing. The findings indicated school principals could play an important role in promoting teachers' wellbeing by creating a positive emotional climate, keeping relationships on the right track, and demonstrating genuine concern for teachers. These factors of relationship management generated the highest level of emotional intelligence, and were viewed as essential for teacher wellbeing by most teachers (Buskila & Chen-Levi, 2021). Ford et al. (2019) determined that creating a trusting environment where teachers had autonomy and could build their knowledge and skills decreased burnout and increased collective efficacy, effectively increasing resilience. A similar finding from Lester et al. (2020) noted that when teachers perceived supportive relationships with school leadership, they reported lower work stress, depression, and anxiety.

After analyzing 91 peer reviewed research studies published between 2000 and June 2020, Mullen et al. (2021) concluded that effective school leadership could build teacher resilience by being supportive (through clearly communicating a strong vision through procedures, recognizing teacher work and achievement, and discussing issues with teachers), streamlining workload (through technology, updated grading practices, monitoring workload, and supporting collaborative planning), and creating a positive school culture (through inclusive

and collaborative leadership and building mutual trust). Additionally, leaders could support resilience by fostering higher self-efficacy through coaching and feedback focused on growth (Raheem, 2022). Flores (2018) determined that supportive and encouraging leadership increased teachers' sense of professionalism, which was a protective factor for resilience. This professionalism could be reinforced through prioritizing teacher efficacy and autonomy, appreciating teacher efforts and experience, and employing evaluation systems that are practical, individualized, and growth-focused (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020).

Gap in the Literature

Teacher resilience and how to develop and support it has been a robust international field of study over the past two decades (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Burić et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2021). However, the majority of studies have taken place outside of the United States (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Kangas-Dick and O'Shaughnessy (2020), in a review of 61 research studies of teacher resilience, noted few experimental studies and a lack of robust data. The non-experimental research focused on pre-service teachers, early career teachers, or teachers in high-poverty schools or urban schools (Garcia et al., 2019b), and schools under the threat of violence. None of these studies included high achieving schools (HASs) as a source of resilience data (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Research about stress and resilience in high achieving schools has centered on the student experience rather than the teacher experience (Luthar et al., 2020b).

Excessive achievement pressures, such as those at HASs, have been identified as one of the top environmental threats to adolescent wellbeing (Geisz & Nakashian, 2018). Since this designation of students at HASs as an "at-risk" group, there has been renewed research interest on risk and resilience in these students (Ebbert et al., 2019; Luthar et al., 2020b; Stiles et al.,

2020). However, little attention has been directed toward the educators in these schools, who “carry the weighty, dual charge of tending to the emotional needs of a group of highly stressed students, in addition to ensuring their continued, exemplary levels of educational accomplishments” (Luthar et al., 2020a, p. 119). This study branched into a new aspect of resilience research, and has the potential to positively impact wellbeing both within the institution under study and in other HASs.

Rationale for Research Study

This study contributes to the knowledge base of teacher resilience by focusing on the lived experiences of teachers in a high achieving school (HAS), using the contextualized approach to resilience and positive adaptation as presented in the theoretical framework of social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar 2011a, 2011b). Both individual and contextual or environmental protective factors have been implicated in the larger construct of resilience (Fox & Walter, 2022; Hascher et al., 2021; Mullen et al., 2021). When considering both contextual and individual factors in the resilience process, Oldfield and Ainsworth (2022) determined that contextual factors influence individual factors much more than individual factors influence contextual ones. Indeed, in an earlier study Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) found that contextual factors such as workload, support from leadership, and school culture had greater impact than individual factors in predicting wellbeing. Additionally, a meta-analysis of 23 research studies on the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce teacher burnout found that the intervention effectiveness was generally small (Iancu et al., 2017). These findings demonstrate the need for support from leadership and colleagues to avoid placing responsibility for resilience solely on the individual teacher (Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022). Conversely, many of the

programs developed to support teacher wellbeing and resilience focus on the individual teacher through mindfulness and stress reduction techniques (Jennings et al., 2017).

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted under the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a). As described in *The social ecology of resilience: A handbook of theory and practice* (Ungar, 2011a), initial research into resilience was positivist and focused on individual traits and factors that provided resilience. Ungar argued for “an interactional, environmental, and culturally pluralistic perspective [which] provides a second way to understand resilience” (Ungar, 2011a, p. 14). This theory posits that resilience is complex and multidimensional, and “is a shared quality of the individual and the individual’s social ecology, with the social ecology likely more important than individual factors to recovery and sustainable well-being for populations under stress” (Ungar, 2011a, p. 17). Indeed, Ungar (2011a) argued that studies of resilience which measured only personal agency and ignored cultural, social, political, and economic factors did not provide accurate data and conclusions with regard to resilience outcomes. The social ecological expression of resilience involves both the person and their strengths and challenges expressed within the context of a complex ecology. Thus, according to the social ecological theory of resilience (SETR), “to understand resilience we must explore the context in which the individual experiences adversity, making resilience first a quality of the broader social and physical ecology, and second a quality of the individual” (Ungar, 2011a, p. 27).

Ungar’s initial work was focused on children (Ungar, 2011b), but the SETR is equally applicable to adults (Liebenberg & Moore, 2018). In his work, Ungar proposed the principles of decentrality, complexity, atypicality, and cultural relativity to help define resilience and

understand the process (Ungar, 2011b). The principle of decentrality means that the responsibility for resilience is not placed on the person in the aversive or challenging environment. Instead, resilience for an individual in a high-risk environment depends more on availability of culturally relevant resources than it does on individual factors. The principle of complexity explains that resilience is difficult to predict or sustain longitudinally, as both individual and contextual (environmental) factors impact outcomes. The principle of atypicality demonstrates that adaptations that seem negative may be functional in context. Finally, the principle of cultural relativity reminds researchers to consider both the local culture of the research subjects and the global culture of human experience, given that protective factors leading to resilience are both variable and sensitive to context (Ungar, 2011b).

Gu (2018) applied the SETR to teachers, applying an “environment-centered, process-oriented latent concept [which] enables us to place teachers in their complex worlds of work and analyze the ways in which their capacity to teach to their best influences and is influenced by their professional worlds” (Gu, 2018, p. 13). Teacher resilience is context specific, role specific, and involves the capacity for teachers to maintain equilibrium in their everyday (complex and demanding) worlds in which they teach (Gu, 2018).

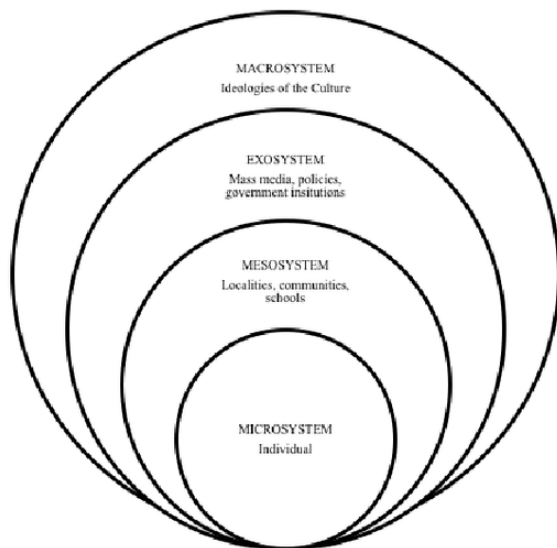
Historical Foundations

The historical foundation of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a) is the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a). In the bioecological model, the relationship between the active individual and the changing environment is dynamic; thus, human development takes place in a both complex and reciprocal interaction between the human and the environment. One of the critical elements of the ecological model is the subjective experience of the human living in the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a). In

addition, as shown in Figure 3, the ecological environment is a series of nested and interconnected structures, consisting of the innermost microsystem (the person and their relationships); then the mesosystem (the settings in which the person is a participant); the exosystem (the setting where events occur that might affect the person, even though it is not part of the person's immediate environment); the macrosystem (the broader cultural context which influences the interactions in the other layers); all of which are influenced by the passage of time, called the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005b). These nested structures became part of Ungar's social ecology (Ungar, 2011a).

Figure 3

Socio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)



Note: Socio-ecological model adopted from Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development. Source: "Ecological Models of Human Development," by U. Bronfenbrenner, 1994, in *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 37-42), Oxford, UK: Elsevier. Copyright U. Bronfenbrenner, 1994.

Building further on the idea of a contextualized approach to resilience, Mansfield et al. (2012) used pre-service and early career teachers' perceptions of resilient teachers to develop the

four dimensions of resilience: profession-related (such as effective teaching skills and adaptability); emotional (such as sense of humor and coping skills); motivational (such as persistence, enjoying challenges, and setting realistic goals); and social (such as strong interpersonal skills and supportive relationships). These dimensions can be placed into Bronfenbrenner's (2005a) microsystems and exosystems and are also part of a social ecology as a teacher demonstrating resilience responds to a dynamic environment. It should be noted that the nature of the dynamic environment means that the boundaries between the levels of the systems are permeable, and the relationship between levels is interactive and multidirectional (Beltman, 2021; Hofstadler et al., 2021).

Rationale for Choice of Theory

The idea of a contextualized approach to resilience, in which individual factors and external factors interact to allow for positive adaptation, is part of the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar 2011a, 2011b). According to Ungar (2011a, 2011b), this decenters the individual from being primarily responsible for their own resilience, and emphasizes the importance of opportunity and resources of the complex and culturally relative environment in which the individual functions. Multiple resilience researchers (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Fox & Walter, 2022; Gu, 2018; Mansfield et al., 2012; Mullen et al., 2021; Oldfield and Ainsworth, 2022) have made recommendations regarding leadership action amid systemic reform to avoid blaming individual teachers for their lack of resilience in a stressful profession. After all, "teachers and teaching must be understood within the social, cultural, and organizational environments of the school - which are designed, nurtured and shaped by the educational architect who lives in the principal's office" (Gu, 2018, p. 14).

Theory Related to Study

As noted by Beltman et al. (2011), “examining a construct with multiple dependent variables, that varies for individuals over time and contents, and may only be visible in the face of adversity, presents challenges in how to examine or measure it” (Beltman et al., 2011, p. 29). Consideration of the contextual factors of resilience with special focus on the impact of leadership actions led to the use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis, as this DiP examined “the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13) as they made sense of their own experiences in their own social ecologies (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Summary

Resilience has no single definition, and has been viewed as a capacity (Gu & Day, 2013), a set of behaviors (Ungar, 2011a), or an outcome (Luthar et al., 2000). It has been characterized as all of these simultaneously. The construct is complicated and dynamic. “Rather than there being a single route to resilience there are multiple pathways involving a variety of factors and processes across different ecological levels” (Oldfield & Ainsworth, 2022, p. 425). Additionally, as noted by Truebridge (2014), “individuals respond in different ways and in different degrees to similar experiences” (p. 23). While teacher stress and teacher attrition continue to be a growing concern, teacher resilience research offers practical steps forward. Understanding teacher perception of resilience is an important and understudied piece of this body of research. Hearing the voices and experiences of teachers in high achieving schools, which have not been studied as part of resilience research, adds another dimension to understanding how social ecologies shape resilience and how resilience can be supported. After all, “the responsibility for wellbeing ... needs to be understood as collective work and shared between teachers and with their leaders, not the explicit domain of one or the other.” (Hartcher et al., 2022, p. 23).

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

When studying teacher resilience in a high achieving school, consideration must be given to the most appropriate type of research method based on the theoretical framework used for the study and the research questions to be answered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, the use of the social ecological theory of resilience as a framework and the construction of research questions aimed at teacher perceptions led to the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a qualitative research method, to investigate teacher perceptions of their own experiences of the phenomenon of resilience. In IPA, data is collected through in-person interviews, and both the participants and the researcher make interpretations of the individual participant experiences (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The research setting of a high achieving high school provided research subjects who have experienced the challenges and resilience associated with the setting, and data analysis using their own words and interpretations allowed the researcher to develop themes based on their experiences. The researcher interviewed 10 subjects who have experienced the phenomenon of resilience in this setting, and used the analysis of those in-depth interviews to develop recommendations for leadership actions to support teacher resilience in high achieving schools.

Methodology: Overall Research Design

Type of Research Design

This research study was conducted under the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (SETR) (Ungar 2011a, 2011b). In the SETR, resilience is influenced by both personal and contextual factors, and these factors interact in each individual's unique social ecologies. Each individual's unique experiences lead to their construction of

knowledge and understanding. This theoretical framework required a constructivist approach to research, where “individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Additionally, the need to explore these subjective meanings in depth, rather than researching a cause-and-effect approach to resilience, required the qualitative research design presented in this section.

Research Approach and Rationale for Choices

The desire to explore contextualized experiences of resilience led to the use of a phenomenological research approach, where participants described their own lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of resilience as teachers in a high achieving school. A true phenomenology is a philosophical approach that brings lived experiences to the awareness of the participants (van Manen, 2017b). According to Husserl’s stance of phenomenological reduction, phenomenology requires freedom from cultural context in order to understand the essence of the experience (Dowling, 2005). Although this perspective of phenomenology has changed as the approach began to be used in research (Dowling, 2005), the philosophical aspect about the essence of the experience of the phenomenon being studied has remained (van Manen, 2017a). When considering the theoretical framework of SETR, the use of a Husserlian method of phenomenology becomes problematic, as context is a vital part of understanding the phenomenon.

However, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a more psychological, rather than philosophical, approach to phenomenology (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). In IPA, the investigation is focused not only on the experiences of individuals, but on the meaning the individuals make of those experiences (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). It is a double hermeneutic approach, where the participant is interpreting their own experiences and the researcher is

interpreting how the participant is making sense of their experiences (Smith, 2004). Rather than being driven by theory, this is a collaborative, constructivist approach between the participants and researcher as they both interpret the participants' experiences (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). IPA involves an idiographic approach, where each participant's experiences are examined individually before any collective determinations are made (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). As described by Smith and Nizza (2022),

With IPA, the objective is to get as close as possible to the lived experience of participants so that it can be examined in detail. Accordingly, IPA researchers aim for insight into what it is like to have an experience from the point of view of the person who has had it to elicit rich descriptions, trying to capture the emotions surrounding the experience and how people understand it and make sense of it. The personal meanings associated with lived experience are considered particularly important in IPA, as is how the experience relates to people's views of their world and their relationships. (p. 4)

As noted above, interpretative phenomenological analysis is an idiographic, rather than nomothetic, methodology (Smith & Nizza, 2022). That is, the focus is on individual experiences, rather than on generalizations for populations of people. This is congruent with the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a; 2011b), where an individual's experience of resilience is dependent upon the larger social context in which that individual exists. In other words, each individual's social ecology impacts their experience of resilience. Additionally, this IPA study elevated teacher voice and teacher interpretation of their own experiences of resilience. The focus was on the experience (phenomenological), the particular (idiographic), and the interpretation of the particular experience by both the participant and the researcher (double hermeneutic) (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Central questions:

- What do teachers in a high achieving school report about their experiences with resilience?
- What leadership actions do teachers in a high achieving school report affect their resilience in positive ways?
- What leadership actions do teachers in a high achieving school report affect their resilience in deleterious ways?

Sub-questions:

- What do teachers in a high achieving school report as sources of stress?
- What do teachers in a high achieving school report as protective factors that support their resilience?

Setting and Population

Research Setting

Bolman and Deal (2021) described four frames (structural, human resources, symbolic, and political) with which to view an organization. Since schools as an organization are composed of and focused on human beings, the human resources frame is a strong frame from which to consider the study setting. As described by Bolman and Deal (2021), with a human resources frame, organizations exist to serve human needs. People and organizations need each other, and a good fit between the individual and the organization benefits both. At the study site, the human resource frame is a valid model. Staff members refer to themselves as part of the school family, and collegial support is evident. “Fit” is a strong component of the hiring

process, and relationships between teachers and students within the classroom are a key part of classroom management. In addition, a strong mentoring program, both formal and informal, encourages supportive relationships between colleagues. The consistent message from leadership is that all staff members are important as human beings, with multiple roles in their lives outside of the organization. The human resource frame resonates most deeply with the consideration of the organization through the lens of teacher resilience.

Population

This study took place in a 1,400-student public high school in a suburban community of 23,000 in the northeastern United States. The high school was built 17 years ago after the community withdrew from having their students attend high school in the neighboring city, where students had attended for 85 years. The high school is an International Baccalaureate World School, recognized by US News & World Report as being amongst the best high schools in the nation. According to the school district website, which is not cited to protect confidentiality of the study site, 90% of graduates attend a two-year or four-year college. There are more than 90 clubs and organizations available for students to join. The school's program of studies lists 12 Advanced Placement (AP) classes and 45 International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, along with the ability to earn a full IB Diploma. Standardized test scores are well above state and national averages and are typically in the top five districts in the state. Thus, the school meets the definition of a high achieving school (HAS) (Luthar & Kumar, 2018). The school employs 121 teachers, with various specialists and support positions. There is a school-based leadership team of nine administrators overseeing various departments, and a district leadership of 32 administrators.

Sample Size

In a phenomenological study, the target sample size is three to 10 (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), with the intention of both in-depth exploration of the phenomenon and the perspective of different voices. Smith and Fieldsend (2021) note that the typical sample size for a doctoral dissertation is eight to 10, while Smith and Nizza (2022) recommend 10-12 participants. The target sample size for this research study was 10 participants.

A goal of qualitative research is to acquire data that is representative of a larger set of participants leading to saturation, where no new insights or understandings emerge (Byrne, 2023). However, Max van Manen (2017b) argued that saturation of data in phenomenology is not possible, as there is always a possibility for new insights and understanding in the exploration of individual experiences. The idiographic nature of IPA, where each case is analyzed individually, in detail, and thoroughly before looking for any patterns (Smith, 2004), requires a limited sample size in order to conduct the in-depth analysis required by IPA methodology.

Smith and Fieldsend (2021) also noted the need for as much homogeneity as possible in order to focus on the factors that differentiate the responses. Given that the population of teachers in the state as a whole is largely homogeneous, with 97.6% of teachers identifying as white, non-Hispanic (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.), homogeneity of race and ethnicity was assumed. This study did not seek homogeneity in age or gender of the participants, as that would have limited the potential pool of participants below the desired level. Participants had at least five years of experience teaching in the study site, as that level of experience both ensured they were on a continuing contract and demonstrated some level of resilience due to lack of turnover. An in-depth analysis of participants' experience of resilience may lead to insights that

would require future exploration of the impact of age, gender, or extended years of experience, but those were not the focus of the current study.

Participants in this study were current teachers in the researcher's school district, which meets the definition of a HAS as noted in the previous section. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling (Mack et al., 2005; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021), as all participants were able to describe and provide insight into the specific phenomenon of teacher resilience in a high achieving school (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This provided for the homogeneity recommended for IPA methodology (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith & Nizza, 2022) as these participants were able to describe their individual experiences of resilience within the same school environment.

The specific recruitment began as an item in the principal's weekly Sunday email. That email, as shown in Appendix C, contained a brief description of the study. Interested teachers emailed the researcher and provided their preferred email address for correspondence. The researcher followed up with interested respondents to set up the time and place for in-person interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) requires "rich and detailed first person accounts of a specific experience" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 19). The participants need to be able to tell their story and their own interpretation of their experiences, in a manner which makes sense to them (Smith & Nizza, 2022). According to Nizza et al. (2021), quality IPA research involves close analysis and interpretation of participant words. The idiographic nature of IPA means that each participant's experiences are examined individually and thoroughly before moving to another participant (Smith, 2004). The need for individual experience about a

phenomenon to be related in depth through a participant's own interpretative lens and in their own words requires the use of in-depth individual interviews conducted in person, rather than focus groups or surveys. As such, the researcher must set up an environment that allows participants to tell their stories in depth, thoughtfully, and freely, with gentle guidance or redirection by the researcher as necessary to answer the research question (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Although van Manen (2017a) favors the unstructured interview, Vagle (2018) argues that the need for structure depends on the phenomenon, the context, and the research plan. In this study, the research questions regarding the specific experiences of resilience and the impact of leadership upon those experiences provided a need for a semi-structured interview format. This allowed for flexibility in exploring participant responses while also ensuring the research questions were addressed (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Use of an interview guide (Stofer, n.d.-b) allowed the research questions to be framed as more straight-forward questions and follow-up probes (Stofer, n.d.-a) that were understandable to participants who were not researchers themselves (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Seidman (2006) prescribes a three-interview series, where the first interview is life history, the second is details of the experience under study, and the third allows for reflection. This study was set in the researcher's institution, where the volunteer participants already had a degree of familiarity with the researcher and worked in the same environment. As noted by Rubin and Rubin (2005), developing trust and good working relationships are a key component of in-depth interviewing. Thus, the need for an extended background interview to learn about participants was reduced and the first two interviews were combined, with the possibility of a

second follow-up interview if needed. This format also respected the time of busy educators, another consideration noted by Rubin and Rubin (2005).

The interview guide consisted of 12 open-ended questions that alternated between descriptive and narrative, and analytical and reflective for a 60-minute interview (Smith & Nizza, 2022). As noted by Seidman (2006), the purpose of interviews is to allow participants to tell their stories. Vagle (2018) states the researcher should “let the participant talk - redirect her or him toward the phenomenon when you find it necessary” (p. 80). The answers to the research questions arise from the meaning the participants give to their experience, and the analysis conducted by the researcher. The most important skill for the interviewer is that of listening, both to the words and to the non-verbal cues of the participant (Seidman, 2006). Indeed, Seidman (2006) recommends that follow-up probes for many participant answers would involve asking to hear more about a particular subject or experience. Smith and Nizza (2022) suggest reminding participants to speak as if the researcher has no understanding of the topic, in order to reach an appropriate depth of their interpretation of their experiences.

Instrumentation and Operationalization

The in-person interviews were conducted in a private space of the participant’s choosing. Allowing the participant to choose the location increased the participant’s level of comfort and ability to concentrate (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The interviews were recorded via Microsoft Teams using the embedded transcription feature of the software. Both the audio/video recordings and the transcript served as sources of data for analysis. Additional recording through the embedded transcription app (Recorder) on an Android mobile phone functioned as a backup transcript. All participants signed a consent form, and were fully apprised of the purpose of the interview, and the fact that they could decide to withdraw at any time. The consent form can be found in

Appendix D. The transcription was fully anonymized, including any identifying information mentioned during the interview (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Prior to the interview, participants were asked to provide a written lived experience description (LED), where they described a specific experience of resilience in the context of their work (Vagle, 2018). The LED helped them to focus their thoughts before the interview, and served as one of the opening questions, allowing them to begin the narrative of their experiences of resilience through telling a story (Seidman, 2006). The protocol for the LED can be found in Appendix B. Van Manen (2017) suggests the basic phenomenological question of “What is it like? What is this experience like?” (van Manen, 2017b, p. 811), and the LED served as the foundation to begin answering that question. This is also congruent with the idiographic nature of IPA methodology, as each participant’s response was explored fully and in depth before considering the next participant’s experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a distinguishing component of the methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2004). While Vagle (2018) suggests a whole-part-whole analysis, where the researcher reads the interview transcript to get a sense of the whole, identifies parts through coding as the transcript is re-read, and then brings those parts back together as a whole through category development, Smith (2004) emphasizes the inductive nature of IPA. According to Smith (2004), “The most exhilarating analysis is often that which develops unanticipated while engaged with the material and the flexible data collection and analysis techniques of IPA facilitate this” (p. 43). Data analysis for IPA is an iterative process, where each individual transcript is read and reread in order for the researcher to familiarize themselves

with the participant's words and to determine what is important to the participant (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Smith and Nizza (2022) note that it may be helpful to make notes which categorize individual statements as descriptive, linguistic, or conceptual. Then, the researcher completes initial coding using in vivo coding.

In vivo coding, as described by Saldaña (2021), where the participants' own words are used in the development of codes, is appropriate for a phenomenology studying the actual experiences of the participants, and their interpretation of those experiences. Smith and Fieldsend (2021) then recommend converting these initial in vivo codes to experiential statements speaking to both the participant's experience and the researcher's interpretation, based on the participant's own words. The researcher then clusters the experiential statements based on connections, leading to personal experiential themes (Smith & Nizza, 2022) for an individual participant. This process is repeated for each individual participant, reflecting the idiographic nature of IPA (Smith, 2004).

When reading each transcript, IPA requires close reading and rereading of each participant's words as the researcher interprets meaning (Nizza et al., 2021). Peoples (2021) suggests that researchers attempt to immerse themselves in participants' accounts in an empathetic way, slowing down and focusing on the details within each participant's experience. The use of analytic memos (Saldaña, 2021) as the researcher interprets each participant's experiences should aid in the development of both experiential statements and personal experiential themes (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

After each case is examined individually, areas of convergence and divergence are examined to look for patterns across cases (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Cross-case analysis leads to the development of group experiential themes (Smith & Nizza, 2022). These group

experiential themes demonstrate similarities in participants' accounts (convergence) as well as individual ways the phenomenon is experienced (divergence). The development of group experiential themes with supporting evidence from interviews and LEDs provide a basis for any generalizations made about the phenomenon of teacher resilience in a high achieving school.

Thus, the data analysis was both inductive through development of personal experiential statements and deductive through the development of group experiential themes as the researcher made interpretations of data gathered from the teacher interviews and LEDs (Constas, 1992; Peoples, 2021). The themes were then related to the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar 2011a, 2011b). The personal and group experiential themes that emerged from the analytic coding process were specific to the context in which the study was conducted, and this importance of context is what the social ecological theory of resilience framework both supports and requires.

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability

In a qualitative study, validity is determined through the viewpoint of both the participants and the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Several strategies were employed to ascertain the accuracy of the findings as perceived by both the participants interviewed and the researcher, as multiple strategies increase validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The first such strategy was that of member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), where the participants serve as a check throughout the data analysis process. That is, the transcripts were reviewed by participants for accuracy (Peoples, 2021). While Peoples (2021) suggests only the transcripts, and not the interpretations, be shared, Creswell & Creswell (2018) suggest the opposite. Thus, the relevant personal experiential statements and personal experiential themes were also shared

with each participant, as a check for accuracy in the researcher interpretation of their experiences.

The use of triangulation with different data sources also supported validity of the study results. For example, the use of reflective analytic memos in the coding process of data analysis (Saldaña, 2021) provided a source of data for triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A memo was written by the researcher after each interview, and the process of writing the memos helped the researcher refine the interview guide and follow-up probes as needed (Stofer, n.d.-a). This is also congruent with the idiographic nature of IPA methodology (Smith, 2004). These memos contributed to the double hermeneutic approach of IPA as described by Smith (2004), where the researcher was interpreting the participant's own interpretations of their experiences with resilience.

Another source of data for triangulation was the personal experiential statements from different participants. Attending to convergence and divergence in the statements while developing group experiential themes (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021) provided more weight to the emerging themes both by noting patterns of similarity and by acknowledging discrepant information, which lent realism and validity to an account (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Reliability was achieved by attention to the accuracy of the transcripts, both by member checking (Peoples, 2021) and by use of two different voice-to-text transcription applications (Recorder and Microsoft Teams). According to Nizza et al. (2021), after the data is analyzed through the construction of personal experiential statements and group experiential themes, there are four indicators of high-quality IPA studies. The first is that the findings should be organized into a “compelling unfolding narrative” (Nizza et al., 2021, p. 371). The narrative and all claims

should be supported through relevant quotes from the participants, along with interpretative commentary from the researcher (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

A close analytical reading of each participant's words is the second indicator of high-quality IPA (Nizza et al., 2021). The researcher does not simply rely on quotes to support claims, but uses analysis and interpretation of quotes to explore participant meaning at a greater depth. The researcher must move back and forth between the individual quotes and the wider transcript, both with individual participants and between participant experiences, to fully develop the experiential meaning revealed by the data (Nizza et al., 2021).

The third indicator of high-quality IPA is using convergence and divergence "to illustrate representation, prevalence and variability within the analysis" (Nizza et al., 2021, p. 376). The analysis attends to both what the participants share with regard to their experience of the phenomenon, and also what makes them unique. This requires cycling between the parts and the whole in the interpretation of the data, as also noted by Vagle (2018).

The final indicator of high-quality IPA is when the analysis emphasizes both the meaning ascribed to the experience by the participants and the significance of the participant experience as interpreted by the researcher (Nizza et al., 2021). This is the double hermeneutic nature of IPA, where the researcher interprets the experiences as told by the participants through their own interpretive lens. There is an implicit acknowledgement of the importance of context to the experience of the phenomenon, which is also a key feature of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a; 2011b).

Ethical Issues of Study

Ethical issues in any research study involve protecting the people involved and ensuring that the issues of risk, confidentiality, and informed consent are addressed (Smith & Nizza,

2022). Given the focus of IPA to explore experiences in depth, there was a possibility that recalling and reflecting upon experiences may be unsettling or disturbing to participants. It was vital to adhere to informed consent processes before, during, and after an interview. The participants were reminded they could cease participation at any time, either by not answering particular questions, ending the interview, or not allowing their data to be used after the interview was finished (Smith & Nizza, 2022). In addition, the researcher attended to nonverbal cues of participant discomfort while conducting the interview (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Confidentiality was assured to participants by removing identifying information. During the data collection and analysis, participants were identified by number rather than by name or pseudonym (Peoples, 2021). Transcripts of in-depth interviews were carefully scrutinized to ensure they did not contain identifying information (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Explicit consent was provided by participants for use of direct quotes (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The informed consent form presented to and signed by each participant addressed these concerns directly. The informed consent form can be found in Appendix D. Furthermore, transcript data was anonymized and stored securely in password protected files.

The researcher is an administrator at the study site, thus raising concerns of power imbalance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While the development of trust is a key component of any in-depth interview (Seidman, 2006), trust is imperative for the deep exploration of experience and interpretation of that experience required by IPA (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Participant recruitment was entirely voluntary, and the researcher required that participants not be members of the departments evaluated by the researcher.

This research study was conducted under the approval of the Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), which assessed any potential risk to participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Southern New Hampshire University). This was not a vulnerable population, and access was readily available through the researcher's school. The informed consent form provided all needed information to the participants. The interviews were conducted at a location of each participant's choosing to increase comfort in the process.

Researcher Positionality

I approached this study from a constructivist ontology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). That is, knowledge is constructed and given meaning by those who experience it. In IPA, it is the meaning of those experiences, as ascribed by the participants, and furthermore the meaning ascribed by the researcher who analyzes those participant accounts (Smith, 2004), that give rise to the findings of the study. Thus, I could not be separated from the participants in the manner of a descriptive phenomenology (Vagle, 2018). Instead, in the double hermeneutic methodology of IPA (Smith, 2004), my interpretations were key to the analysis. I needed to bracket any preconceptions and expectations (Dowling, 2007), but could not and should not set aside my experiences, as they are part of my lens and thus influenced the interpretation of the participants' experiences (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

In IPA, the primary method of data gathering is the in-depth in-person interview (Smith & Nizza, 2022). In the process of interviewing, the interviewer is a data collection instrument (Roberts, 2020). As the participant shared experiences, influenced by individual social ecologies, the researcher interpreted those experiences, and thus the interview became an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Roberts, 2020). The research questions were answered not by being specifically asked, but through the telling of stories through the lens of

the participants (Seidman, 2006). Roberts (2020) and Dowling (2007) suggest reflexive journaling, where the researcher makes note of how their own experiences are influencing either interview questions or data analysis. The use of analytic memos (Saldaña, 2021) was a form of reflexive journaling.

The theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a; 2011b) required examination of the impact of context in the phenomenon of resilience. Examining the impact of context and social ecologies required that the researcher ask open-ended questions and examine the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, using their words to express their experiences as a source of data. The themes that emerged from data analysis reflected the participants' construction of their reality, as required by the constructivist paradigm. Thus, the qualitative research methodology of a phenomenology, and specifically an interpretative phenomenological analysis, for the study of teacher resilience in a HAS as a Dissertation in Practice followed logically from both the constructivist worldview and the SETR theoretical framework.

Summary

The phenomenon of teacher resilience in high achieving schools was studied through an interpretative phenomenological analysis study in the researcher's own school, which meets the criteria for a high achieving school as described by Luthar and Kumar (2018). The research examined the phenomenon of teacher experience of resilience in a high achieving school, along with leadership actions which impact that resilience, through the idiographic, double-hermeneutic (Smith, 2004; Peoples, 2021) analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews. The data analysis resulted in personal experiential statements grouped into personal experiential themes (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021), which were then clustered into group experiential themes

(Smith & Nizza, 2022). This attention to divergence and convergence in the data analysis is an indicator of high-quality IPA research (Nizza et al., 2021). The research followed all ethical and confidentiality guidelines and expectations as delineated by the Institutional Review Board (Southern New Hampshire University).

Chapter 4: Analysis of Data and Findings

Introduction

This research study of teacher resilience in a high achieving school was conducted using interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) methodology. This methodology requires a double hermeneutic approach, as the participants interpret their own experiences, and the researcher interprets how each participant is making sense of their own experiences (Smith, 2004). IPA is inductive, as meaning is revealed through the participant's experiences, filtered through researcher interpretation; and idiographic, as each participant's experiences are analyzed thoroughly before the next participant's experiences are considered. This methodology is ideally suited for the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a), which underscores that resilience is not an individual characteristic or trait, but results from complex interactions between the individual and their environment at varying levels. In IPA, each participant is considered individually, and the ultimate findings result from group experiential themes (GETs) emerging from the commonalities and differences of those individual experiences and interpretations.

This chapter provides a step-by-step overview of the IPA process used in this study, beginning with participant recruitment and ending with the development of four GETs and eight subthemes. The data analysis process resulted in what Nizza et al. (2021, p. 371) identify as the four quality indicators of good IPA: "a compelling, unfolding narrative" presented through "carefully selected and interpreted extracts from participants"; "a vigorous experiential account" which provides "depth to the analysis"; a "close analytic reading of participants' words" giving meaning to the data "through analysis and interpretation of quoted material"; and "attending to convergence and divergence" through "idiographic depth and systematic comparison." The

researcher has adhered to these quality indicators throughout the interview process and resulting analysis, ensuring methodological integrity of this IPA study.

Results and Findings of the Research Study

Overview of Sampling

An IPA study has specific parameters for sampling (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith & Nizza, 2022). Specifically, the sample size must be small enough to conduct the in-depth analysis required by IPA, while also including the perspective of different voices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A sample size of 10 individuals meets the criteria of providing sufficient data to attend to any patterns of convergence or divergence while not overwhelming the researcher due to the extensive data analysis involved (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith & Nizza, 2022). Moreover, the sample should be relatively homogeneous in nature, so that any differences that arise in the analysis result from the participants' own meaning-making at the individual level (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). An additional consideration for this IPA was length of employment at the research site of a high achieving school (HAS), as employment at a HAS for at least five years would both demonstrate resilience, the phenomenon under study, and alleviate power imbalance concerns of a participant who had not yet achieved continuing contract employment status.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through purposive homogeneous sampling (Mack et al., 2005; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021) of the staff at the identified research site. The initial recruitment occurred through an item in the principal's weekly email to staff, which may be found in Appendix C. The first four respondents were members of departments which the researcher supervises and thus has an evaluative role. To avoid any perception of power imbalance, the

researcher excluded members of these departments from the sample. Several other staff members volunteered, and snowball sampling (Mack et al., 2005) occurred as staff talked to one another and other volunteers emerged. As each participant contacted the researcher, they were provided with the Lived Experience Description (LED) protocol (Vagle, 2014), as shown in Appendix B. All participants completed the LED before the in-person interview was conducted.

Sampling

Ten teachers who had been working at a HAS for at least five years participated in the study. Six of the teachers teach humanities, three teach world language, and one is an academic support teacher. The sample consisted of nine females and one male, with years of experience at a HAS ranging from seven to 17 years. Collectively, these participants contributed 119 years of teaching experience in a HAS environment to this IPA study. Specific subject matter and specific years of experience for each participant are not provided here to protect the confidentiality of the study participants (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Interview Process

The initial phase of the interview process was the Lived Experience Description (LED), as shown in Appendix B. The LED protocol (Vagle, 2014) provided the working definition of resilience used for this study (Truebridge, 2014), and asked participants to consider a time in which they had demonstrated resilience during the past year. The participants were asked to provide a written description of this experience. The purpose of the LED was twofold, as it served to facilitate reflection by the participants on their own resilience, and also provided a starting point for a greater exploration of their lived experience during the in-person interview. Participants shared the LED with the researcher prior to the interview. The researcher reviewed the LED, creating initial in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2021), prior to conducting the interview.

Eight of the 10 participants were interviewed face to face, while two of the interviews were conducted using the Microsoft Teams platform. The use of a virtual interview platform served to accommodate the needs of the participants whose outside-of-school obligations prohibited an in-person meeting outside of working hours. All interviews, whether in-person or virtual, were recorded using both the record feature of Microsoft Teams and the Recorder app on an Android mobile phone. Microsoft Teams created both an auditory record and a written transcript of the interview, and an additional written transcript was provided by the mobile phone Recorder app. The majority of the interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, with the longest interview lasting more than 60 minutes. In each interview, the researcher established a conversational tone, enabling participants to “tell their story freely, on their own terms, taking the time to reflect and think about what to say, and to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without feeling judged.” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 19). The interview protocol may be found in Appendix A, while the alignment of interview questions and research questions is depicted in Table 1. The use of “what,” “how,” and “tell me about” questions reflect the intentional use of “open and expansive” questions as recommended by Smith and Nizza (2022, p. 20).

Table 1*Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions*

Research Question	Interview Question(s)
General Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me a little about your history. What brought you to teaching in general, and this school in particular? • Is there anything else you would like to share about being a teacher here?
<p>Central Research Question 1: <i>What do teachers in a high achieving school report about their experiences with resilience?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's talk about your LED. Can you tell me more about that experience? • What is it like to be a teacher at this school? • What makes you feel resilient as a teacher?
<p>Central Research Question 2: <i>What leadership actions do teachers in high achieving schools report affect their resilience in positive ways?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does leadership play a role (positive, negative, or both) in your experience of resilience? • How does leadership play a role in your stress (positive, negative, or both)?
<p>Central Research Question 3: <i>What leadership actions do teachers in high achieving schools report affect their resilience in deleterious ways?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does leadership play a role (positive, negative, or both) in your experience of resilience? • How does leadership play a role in your stress (positive, negative, or both)?
<p>Sub-question 1: <i>What sources of stress do teachers in a high achieving school report?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you felt stressed by being a teacher here. • How does leadership play a role in your stress (positive, negative, or both)?
<p>Sub-question 2: <i>What do teachers in a high achieving school report as protective factors that support their resilience?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what you consider to be supports in your teaching life.

Data Analysis Process

Data analysis in an IPA study is an idiographic, inductive process (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith & Nizza, 2022). That is, each participant's responses are analyzed individually, in depth, before considering the next participant's responses. Only after each individual analysis has been conducted will the researcher begin to conduct a cross-participant analysis to determine larger themes (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Additionally, these larger themes arise from participant responses and interpretations, and researcher interpretations of participant responses, rather than being established a priori (Nizza et al., 2021).

Immediately after each interview, the researcher wrote an analytic memo as recommended by Saldaña (2021). These memos provided a contemporaneous record of emotions reflected in the interview, underlying themes, researcher reflections, and particular points of interest or emphasis. Given the passage of time between interview and data analysis for some of the participants, these memos served as an additional way to bring the researcher back to the immediacy of the interview. Sample analytic memos written after interviews with two of the 10 study participants may be found in Appendix E.

The transcripts generated by Microsoft Teams and by the Recorder app required significant preparation before the data analysis process could begin. Both applications create frequent timestamps, and Microsoft Teams uses a graphic icon to depict speakers. For this reason, the Microsoft Teams transcript served as a backup and the Recorder transcript was copied to a Google doc, where timestamps were removed. The researcher re-listened to the audio multiple times while "cleaning up" the transcript in order to consolidate sections by speaker, determine unintelligible words, add punctuation, and note lengthy pauses or responses such as

laughter. The transcript was then printed with line numbers and wide margins to allow for the necessary writing space for data analysis.

The data analysis process in IPA follows a four-step process as outlined by Smith and Nizza (2022). Each transcript was analyzed through this process with as much fidelity as possible given the individual, inductive, and creative nature of IPA (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). As required by IPA's idiographic approach (Smith & Nizza, 2022), each participant's transcript was fully analyzed through the process described before proceeding to the next participant.

Step one involved reading the transcript and making exploratory notes in the right margin. Smith and Nizza (2022) refer to this as a "nonprescriptive process" (p. 33), as the researcher may comment on anything of importance while reading the transcript slowly and in depth. For this step, the researcher used two different first-cycle coding methods as described by Saldaña (2021). For the first reading, *in vivo* coding, where the codes consist of verbatim words and short phrases used by the participants, was used. These *in vivo* codes were written in the right-hand margin, and the researcher used circling and underlining in the actual text. The list of *in vivo* codes was typed into a Google doc, which was then alphabetized to look for patterns and repetitions. The transcript was then reread and recoded using emotion coding, where the codes "label the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant, or inferred by the researcher about the participant" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 160). These emotion codes were also both hand-written on the transcript and recorded in a Google doc for later reference. These codes would be considered linguistic or conceptual notes in the IPA process (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Step two involved creating personal experiential statements which "capture in a succinct form what we have learned about the meaning of the experience to the participant in this portion of the text" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 39). That is, the personal experiential statements include

the researcher interpretation of the participant words, and are tied to a specific section of the transcript text. These statements are analytical and reflect context, rather than being simply descriptive. The researcher hand-wrote personal experiential statements in the left-hand margin. After completing the first analysis of the transcript, the researcher then typed the list of statements into a Google doc with the associated transcript line number. This provided another review of these statements in conjunction with the participant quotations supporting the statements, as required by the iterative nature of IPA (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Step three involved “finding connections and clustering experiential statements” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 42). The list of personal experiential statements with associated transcript line number was printed, and the statements were then cut apart so they could be physically manipulated as the researcher considered how to “review and refine the experiential statements, putting like with like, distilling, synthesizing, and identifying a structure that can bring them together” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 43). This clustering of statements by the researcher was another level of interpretation of the participant’s words and experiences as required by IPA analysis (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The pieces of paper were placed on a large surface, and then manipulated into various piles, with the researcher considering and reconsidering clusters throughout the process.

Step four involved creating a table of personal experiential themes (PETs), naming each cluster and providing the subset of personal experiential themes and associated quotes or in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2021) that comprise that PET (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 45). A sample of PETs and supporting personal experiential statements and associated quotes is provided in Appendix F. This sample is a compilation of PETs from several different participants in order to protect participant confidentiality (American Psychological Association, 2020). Smith and Nizza (2022)

suggest broader PETs resulting in three to five consisting of three to five statements each, with subthemes as needed. However, they also state that “[T]hese numbers are indicative and not prescriptive, and the goal should be quality, not quantity” (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 48). For this researcher, this PET development process resulted in eight to 10 themes per participant, with 10-20 personal experiential statements and supporting quotations per theme. The personal experiential statements were ordered in the sequence in which they appeared in the transcript, reflecting the chronology of the participant’s words and remembrances. Printed copies of the transcript and PET analysis were then shared back with the participant for approval and verification. Participants were often concerned with the verbal tics and filler words such as “um” and “like” peppered through their speaking, but each approved the transcript and PETs for further analysis. The inclusion of the verbal tics and filler words is a direct result of the methodology of IPA, where researcher interpretations of participants’ own interpretations of their experiences are part of the analysis process. These hesitations and verbal tics reflect thinking and reflection during the answering of questions, and were part of the researcher's interpretations of hesitation, confidence, and emotion in the participant responses.

This four-step process occurred for each participant individually, with the PET table created for one participant before the process of “cleaning up” the transcript began for the next, reflecting the idiographic nature of IPA (Smith, 2004). After each of the 10 PET tables had been created, the researcher began a cross case analysis to develop group experiential themes (GETs) (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The researcher initially created a summary table of PETs for each participant, which is shown in Appendix G. Smith and Nizza (2022) note that the development of GETs is both analytic and intuitive, and that “[T]he process is not a linear one; individual tables of personal experiential themes are a tool to be considered holistically” (p. 56). After considering

the summary table of PETs both holistically and analytically, the researcher created a Google doc with a list of categories and supporting quotations from each participant. Those initial categories were Resilience, Expectations, Flexibility, Appreciative, Colleagues, PLC, Leadership Support, Student Need, Parents, Leadership Stress, Communication, and Workload. The process of organizing quotations into these categories and determining which categories had limited supporting data, and thus lesser importance, was a further analytical exercise. Categories with supporting quotations from fewer than five participants, such as “Flexibility,” “Parents,” and “Appreciative” were either incorporated into larger, more inclusive GETs or determined to be of lesser priority for these study participants. The researcher then merged categories, expanding the themes into four GETs. Further consideration of similarities and differences in both the PETs and the resulting categories resulted in the development of two sub-themes within each of the four GETs. These GETs and sub-themes will be described and explained in the next section.

Once the GETs and sub-themes had been developed, the researcher created a document organizing supporting quotations from each participant under each GET and sub-theme. This document may be found in Appendix H. Copies of this document were created for each participant, and included only the supporting quotations from that individual. The researcher provided printed copies of these individual GET documents for explicit participant approval of the use of these supporting quotations.

Research Question Analysis

This IPA study investigated the phenomenon of teacher resilience in a high achieving school (HAS). The participants were self-selected through purposive snowball sampling, and represented the experience of teaching for at least seven years in a HAS. The central research questions and sub-questions were addressed through interview questions asked in a manner to

elicit participant responses in a story-telling, conversational format. Alignment of research questions and interview questions is depicted in Table 1. Following thorough and detailed analysis of each of the 10 participant transcripts as described in the previous section, the following group experiential themes (GETs) were developed:

- GET 1: Resilience results from meaningful work and finding the balance.
 - Subtheme 1a: Meaningful work and student need
 - Subtheme 1b: The struggle to find the balance and support their own resilience
- GET 2: Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress.
 - Subtheme 2a: Leadership as a source of support
 - Subtheme 2b: Leadership as a source of stress
- GET 3: High expectations and an overwhelming workload both support and challenge resilience.
 - Subtheme 3a: Holding each other to high standards
 - Subtheme 3b: The workload is a result of the expectations
- GET 4: Colleagues are both a great support and a stressor.
 - Subtheme 4a: Colleagues are a support system
 - Subtheme 4b: Colleagues can be a stressor

Each of the research questions was addressed through these GETs as will be explained in the following sections.

GET 1: Resilience Results From Meaningful Work and Finding the Balance

The central research question “What do teachers in a high achieving school report about their experiences with resilience?” was addressed through GET #1: Resilience results from meaningful work and finding the balance. The definition of resilience used for this study was

“the dynamic and negotiated process within individuals (internal) and between individuals and their environments (external) for the resources and supports to adapt and define themselves as healthy amid adversity, threat, trauma, and/or everyday stress” (Truebridge, 2014, p. 12). Of particular note in this research study is how the participants used the words “resilience” and “resilient” interchangeably. As discussed in Chapter 2, resilience researchers consider resilience to be a process, not a trait. However, in the questions and follow-ups of these interviews, this distinction was lost, and participants referred to themselves as resilient or not resilient rather than as demonstrating resilience.

Even when provided with the Truebridge (2014) definition emphasizing the idea of resilience as remaining healthy through everyday stress, many of the participants did not consider themselves as demonstrating resilience. Participant 1 stated that “I don’t know if I would use that word to describe me” and noted resilience “is an interesting word because I don't think anybody sees themselves that way and it's a word that you don't use to describe yourself.” Participant 5 concurred, relaying “I don't know what makes me resilient because of partially I feel like I'm not resilient. I'm just such a creature of habit that staying is easier than going and change is really hard.” Other participants noted their own resilience with a variation of the idea of “I’m still here.” Participant 1 (“It was my first job, like, and I'm still here”), Participant 4 (“Yep, here I am”), Participant 9 (“I think so because I showed back up the next day”), and Participant 10 (“I don't know, would I call myself resilient? I guess so, because, like, the last years have been hard and I, like, I'm still here”) all reflected this idea of resilience as continuing the work in the face of challenges.

The idea of a sustainable balance between all of the important aspects of their lives surfaced as the participants reflected on both the challenge of the work and the need to bring their best selves for students, particularly in this post-COVID-19 time. As Participant 10 stated:

The last two years have been a challenge to me as a teacher to, like, wake up and see the value in what I'm doing and, like, come back and try to do better. Get them to do better. That's been challenging.

Participant 7 concurred, noting “and then I had to take care of myself and I think that was an eye opener like COVID, too. You have to take care of yourself first, or you can't be there for, for anyone else.” The teachers recognized the importance of being there for students as part of their own resilience. Participant 4 reflected that “We do all this for them and putting them at the center of, like, the work. And so, you know, I think there's sort of the academics but then there's also, like, the extras, right?” But even in lamenting the extra work of the demands beyond the classroom, Participant 4 noted “but I believe so strongly in those things for the students. And so, it's sort of reminding myself like that.” Participant 4 also found meaning in helping students, stating:

I mean, I think that seeing the result of my work in the kids that reminds me of my resilience and, like, makes me feel like I'm actually making progress. And that not all of my work is for naught.

Participant 10 also reflected this idea of being there for students, stating:

But we came in every day, and every day I'd look at [my partner] and I'm like, okay today it's a new day and we're gonna try this thing or we're gonna, like, don't—we're not gonna give up on them.

Participant 9 also acknowledged the importance of the larger idea of resilience in teaching as long-term rather than day-to-day, noting:

I think, like, those pieces are where the resiliency is in this profession. Specifically, I don't think it's necessarily always about me. I think it's really about, like, my part in the bigger system than it is anything, because it is more about the example and thinking about the bigger picture, then it is about thinking about me. I thought about me then it'd be a very different thing, but (laughs).

Participant 8 concurred, relating that resilience is demonstrated when a teacher knows to:

just to kind of, like, stick with it long enough through some of the really, really, hard times like hybrid learning or having my own small children or behaviors and administration that isn't supportive, like, you know that they're—at some point it is going to change.

Subtheme 1a: Meaningful Work and Student Need

Interestingly, not all of the participants intended to become teachers. Several participants worked as paraprofessionals before becoming teachers, or were pointed in the direction of teaching by a mentor or co-worker. As Participant 10 stated, upon moving into a teaching role, “and I was like, you know what, I—I do want to teach, like this is what this is what I'm supposed to do.” This sentiment was echoed by Participant 6 (“I'm gonna be a teacher. I know I'm good at that. Um, I know I had good success.”) and Participant 3 (“It's one of the most rewarding things that I do. I like to think that what I do here defines me.”). Once in the profession, the participants all noted that they feel the work they do is important and makes a difference for students.

As teachers, a belief in their own efficacy and ability to do good work and help students find success was an underlying theme of their own resilience. As Participant 1 relayed, “I think

for me what I've—over the years—what I realized is that I'm here to teach people how to read, write, speak. At the end of the day, nothing matters outside of that.” Participant 2 conveyed a similar emphasis when speaking about students, recalling a message from a mentor that:

They need you. It's actually in your practice, like, you need to be at the top of your game. You need to believe in them when they don't believe in themselves even though they're, they're getting that from other people. They need to see that from their instructor.

Participant 2 has incorporated that into their own practice, emphasizing that:

I think you have to be resourceful and try to figure out each individual kid and how, how to reach them. Because what works for one doesn't work for the next one. So, you got to figure that out. You can't give up.

Participant 7 echoed this sentiment, stating that “I'm trying more to be that person for them. And I think that, I think that the reason why I come here every day is for them.” Participant 10 reiterated this idea, saying “I don't know if I can call myself [resilient] but I think I try to be resilient here because I want to be the best teacher that I can be.”

That feeling of effectiveness and working with students elicited passionate responses from the study participants. Participant 1 emphasized “It's that give and take, I love working with students that legitimately are dealing with complicated things and that's what I feel like I sacrifice this other stuff so that I get to know this.” Participant 3 agreed, noting that “I think what makes me feel resilient is my interactions with the students. For example, I know I did a really amazing job in my last advisory.” Participant 7 pointed out that the school culture and schedule support this effectiveness, stating that “The time that we actually have dedicated in our schedule to work with one another to make our curriculum, make—make things better for kids is just ideal here. Doesn't happen everywhere.” Participant 4 agreed, emphasizing that “I love that we can

change and we don't sort of resort to like, well, this is the way we've always done it. So this is the way we're going to do it. I think that's super important.” Participant 8 noted that the students benefit from this, as “We're expecting these kids to do so much more into like, not necessarily, like, do anything different than any other school, but to think about things differently and that's what I really appreciated.” The importance of the work is central for Participant 5, who shared:

I am fearful of a job that doesn't give me, like, doesn't give me, like, stimulation, or make me feel like I'm doing something of importance. Not that I think I'm doing something so important but I have a task. I feel like I know what I'm doing and I do think that my job makes a difference.

Conversely, feeling ineffective had a negative impact on resilience. Participant 6 conveyed that “I have a tough time with kids who aren't self-motivating. And that's been something I've needed to work on so that in and of itself has taken some resilience to just try to reach them somehow.” Participant 10 relayed similar thoughts, sharing:

I'm like, [partner], we have to teach all kids, like, not just the easy ones, not just the ones we don't have to chase down, like, and so this is the challenge. Like, how do we help these kids? That's, that's what keeps pushing me is, like, I don't want just the easy path, but this is not, it's definitely not an easy path. This, this belt of kids.

As Participant 6 explained, “So then it's just trying and trying and trying and that led to some burnout for a while and then you recalibrate and you get right back to it.”

Participant 7 summed up this idea of the importance of the work when talking about a recent message from the principal:

But [the principal] rang a bell with me recently, when he said, like, this, these kids get one chance at high school. We need to be there for them, and, and that helps. I always

now think about that and how you're right. Like these kids, I feel like I've done the same thing over and over and over again. But every kid that is in there is right there. This is their first time in this class and this is their first time in, like, with me in this room and so I really do have to bring it for them and, and it's, it's super—I think it's important for all of us to keep remembering that.

As Participant 4 stated, “I really, like, if that—if like, that's the one takeaway, like, even through all the stress and sort of, like, the high expectations. Like, I believe in what we do.” Reflecting on their own efficacy and resilience, Participant 5 summed up that “Every school comes with its, like, benefits and its challenges. And I will take the challenges of this, like, a rigorous school.”

Participant 5 went on to conclude that:

I think this is a really good place to work. I think we're lucky. It's like a bubble. I—if I ever leave teaching it will be, I left. It won't be that I left here to go somewhere else. So, I think this is the best place there is to teach. I, well, I'm not just saying that I actually believe it.

Subtheme 1b: The Struggle to Find the Balance and Support Their Own Resilience

Even while reflecting on their own efficacy and the importance of their work, teachers related the need to set boundaries and find ways to support their own resilience. Participant 6 summed this idea up as “I'm much better now at realizing what my strengths and what my, where my capabilities are and that I don't have to be everything that everybody else is as well.”

Reflecting on personal strengths and weaknesses with regard to school expectations of student support, Participant 1 allowed that:

It feels like those things are being pushed as the priority. And that's not really what I'm good at. I can really help someone write a thesis statement. I really don't know how to

give an advisory experience because I also—I just—it's just not me. This is me; this is not.

Participant 5 spoke of the need to “shift my mindset a lot. I used to get very, very stressed out.”

Participant 3 looks for the positive, stating that “those type of things. Make all of the other things. The not so pleasant things. They overshadow it to a point where it doesn't matter.”

Many of the teachers spoke of shifting priorities in order to support their own resilience.

Participant 4 noticed that:

I see a lot of like letting go sometimes, especially now with, like, being mom and having other things in my life of just sort of being, like, all right? Well, like, those papers aren't going to get graded this week. We'll try for next week and, like, but knowing that sort of, like, big picture. That's not gonna like, you know, make or break anyone.

Participant 9 agreed regarding grading, stating that “It takes longer, like I never meet the two-week deadline, but I don't stress about that anymore.”

Others also spoke of the need to set physical and mental boundaries: “But now me going home now is my declaration of being done. And I think that has been a good, good reset for me.” (Participant 6) and “My time at home and my time and my personal life is my priority.”

(Participant 9). For Participant 5, the summer break is vital for resilience. “I don't work in the summer. Like I take—I try to, like, be—I take full advantage of the summer and, like, I tell myself, like, you're not gonna work in the summer because the fall is gonna be a dead out sprint.” Participant 1 noted the need for change, stating that “There are these things that I think, over the last couple of years, where I've just had to build a bit of a barrier. Um, you know, these things can't happen for me to make sure that I can teach reading, writing, speaking.”

Even with established boundaries, it can be difficult for teachers in this HAS to support their own resilience. They worry about efficacy: “It makes me worried, you know, I—I'm not doing what I could do, I'm not doing enough for them. Because I could be doing a better job, but I—I can't” (Participant 3); their impact: “Sometimes you have to look back and be, and COVID, even changed that a little bit where we're like, wait, why am I working here for all of these hours? And why am I putting in this time?” (Participant 7); and even their ability to continue: “Though, there have been a few times this year where I'm like, I don't know. I don't know, like, how much longer I can do this? It's like. It's kind of killing me a little bit.” (Participant 10). Ultimately, when asked in May of the school year about their own resilience in a HAS, Participant 10 summed up the overwhelming feeling of “Not right now. (laughs) I'm so tired.”

GET 2: Leadership Is a Source of Support More Than a Source of Stress

The central research questions “What leadership actions do teachers in a high achieving school report affect their resilience in positive ways” and “What leadership actions do teachers in a high achieving school report affect their resilience in deleterious ways?” were addressed through GET 2: Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress. As Participant 6 explained, “[This school] doesn't get everything right, but everything is done with intent. There's a purpose. There's a reason.” Reflecting back to the beginning days of the school, Participant 4 spoke of “this vision that we sort of set out with of, you know, leadership isn't this sort of, like, removed idea of, like, people sitting in their offices, but they're leading as, like, a member of the community.” Another teacher explained “That's why I really wanted to stay and work because I believed in the vision of it and I believed in where the school was going and I liked that there were all of the collaborative pieces available” (Participant 9). Participant 4 offered that “I really

believe that the whole leadership team is really, like, trying to make the best decision in the moment for everyone.”

While some of the participants had only experienced leadership at the study site school, others had worked in other schools and reflected on their interpretation of the differences.

According to Participant 2:

A general statement would be people don't realize how good they have it while they have it and then it would be very, very tough if any of you were replaced, I think. And I think those who may not have that sentiment, just don't understand because maybe they haven't worked in other places.

As noted by Participant 6, “I just feel like administration here, for one, for the most part, at least from an outsider's perspective, there seems to be more of a team.” Comparing this administration to a previous school, Participant 8 observed the benefit of:

knowing that the administration is consistent and fair and actually cares about, like, the progress of the school rather than just them being there. I don't even know what else you would really want to do as an administrator. I can't even imagine, like, not wanting to see your teachers and your school progress.

Participant 10 shared that “I love how he [the principal], like, tries to steer us each year. You know, he has an overarching theme for the year and a message and stuff.”

Participant 6 observed:

We're pretty good community here overall teaching staff wise. That's not the case elsewhere for sure. And I think culture and crafting that as a leader is important to do and it's hard to do, but [this school] found a way to overall make this place, kind of a community.

Subtheme 2a: Leadership as a Source of Support

When asked about specific ways in which the leadership supported their resilience, teacher responses fell into broad categories of professional support and respect, communication, and trust. Participant 1 summed up the general consensus as “Leadership in a positive way. They're there. The encouragement is there.” Participant 2 agreed, stating:

Anytime I've ever needed something the direct line to me, has always been, like, here you go. What do you need? How can I get it? How can I get it faster to you? Like what? Let me find out that answer.

Even without a close relationship, Participant 3 still felt supported, conveying that “I don't have a warm fuzzy relationship with my supervisor. But I know that if I need that supervisor, they'll be there. They'll absolutely be there. And that's okay.” Participant 7 expressed a similar sentiment, stating “I do feel like, like, everybody has your back. If you, you know, have a problem with someone, they do seem to have—or a parent or a kid or anything—they do seem to have your back.”

The teacher participants generally felt that the leadership team supported them in their teaching. As Participant 5 relayed, “I feel like I can be myself and do my job to the best of my abilities.” Participant 7 stated that “We do have the support from admin and from other people to make sure that we're, like, raising our bar too, and making sure that we're not letting kids fall through the cracks.” Participant 8 agreed, noting that “I feel like there's an expectation from administration. There's a lot of support to say, hey, this is what's new, let's kind of do this. Hey, this is what's new. Let's do this.” Participant 8 also appreciated the feedback given through observations, relaying:

When, like, [administrators] come in I get a full transcript, I get an analysis, and, like, I'll get like a 0.75 or 0.5 with, like, an explanation and it's thorough and it gives me recommendations on things that maybe I could try ... and that's actually really, really helpful for me.

Participant 10 agreed regarding feedback, sharing her feelings after a difficult classroom observation:

I'm still here because she was very supportive, right? Like you, you guys, like, I can't—I can't attest to what you do as a dean. I can only attest to you, like how you've listened to me even though I'm not in your department and whatever, but like, you know she was like, we all have those days. That's a real day. I'm like, and I did learn from that. And we talked about some of the things I learned.

Participant 9 relayed that leadership will help when people are struggling professionally, especially in professional learning communities (PLCs):

PLCs are infrequently visited. But I think, at least for me, the last number of years, they've been frequently in visited—infrequently visited, excuse me—but I think that's because I've been on very functional PLCs and I know that, like, and I say that because when I've been on dysfunctional PLCs, there's been more of a presence and an appearance and so, like, it's things like that.

Participant 5 agreed, stating:

I think leadership does help with it [professional struggles]. Like there's usually changes that are made or I think also, sometimes if there are years where there's like, definitely issues happening that [my dean] is aware of she comes and sits in more frequently in a PLC.

Teachers also relayed that they felt supported in their professionalism when conflict with parents arose. Participant 1 noted that “I’ve been really grateful over dealing with, like, sticky situations with parents, where things come out of the blue and you’re like, wait, what? What’s happening? Like, what did I say?” Participant 5 concurred, reporting:

I think having a, having a warning about those parents, like those parents. If they’re on our roster and you know that they’re like heavy hitters, it is good to know that. So that’s like one way administration I think can help and also, I think that you guys do when you can, so if you know, I think it you’re pretty good at giving heads up like this parent, like, got really angry.

The perception of communication as a leadership support surfaced in many of the participant responses. Participant 7 conveyed the general idea of “having them feel, feeling like they’re one of us. I do feel like everyone has an open-door policy. I can go and talk to anyone I need to at any time.” Although less generally positive, Participant 9, when asked about support, stated “I think your availability, like doors are always open. Even doors that, like, maybe I don’t always feel like I’m authentically heard. Those doors are still open so, like, I can check the box and feel a little better.” Participant 4 felt that “[my administrator]’s doing a fabulous job because he’s a good communicator. And he really lets us know that he has our back on stuff, or if he doesn’t know the answer to something, he lets us know.” Participant 8 agreed, saying that she could go to her administrator and say “We need to do this, we need to do this and he’ll problem solve with us, he’ll work with us and he will—he’s—he’ll communicate.” Participant 5 expressed appreciation for the quality of leadership communication, stating:

But I think what keeps me here is the fact that both of the people who I’ve, who have been, like, the head leaders of the school and the people who I work with who are the

deans and the, you know, assistant principals have I think been pretty clear in their expectations of us and fair.

The underlying foundation of administrative trust in teachers' professionalism was an important leadership support for most of the participants. Participant 8 summed it up:

Here, I feel like we have freedom, we're treated as professionals and if you're treated as a professional, you're going to act like a professional. Maybe not always. But I think, like, theoretically it sounds, I think that's a big difference. The minutiae that happens at other places.

Participant 6 agreed, stating the perceived administrative stance as:

I know you have people that might take advantage of things here but for the most part it's clear we trust you to be a professional. Go do your job, the best way how. And we'll correct anything that might need correcting, but I think that's the biggest difference, you know?

Participant 5 also concurred, stating about administration that "They know I work hard but I also think that, like, it's understood that we're doing a lot of work in our personal time and we're, like, functioning as professionals. Um, and to me that's, like, worth a lot." Even Participant 9, who felt the most stress from leadership, noted about a particular administrator that "He, I feel like, demonstrates a lot of trust, I think in the staff and I think like that is a common thing that I hear said." Participant 4 was the most succinct, stating that "I really trust the leadership team at the high school."

Subtheme 2b: Leadership as a Source of Stress

When asked about leadership as a source of stress, Participant 10 stated:

It's not coming from you guys. Like, not you and [my dean], I don't think, like, because I don't interact with [my dean] unless she, like, comes to my room or, like, I come seek her out. It's not like she's, like, you need to do X, Y, and Z, like, so I don't know. I don't know.

Participant 2 agreed, expressing that “I don't think they do. I don't, like, I don't, I don't have stress with them.” However, further reflection by these participants and others revealed that sources of stress from leadership fall into categories of workload and expectations, communication, and accountability for students.

Many of the participant comments focused on workload, which will also be addressed as part of GET 3 in the next section. Specifically, Participant 4 reported:

I think sometimes there is a lot, like, more asked of us, like a lot put on our plate. And some of it is just, like, timing and how that messaging is, like, conveyed at times that are, like, not very convenient for them. That time that those messages and feeling like I can't—like I can't process this right now. I can't do this right now.

Participant 5 agreed, stating:

I don't blame, like, the, the principal or the, like, deans or anything like that. I just, I do sometimes feel like, oh, okay, we're talking about how we can, like, lessen our load. But, like, then four more things will be, like, put on our plate.

The full plate analogy also surfaced with Participant 10, who noted “Well, I mean I feel like [the principal] told us a couple years ago I want to take something off your plate. Nothing has ever, ever come off our plate. In fact, I feel like there's more on it.” Other participants commented that while leadership seemed to recognize how much was being asked of teachers, it did not lessen the workload. For example, Participant 6 stated:

But it's like, you're still asking me to do, like, I'm still being asked to do this. So, in one sense, it's good that it's recognized, but it's also like, okay, you recognize, this is more, but, like, I still have to do it.

Participant 4 also requested more prioritizing of demands, wanting “sort of the, like, agreement between like the teachers and the leadership of, like, these things can't all get done. And so, like, you know. Let's make sure we all, we have the same priorities in mind.”

The priority that seemed to result in the most stress was the emphasis on eliminating student failures (referred to as the ‘holy grail’), which was a struggle for some teachers both philosophically and logistically. Participant 1 expressed frustration with “this feeling that we're more about community building than developing knowledge. And that bothers me.” Participant 9 argued that “decreasing failures is just a ridic—a ridiculous ask. There is some reason, there's a reasonableness to failing, we learn through failure and sometimes you do have to fail.”

Participant 10 agreed, asserting that “the holy grail is an unattainable task and so when you have people who work so hard already, and you set up the year with an unattainable task. It colors the whole year.”

In addition to stress from administrative expectations, teachers reported stress when communication from leadership was lacking or unclear. When asked about stress, Participant 2 reported “Yeah, so just communication. I think. When communication isn't working, I guess, in any part of this job that is stressful.” That breakdown in communication may occur in different ways. In some cases, communication is lacking. For example, Participant 3 relayed that “There have been times where I felt like they [leadership] should have had my back. And they didn't. For whatever reason.” In conflict between colleagues, Participant 7 required communication from an administrator on a difficult decision, arguing:

But then, if I make it, I'm a colleague telling another colleague what to do, it's like your own children telling them, telling each other what to do, that doesn't work. So, mom has to do it. Or dad has to do it, so that they don't get mad at each other.

Lack of communication from an administrator over a student issue caused Participant 9 to report:

That I found incredibly frustrating and honestly wasteful and it ended up in hours of my time wasted and all of these different routes were gone down that did not need to go, like, to go down whatsoever. Um, but like, that's what I'm frustrated with, I think the most.

In other instances, it is unclear communication that is a source of stress. When asked about what gets in the way of resilience, Participant 9 reported:

I think the other thing that gets in the way is the, the false questions, or like the, at least the appearance of it being a false question. Like it seems like decisions have already been made. So why bother asking, just make the decision.

While other participants did not necessarily share in the idea of false questions, they did stress the need for clarity. As Participant 6 said, “You should just basically tell people ‘this is gonna be hard, but it needs to get done.’ Not everybody responds to that, though.” Participant 4 agreed, maintaining that “all the sort of nuance that comes with that, and if you say this, but like, what are we really expecting to do? And just like, tell us what we're actually expected to do.”

Participant 10 supported this idea of clarity in referring back to the holy grail, stating:

It's been a, like the, some of the paradoxical [sic] messaging about it, like, has been hard to decipher, like about like, really what is needed. And I think, like, that—that's clouded this year a bit too. So then we talk about adding a stress. There's an added stress.

The final, and most common, source of stress from leadership mentioned was that of inconsistency in student accountability. Participant 10 strongly articulated the need for leadership to support teachers in holding students accountable, stating:

I think that in that role, you just—you gotta hold the line because I have a hard time holding a line, right? I'm very—you care about kids. When you start to care about kids, you try to, like, help them as much as you can. But there also is a point where, like, they have to understand that there's a line. Like, I've helped you out. Now, like, what are you actually gonna do here?

Participant 8 agreed, supporting students but also realizing:

You're being like, this is not a good decision, like they need—students need to be taught consequences. They need to be, like, and they need to have things explained to them, but they also can't get away with it.

Participant 10 concurred, observing:

Because some kids understand there are lines, and some kids don't, and need an adult to hold a firm line. And the kids who are not having a firm line, think they can do whatever they want to do, and that makes our job harder as teachers.

Participant 9 agreed, declaring:

Like, I'm trying to be a professional, they're trying to not get in trouble. I think it's, like, I can't stand the fact that they're treated equally when it is that the two—the two objectives are incredibly different. So then I don't think that's considered a lot.

This general feeling was succinctly conveyed by Participant 7, who noted that “Sometimes, I think we could have a little bit more discipline with some kiddos.”

Student accountability was a source of stress not only when it was lacking, but when it was inconsistent between different administrators. Participant 7 observed “I do feel like sometimes there's inconsistencies amongst the APs.” Participant 9 concurred, sharing frustration that “I just find that, I don't give a resolution and things are not resolved. Um, when I send them to one compared to when I send them to another.” Participant 9 was particularly frustrated with a discipline issue regarding plagiarism:

So, like, I felt like my expertise and my understanding and knowledge of it was completely sidelined because that specific individual didn't have a clue as to what they were looking at. And so, it just kind of felt like I wasn't trusted in, like, my ability to be professional and do my job in the way that which I've been trained by the district that I work in. And then also, like for it to—like, it's hard for me to, to be the one who has to educate someone who is supposed to be one, making very serious decisions for people and two, that is, like, supposed to be in charge of me and, like, be my leader. Like, I have a very hard time with that personally.

Although Participant 9's frustration stemmed from a specific incident, student accountability was consistently raised by study participants when asked how leadership plays a role in stress or resilience.

GET 3: High Expectations and an Overwhelming Workload Both Support and Challenge Resilience

The research subquestion “What do teachers in a high achieving school report as sources of stress?” was partially addressed through GET 3: High expectations and an overwhelming workload both support and challenge resilience. As noted in the previous section, some of the expectations were a result of administrative “asks” regarding school goals and student

responsibilities. However, nine of the 10 participants reflected on their expectations for themselves as teachers in a high achieving school. Participant 2 reflected that “You know you're always going to bring in your best effort; you know that you're always going to do what you can to stand out, right? Because you want to add value, you don't want to detract value.” Participant 6 agreed, stating that “When I first started, um, more so than now, there was a definite like keeping up with the Joneses for me. Um, and oftentimes I would feel like, oh why aren't I doing that?” Participant 8 shared how that message came from a top administrator when meeting him for the first time. “He shook my hand and he said, congratulations on making it to [this district] and just remember, you may have been the best somewhere else, but here we're all the best so you're just one of us.” Participant 10 supported this idea, stating that “I don't know who puts that expectation on. But like, you're always trying to be better and do better. And so, you're, you're wondering, like, how to get at things in different ways.” That idea permeates school culture, as noted by Participant 7, who related:

And then when we have new people coming in and saying, sometimes saying, ‘Wow. Like well, I'm not doing that. This isn't in my contract.’ And we're like, well, no, this is just always what we've done. This is how you're supposed to work, this is how you should.

Many of the study participants acknowledged this need to work hard as part of school culture. Participant 4 relayed that “We're a whole school of, like, type A teachers who need to, like, do the thing at the highest level.” Participant 2 used a sports analogy, stating that “I think because we are all—I mean, it's like being on the best team. And everybody wants to be captain, like that's what it feels like.” Study participants reflected on their own desire to improve their teaching practice, with Participant 5 stating “It's an overwhelming feeling when you are trying to

be good at a job like this because it's just—you're never, you're always going to need to work to be better, I guess.” Participant 8 agreed, reflecting:

It's like at the beginning, when you first start teaching, that veteran teacher always says to don't worry in like five or 10 years, you'll be fine. You'll have more time on your hands because you'll have it all figured out. No, like 20 years in and I'm still, like, recreating the wheel. But I think that's what we should be doing.

Participant 5 also expressed this idea, saying:

Everyone thinks that, like, the longer you're in teaching, the easier it gets, but my experience has been the better I get at this job, the harder it is because the expectations for myself, like I can't just reuse things every year. I—and I understand a lot better how to give kids feedback.

Subtheme 3a: Holding Each Other to High Standards

The participants in this study of a high achieving school demonstrated a high achieving mindset. For example, when asked if they felt that they were being held to a standard that's too high, Participant 8 responded emphatically “No. I hold myself to a really high standard.” This was supported by Participant 7, who responded “All the people that I work with and the people, like, we set this standard really, really high.” Participant 5 concurred, stating “I think my experience has been, like, we sort of all hold each other to a high standard.” This teacher went on to say:

I just see that, like, culturally around the school. Like, I think people are always—It feels like someone is always doing something that makes me realize like, oh I could do this a little bit bet—like, I can be a little bit of a better advisor than I am.

Having experienced a challenging year, Participant 6 shared “This year, it's just been kind of like, oh my gosh, a lot of wake-up calls. I feel like I'm just falling short of my own expectations.”

This idea of challenging each other while supporting each other was explicitly acknowledged by several of the study participants. Participant 7 shared “We've been constantly working real hard and I want to work real hard for these people.” Participant 1 reflected that “We also know how to challenge each other too, which is really nice.” Indeed, Participant 4 revealed that “I feel like I'm constantly being challenged and every time I turn around, I'm like, well, what can we do to make this better?” The professional learning community (PLC) structure was seen as a support for high standards by Participant 5, who noted:

I think that the PLC culture here—and that didn't exist in a lot of the other places that I worked on. So, like, we would have meetings and like, certainly there was like camaraderie, but I think my experience has been, like, we sort of all hold each other to a high standard.

Participant 2 agreed, reflecting “I think I'm really lucky that I've worked at a place that has forced me to grow in different ways. I don't think this is a place where you can stay and not grow.”

The high standards and achievement mindset, while supporting teachers to grow as professionals, was also revealed to be a source of stress. As shared by Participant 2, “When you're at a top performing place asking for help, kind of has to—you have to admit that like, you're not at your best.” Reflecting on struggles, this teacher also disclosed “But yeah, if you mess up? It's not good. So, but I don't know if that's a bad thing. I think I look at that as a valuable.” Participant 5 explicitly acknowledged the stress of these high standards and

expectations, stating “I think it holds us to account a little bit and makes us all, I don't know, work harder, which is stressful.”

Subtheme 3b: The Workload is a Result of the Expectations

All of the study participants explicitly mentioned the overwhelming workload.

Participant 4 directly related the workload to the expectations of this HAS:

But I do think, I mean, there's, there's a lot of expectation on us, and usually the—there's acknowledgment of that expectation. That it's a lot and sometimes, there's not. And sort of, you know, I guess, like, there's the expectation of things to be done and how well it needs to be done.

In several instances, those expectations were tied to the “extras” of advisory, senior project, and intersession, which are all graduation requirements for students and part of teacher responsibilities at the study site. Participant 5 expressed “There's just so many things that we're expected to do here that we wouldn't be expected to do somewhere else. Intersession. Advisory.” Participant 4 directly tied these extras to stress, noting it “can be super stressful with everything that's asked of us, you know, like all the extras of advisory and senior project and intersession.”

Participant 6 emphasized that these extras are a core part of the school experience, stating:

I just feel like I think, ultimately, it's that the expectation of so much to—to do, like, but one of the things that [this school] drives on is the fact that it does things like intersession. It does advisory. It does senior project.

Participant 5 summed it up by declaring “I feel like my stress is being added to all of the time. Like, I feel like things are being put on my plate and I'm like, one more thing.”

Several study participants focused generally on the feelings being overwhelmed by the expectations. Participant 3 expressed this as “those feelings of, like, I'm not doing my job or

those feelings of I'm not doing enough or I—I—I'm just not doing what I'm supposed to be doing.” For Participant 1, it was a feeling that “you're not, like, super organized on any given day, it could just blow up in your face.” Participant 4 noted that:

It's a double-edged sword because it's like, oh, it's like we're always changing and like trying to, like you know, flex on the spot to, like, figure out the next thing. So, those are the, like, the little things, like the day-to-day things that I think it's stressful.

Participant 7 observed that “We always say we don't have enough—enough time and nobody has enough time.” For Participant 5, this resulted in “a lot of just feeling overwhelmed all of the time and thinking, like, how can I—what kind of like—what can I do?” Participant 9, when asked about stress, reported “It's really time. Like I don't feel like I have enough time to do the basic things that I need to do in order to just be like a functional classroom teacher.” Participant 5 concurred, sharing “Like we're all working so hard. Um, and it just doesn't feel like you cannot work hard, because you have to be ready for the next day.”

The need to not only be ready for the next day, but to plan effective, meaningful lessons with colleagues was revealed as another source of stress. Participant 9 reflected:

So it's like, managing that, and the planning to make sure that it is appropriate, dynamic, differentiated, all of those pieces. And I'm not just, like, reusing the same things over and over and over again. Um, because I think that's not always the—in the best interest of everybody.

Participant 7 spoke about the need to constantly adjust, with the example:

Like, let's start a new book because we don't like this book anymore. Okay, now our new book takes a lot of work to get that in there and so it's our—we're our own enemy. Worst enemies are that sometimes.

Participant 8 agreed, saying “I’m like, it’s true though, because everyone rises above. Like everyone wants, like, to come up with something new, nobody wants to kind of like, sit and do the same things.” Participant 10 expressed gratitude for being able to share the planning workload with the PLC, stating:

I don't really grade much on my prep, and thank God we PLC because that's when we like, plan and like, sort of think about what we're going to do and what that assessment is going to look like. And we're building that together, but they're just not enough hours in the day to do all the things.

Most participants explicitly mentioned grading as a source of stress. They felt the feedback to students was important, but providing that feedback was very time intensive.

Participant 5 shared that to give the feedback needed for students to improve:

The only way I can do that is to just spend, like, an enormous amount of time outside of school in my free time grading their essays and putting feedback on it. And there's no—there is no shortcut to that. It just has to get done. Um, I can't procrastinate it because if I do that, I can't um, teach my next lessons.

Participant 9 agreed with the grading stress and the feedback needed, stating “Like, you know we have a two-week turnaround for grades that's, like, impossible with the number of kids I have and, like, the type of work that I'm supposed to be evaluating for where they're at level-wise.”

Participant 8 acknowledged that some of this stress was the internal need to provide what they felt students needed, sharing “I have piles and piles and piles of grading to do, because there's so much feedback. And maybe that's a me thing, too.” Participant 10 summed up the general sentiment of “It's never gotten easier. I've never figured out how to not have the pile of stuff to grade.”

GET 4: Colleagues are Both a Great Support and a Stressor

The research subquestions “What do teachers in a high achieving school report as sources of stress?” and “What do teachers in a high achieving school report as protective factors that support their resilience?” were addressed through GET 4: Colleagues are both a great support and a stressor. This statement, when shared back with the study participants as one of the group experiential themes, elicited knowing smiles, laughs, and strong expressions of agreement. Relationships with colleagues surfaced as a personal experiential theme in nine of the 10 study participants. Although each of these participants cited colleagues as a supporter of resilience, conflicts with colleagues were acknowledged as a stressor. In some instances, the relationship with colleagues in a PLC determined the tenor of the year, as shared by Participant 10:

We thought—we were hoping we were gonna have the same PLC, which is—was—is great this year. Last year, we had a rocky PLC. This year we have a great, really super collaborative PLC. I'm like [partner], we're gonna have a great PLC.

For Participant 1, in the previous year, “the PLC was just one of those, like, places—not of collaboration, of stress.” Participant 5 stressed the importance of a good PLC, revealing:

I try to be really diplomatic and give my opinion without sounding bratty, I guess or that's not really the best word, but we've had, like, some contentious PLC's and, like, because I try to avoid conflict, I think I usually try to smooth it over.

Participant 7 also emphasized the importance of relationships with colleagues, noting that “I think that's the most stressful for me is like, when any of our personal—or personal, like, relationships are compromised because of this place when it shouldn't be that—that's what's best for kids.” The importance and difficulty of forming strong teaching partnerships was summed up by Participant 6, who shared:

I've always equated partnerships seriously to like, roommate or college roommate. The first few months, like when you first meet them, you're like, oh they're great. We're—I don't—I don't care if you make your bed, or I don't care if you are up and I'm in bed, no problem. And then the little things just start to just start to get at you. And it's hard. It's hard to do. That's, that partnership is hard to do.

Subtheme 4a: Colleagues are a Support System

As simply but powerfully stated by Participant 6, “the people just make a difference.” Each of the 10 study participants shared a way in which they felt supported by or connected to colleagues who were sharing the same experience of a HAS. Participant 1 stated “It's those individual, um, connections that they can be—feel so much better always, um, because they're the ones that are living in it too.” This idea of connection was echoed by Participant 4, who shared “Because I love them all and that's I think part of what keeps me at [this school] is that I really—I love my colleagues.” Participant 6 agreed, explaining “Whereas here I have the office, I've got [my partner]. I've got my colleagues to just, just be talking things out and laugh with them, and vent with them as well.” Participant 3 appreciated colleagues for “just that act of listening, just, it's a reset button like on your computer. It's that reset button and I'm good.” In lamenting the loss of a small, tightly connected staff, Participant 7 shared:

I do feel like we still do have that but we're all running our own rat race all the time. And so sometimes you have to realize you have to take a minute and appreciate the people that are around you.

This feeling of connectedness as a bulwark against stress was summed up by Participant 10, who emphasized:

Here like people, like we work so hard together. So that's what I think keeps people going is the collegiality and the professionalism here and the actual care that people have for one another. And I think, like, without that, it would totally fall apart.

Not only did study participants share that they felt connected to their colleagues, they also viewed them as a source of advice and support in their teaching practice. Participant 1, reflecting on a teaching partner, revealed that “talking things out with her has always been really helpful on how to navigate teaching.” Participant 5 agreed with the importance of a partner, sharing “I have supports in the building like [my partner] is a big support because we've, we always at least teach one class together and we help each other throughout the day.” Participant 10 concurred, emphasizing:

It helps to have a co-teacher who you can talk with. Because I don't always feel like I'm my best, right, or that I've done the best job and you can, you've got someone in the room and that you can be like, do you think that worked or like, what did you think of that?

Like, what could we do to make that better versus being in the room by yourself.

Participant 8, reflecting on teaching supports, quickly responded “Oh, the other señoras. All of them and we all rely on each other too. Like if I need something, I know one of them is there in a heartbeat.” This teacher elaborated on the teaching support, sharing:

If I'm like, looking for something, if I need, like, help coming up with an idea. I know that I can say, [colleague] look at this and she'll fix it, and be like [another colleague], this looks weird. Can you fix it? And like [different colleague], look this over. I can have anybody look at it. They will, they'll give me feedback on it or they'll say, “Why are you doing this? I have this” and they'll send me it already completed and it's awesome.

Participant 2 communicated the need for a supportive colleague even outside a teaching team, wanting:

Someone who can take an incident, not create judgment on the incident, and look at it clearly and say, 'Yeah, you shouldn't have done that. Try this instead,' or 'No, that was great. You're being too hard on yourself.' She was really professional. So I do lean on her sometimes.

Participant 8, reflecting on the difference between this HAS and a previous workplace, summed up the importance of supportive colleagues:

And then here, it was like, everyone was ready to go at all times. Everyone's ready to help each other. There was so much energy and like, people actually cared, and it was such a big difference. So, and I think that's the reason why we're a top school here.

The final way in which colleagues were cited as a support by many of the study participants was through being collaborative. As Participant 3 shared, "I love working with some of the teachers. We collaborate on the best way to help a student. Uh, I am able to learn from them." Participant 4 agreed, declaring "I really feel like I have the best department, like the six of us. Like, I have like my best friends and colleagues who I trust, like, with anything, you know, like there's never any hesitation to share." Participant 6 felt "There's just this welcoming environment with—that's sharing. That's collaborative. It's like here's all of my stuff. I taught this class. Here's all of my stuff. You do whatever you want with it." Beyond sharing of materials, colleagues can be collaborative through problem-solving and brainstorming, as explained by Participant 9, who shared "Like there's a lot of venting in PLC and like, trying to work out— Why is this happening or why is this not going whatever, like either the way it's supposed to or why are they just not doing it?" Participant 10 articulated the theme of colleague connectedness,

support, and collaboration succinctly and emphatically, stating “And so, being on a good PLC this year has been just like reinvigorating and helpful, you know. The PLC is important. It starts there.”

Subtheme 4b: Colleagues Can be a Stressor

While colleagues were universally viewed by the study participants as a support, they could also at times be a source of stress. This was particularly evident when study participants were reflecting on their experiences with professional learning communities (PLCs). In the context of a high achieving school where self-imposed expectations are high and teachers hold each other to high standards as discussed in GET 3 above, collaborating effectively can be challenging. As Participant 1 explained:

So you're working with a partner, you're working with a PLC that has two subjects and so they have to negotiate and figure that out. Um, and then a lot of times in our department, we are multiple PLC. So, like, negotiating the humanities versus like the small PLC or whatever little elective that you have, that has multiple people teaching.

Members of PLCs need to agree on academic goals and which skills to teach, in addition to content. As Participant 6 expressed:

That's been frustrating because we're trying to figure out the course itself and where we want to take the kids and what skills they should have. And for them it's ‘oh, we just, we do this.’ [My partner] and I are like, but what's the why, you know? So that's about the sort of that's—that's been trying.

Participant 1 agreed, expressing frustration when working with a new team by stating “I don't know, as someone who was new into that PLC I wanted, I guess I was waiting for something else.”

In addition to stress caused by conflict over collaborating and communicating about academic goals, work in teams and partnerships can be personally stressful when conflict arises. As Participant 3 shared about a team, “Their actions and their words made me feel undervalued and insignificant.” Reflecting on conflict, Participant 2 disclosed “It was just basically like I need to figure out how to manage this. Move forward. Grow from it.” Participant 5 took a more optimistic stance, noting “I think although it isn't always functioning great, I think there is opportunity for a voice and getting our voices in and I do think [my dean] helps when she knows that there's, like, something, maybe boiling.” The conflicts may stem from differences in philosophy, differences in goals, and/or differences in personalities. While expressing admiration and fondness for PLC members as people, Participant 10 related:

I've had a lot of bad PLCs because I've been with [a different team] more times than not of my seven years here. I think just two years I was not in their PLC and they're very hard to work with. They're great teachers, they know their stuff, they just don't like to collaborate. They don't—like they've got their thing that they want to do. And they don't want to, like, they don't like other people's ideas or at least they always give that impression, they don't like your ideas.

This stress around collaboration appears to be a corollary to the high expectations and overwhelming workload addressed in GET 3. Participant 1 summed up the dilemma by stating “You have all these other teachers who probably have really good reasons for wanting the specific goals that they have. And so how, how do we, how do we compromise? How do we get to that point?” This is both a challenge and a stressor for teachers in this high achieving school.

Conceptual Findings

This IPA study was designed to answer specific research questions about the experience of resilience for teachers in a high achieving school. The experiences of the study participants, all teachers in a HAS, were analyzed through a formalized IPA process as described previously to distill these four group experiential themes (GETs). These themes address the research questions in a general way. They are not precise, specific answers, but rather answer the questions through conceptual themes and interpretations as experienced by these 10 individuals and interpreted by the researcher. For each participant, the GETs were shared back with them, along with a selection of their individual quotes which supported each GET. The four GET statements elicited expressions of support and agreement from each of the participants, several of which were emphatic (“That is so true!” and “You got that right!”).

The first central research question, “What do teachers in a high achieving school report about their experiences with resilience?” was as individual as the participants themselves. Ultimately, all study participants spoke about relationships (with colleagues, students, and leadership), finding their own balance, and doing work that was meaningful and needed. This echoed some of the findings of Drew and Sosnowski (2019), who found that teachers demonstrating resilience “pull from a sense of purpose” and “use relationships with colleagues, students, and school leaders to endure challenges” (p. 492). While the findings of this current study were similar, the focus on the experience of resilience in a high achieving school also led to more discussion of high expectations (both self-imposed and external) and holding each other to high standards, which were not findings of studies on teacher resilience previously reviewed by the researcher. Truebridge (2014) emphasized the importance of high expectations as a key protective factor for resilience, but the focus was on high expectation messaging between teacher and student or between students, and the research was focused on student, not teacher, resilience.

The second and third central research questions focused on the actions of leadership affecting teacher resilience in positive and negative ways. Only Participant 9 focused on specific actions in their responses, but clear communication, trust, professional respect, and feeling supported by leadership were reported as the major factors affecting resilience in positive ways. This echoed the findings of Haydon et al. (2018), who identified clear communication and trusting relationships among the top leadership factors impacting teacher wellbeing. Communication was clearly vital, as unclear communication, in addition to inconsistency in student accountability, emerged as top leadership factors affecting resilience in negative ways. Teachers in this HAS also noted negative impacts from the overwhelming workload and high expectations, although they varied in their attribution of the source of the workload and expectations and not all participants attributed this to leadership. Interestingly, leadership was not a focus in participant responses, and most study participants began to talk about the impact of leadership only when directly asked. This was reflected in GET 2 (Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress), as leadership support was assumed to be present, and only became a negative impact when it was not. Only Participant 9 was focused on frustrations with leadership based on a series of incidents. Interestingly, this participant stopped the researcher the next day to tell her that they appreciated the interview and being asked about how leadership could be (or was) supportive, as it helped them to reframe their perspective and be a little less negative and more appreciative in their thinking.

The first subquestion, “What do teachers in a high achieving school report as sources of stress” elicited common experiences of heavy workloads and high expectations. Many of the participants spoke about the need to do high quality work, such as having students write and speak and provide quality feedback for student work in order to help them achieve at high levels.

The other major source of stress was conflict with colleagues, generally in professional learning communities (PLCs), which is tangential to the need to do high quality work. The conflict largely arose over differences in priorities for instructional goals and student skills, with each participant acknowledging that those with whom they had conflict were also good teachers wanting to support students in their learning. The culture at the HAS study site was one of collaboration, so difficulties in collaborating were a major source of stress.

Surprisingly, interactions with parents were not universally cited as a source of stress. Only four of the study participants mentioned parents independently (outside of the context of parent-teacher conferences as an expectation), and all four of these participants also cited general parent support after relating a stressful incident with a parent. For most of the study participants, parents were viewed as a source of support much more than as a stressor, in contrast to the image of parents at a HAS being demanding and difficult as seen in both popular media stories about so-called snowplow parenting (Miller & Bromwich, 2019) and research studies on HAS (Luthar et al., 2020b). In fact, all participants related the idea of feeling “lucky” (or a variation on that word) to work in a school with such community and parental support.

The final research subquestion, “What do teachers in a high achieving school report as protective factors that support their resilience?” was overwhelmingly answered in a single word: colleagues. Every participant spoke about colleagues when asked about supports in their teaching lives, reflecting the findings of Truebridge (2014), Drew and Sosnowski (2019), and Oldfield and Ainsworth (2022) that caring relationships with colleagues are a key factor in resilience. Several of the participants spoke about the difference between colleagues at the study site and colleagues in other places in which they had worked. They relayed that colleagues were always

important, but the colleagues here were the reason they were still here, in spite of the demands. This is reflected in the explanation of GET #4 above.

This IPA study was designed and conducted under the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a). The conceptual findings support this framework of contextualized resilience. Each participant spoke of their own resilience in the context of the study site, but more importantly, with the support of their colleagues and, to a lesser extent, the leadership team. Individual characteristics and experiences were part of each participant's interpretation of their own experiences as conveyed to the researcher, and the researcher's characteristics and experiences were part of their interpretations in the development of the GETs (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The experience of teacher resilience in a HAS study site must be interpreted in terms of the individual microsystem, the collegial mesosystem, and the HAS exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) as part of each individual's social ecologies of resilience (Ungar, 2011a).

Limitations of the Findings

This study, like all studies, was subject to potential limitations and delimitations. The identified limitations of an interpretative phenomenological analysis study include the need for a small sample size of 10 or fewer (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Additionally, the sample was limited by a self-selection bias, as only those participants with the time and willingness to share their stories via both a written response and a personal interview were included. Motivation to participate may have been driven by a personal wish to tell a story or a personal interest of the participant. However, the nature of IPA studies requires self-reporting and a willingness to share personal experiences, making that limitation unavoidable.

There were several delimitations imposed by the researcher on this study. The selection of the study site of a particular HAS necessarily limited the participants and their experiences. IPA requires a relatively homogeneous population (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021), and due to the methodology requiring researcher interpretation of participant experiences, researcher familiarity with the study site assisted with those interpretations. Thus, the decision was purposefully made to include only teachers within that one study site as part of the study, further homogenizing the population.

Additionally, participants were limited to those departments not overseen by the researcher, and to those teachers having at least five years of experience teaching at the study site. This intentional limitation of participants was necessary to remove any perception of power imbalance, as the researcher would have no evaluative role with the participants, and all participants would be on continuing contract at the study site. However, this limitation of participants resulted in perspectives from the outside of humanities and world language teachers being excluded from the data. In particular, teaching the humanities includes team teaching, which yields a different colleague dynamic and thus potentially different perspectives and experiences.

The interview questions and protocol were designed by the researcher, and follow-up questions were not necessarily identical, as required by the in-depth semi-structured interview format (Byrne, 2023). This did limit external validity (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017), but allowed the researcher to pursue responses in more depth as suggested by Smith & Nizza (2022). To make responses clearer to an outside reader, Smith and Nizza (2022), recommend “asking participants to talk as if you knew nothing about the topic” (p. 25). The researcher chose not to

make this request, as the interviews were conducted in more of a conversational format, as also recommended by Smith and Nizza (2022).

Additionally, one respondent (Participant 7), provided an LED that related an experience much less recent than the previous year, and the researcher chose to include this LED as part of the interview and analysis of the participant responses. Many of the participants told of experiences that were outside of the most recent school year in their responses, and the researcher chose to include those responses as part of the overall experience of resilience in the study site. By necessity, these delimitations result in interpretations of specific teacher perspectives in a particular context at a particular period of time.

Implications for Future Studies

This study was limited to 10 participants of a specific HAS in the northeastern United States. While the GETs developed are congruent with the resilience research literature, many questions remain to be explored. In particular, the experiences of STEM, fine arts, or other non-humanities or world language teachers in this HAS study site would be of interest, especially in ways in which they echo or are different from the experiences of teachers included in this study. Additionally, case studies using different HASs in this state or region as a comparison to the experiences within this study site would be of interest. Finally, given the importance of colleagues revealed in this study, studies exploring specific leadership actions which support the social ecologies of teachers in HASs could yield recommendations applicable beyond this specific HAS.

Application of the Findings

The GETs developed as a result of this IPA study, while limited to the study site, support specific recommendations to leadership to support teacher resilience in this HAS. Clear, effective

communication between leadership and staff, between members of leadership, and between staff members themselves is essential to both the culture and effectiveness of this HAS. Several of the participants reflected on the importance of communication, which was also noted as a particular factor impacting teacher resilience by Haydon et al. (2018) and Carroll et al. (2021).

In addition to clear communication, effective collaborative work within professional learning communities (PLCs) emerged as a source of teacher resilience, while poorly functioning PLCs emerged as a source of stress. Specific mentoring of new teachers, refreshing veteran teachers on the tenets and practices of highly functional PLCs, and specific leadership intervention when PLCs are dysfunctional are all possible applications of the GETs developed through this study. These potential applications will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Summary

This interpretative phenomenological analysis study of teacher resilience in a high achieving school in the northeastern United States used a thorough and extensive data analysis process to yield four group experiential themes and eight sub themes summarizing the lived experiences of teachers in the study site school. These GETs were congruent with the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a), as they elucidated the resilience aspect of both the ecology of the HAS environment and the complex interactions between individuals and this environment. Specifically, GET #2 (Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress) and GET #4 (Colleagues are both a great support and a stressor) captured the complex interactions (mesosystem) that both supported individual resilience (microsystem) and acted as stressors in the dynamic of a HAS environment (exosystem). Additionally, GET #1 (Resilience results from meaningful work and finding the balance) and GET #3 (High expectations and an overwhelming workload both support and challenge resilience) reflected both individual aspects

(microsystem) and interactions with the HAS ecosystem (exosystem) at the study site.

Ultimately, relationships with both colleagues (primarily) and leadership (secondarily) were the greatest support for teacher resilience and workload and stressful interpersonal relationships had a negative impact on resilience in this HAS.

This study met the criteria offered by Nizza et al. (2021) for a high-quality IPA:

- keeping focused and offering depth
- presenting strong data and interpretation
- engaging and enlightening the reader (p. 370)

This study of teacher resilience in a high achieving school

- specifically focused on the lived experiences of resilience and stress in a HAS through the deep exploration of the experiences of 10 individuals;
- presented strong data through extensive in vivo and emotion coding, followed by development of personal experiential statements and personal experiential themes in an idiographic and inductive methodology; and
- engaged the reader through the participants' own words and stories, organized into simple yet powerful GETs and subthemes that captured the essence of these lived experiences.

Chapter 5: Contribution to Practice and Practitioner Reflection

Introduction

“Resilience is a process, not a trait” (Truebridge, 2014, p. 15). Resilience is not something that an individual possesses or does not possess; rather, it can be developed and supported as an individual interacts with others in their complex social ecology (Ungar, 2011a). This interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study investigated the phenomenon of resilience in a high achieving high school through the lens of teachers’ perceptions and interpretations of their own experiences in this high achieving environment. The group experiential themes (GETs) developed from the analysis of their self-reported experiences lead to the following discussion and recommendations for developing and supporting teacher resilience in this complex environment of a high achieving school (HAS).

Discussion and Recommendations

Each of the GETs generated through this IPA study was unique to the social ecologies of this specific HAS, yet each was also generally supported by previous research as documented in the scholarly literature on resilience. GET 1, “Resilience results from meaningful work and finding the balance,” echoed the internal protective factor of having a sense of purpose as a foundation of teacher resilience (Carillo & Flores, 2018; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). Truebridge (2014) emphasized meaningful opportunities for contribution and participation as a protective factor, noting how these opportunities support self-efficacy, which was found by Chesnut and Burley (2015) to be positively related to teacher commitment and by Wang (2015) to be negatively related to burnout. Although the educators in this study did not necessarily think of themselves as demonstrating resilience, nearly all spoke about the importance of their work having an impact on students.

The need to be needed, while providing the crucial resilience protective factor of a sense of purpose, also resulted in a struggle to balance competing needs in all of the complex relationships in each individual's social ecologies. Every participant in this study existed in their unique social ecology characterized by unique interactions with students, colleagues, families, friends, and the larger community. These unique interactions led to each individual finding their own way to balance competing demands of student needs, family needs, personal needs, and community and social needs. As noted by Oldfield and Ainsworth (2021), these contextual factors had a greater influence on the resilience process than did individual factors in conditions of high stress, such as teaching. For educational leaders in a HAS, recognition of these competing needs is vital. Cann et al., (2021) recommended three leadership actions to support teacher wellbeing:

- Ensuring teachers feel that their voice, work, and effort are valued;
- Facilitating professional development that is meaningful to teachers; [and]
- Enabling teachers to have sufficient agency in decision making and changes. (p. 209)

While this study did not reveal professional development as a factor in supporting resilience, the ideas of ensuring that teachers feel heard and valued, and providing agency in work decisions support the GET of meaningful work and finding the balance. One action for leaders in a HAS would be to continue to build trusting, empathetic relationships with teachers where teachers feel heard, respected, and valued.

GET 2, "Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress," was a result of trusting relationships between teachers and leaders in this HAS environment. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2007) denoted five facets of trust as being benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence. In more recent research, Bukko et al. (2021) compiled teacher

recommendations of how leaders could show each of these facets: benevolence through demonstrating the belief that teachers want to do well, honesty through acting with integrity, openness through humility and being a learning leader, reliability through being consistent in communication and actions, and competence through deep understanding of pedagogy and providing meaningful feedback. Although all 10 participants in this IPA study did not each speak of each of these facets of trust, all five facets emerged as important to perceptions of leadership support when considering all of the participants' responses. While four participants specifically used the term "professionalism," all spoke in some degree of being trusted to do their job well, demonstrating the facet of benevolence. The facet of integrity surfaced through participant frustration with inconsistency between different administrators in response to student behaviors. Two of the participants spoke admiringly of the principal as a learning leader, setting a direction and supporting them as they tried new ideas, demonstrating the facet of openness. The facet of reliability was a thread through all of the participants as they spoke about the importance of clear communication and consistent expectations and consequences. Finally, the facet of competence surfaced both positively and negatively, as three participants spoke about the importance of the effective feedback they receive, and one expressed sheer frustration with an administrator as a source of stress: "Yeah, in—incompetence. That's the—that's the biggest one I think for me. And, like, lack of knowledge and understanding" (Participant 9).

The participants in this study equally reflected some of the facets of trust, assuming good intentions on the part of leadership, and generally trusting and participating in the decision-making process. This echoed the findings of Cann et al. (2021) regarding teacher agency in decision making and changes, and Truebridge (2014) on meaningful opportunities for participation and contribution. Strong positive relationships have been found to be a protective

factor for resilience by multiple researchers (Benard, 1991; Cann et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Ebbert et al., 2019; Garmezy, 1991; Haydon, 2018; Masten et al., 1990; Mullen et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Truebridge, 2014; Werner & Smith, 2001), and by building mutual trust, school leaders can create a positive school culture (Mullen et al., 2021).

In this HAS, teachers recognized the overall sense of community and trust in the leadership team. Several participants mentioned the “open door policy” and receptiveness of leaders to open and honest conversation about both successes and challenges. Every participant acknowledged at least one member of the leadership team as a “go-to” person, and many suggested they were comfortable talking with any of the school leaders about issues of concern or when in need of support. Clear two-way communication surfaced as a vital part of trusting and feeling supported by leadership, both in this study and in the literature (Haydon et al., 2018). Participant 4 summed up the challenges: “And we're just a big school. And so it's, it's hard, like, there's—it's hard to be totally transparent and have everything be communicated because there's just so many people and so much going on all the time.” However, this same participant noted that the foundation of trust and communication is present, reflecting on the current principal: “I don't always necessarily agree with everyone's—like, his decisions all the time but I really, like, trust him and trust that I could talk to him about it” (Participant 4). It is essential for leaders in a HAS to continue to craft this culture of mutual trust and respect, intentionally increasing the external protective factor of supportive and trusting relationships between teachers and school leaders.

GET 3, “High expectations and an overwhelming workload both support and challenge resilience” was more unique to this HAS environment. While the literature noted high

expectations as a protective factor for resilience (Truebridge, 2014), this was in relation to student resilience when teachers and classmates used high expectation and empowering messaging focused on belief in students rather than on performance. In the current study, the high expectations were largely self-imposed and also between colleagues. Several participants were explicit in stating that this was not a top-down feeling, but that they held themselves and each other to high expectations as part of the school culture. This holding each other to high standards resulted in both self-efficacy and collective efficacy, which have been found to be significant in promoting resilience (Karakus et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2015) and in remaining committed to the teaching profession (Chesnut & Burley, 2015). Additionally, researcher John Hattie has identified collective teacher efficacy as being strongly correlated with student achievement (Waack, 2018). The idea that the teachers in this HAS make each other better surfaced strongly in almost all of the participant responses. However, this was not a universally positive protective factor, as the underlying competitiveness of wanting to be their best and not let any of their colleagues down also surfaced as a stressor for several of the study participants. For example, Participant 6, revealing internal doubts about performance in a partnership, admitted that “I find myself worrying a little bit. [Is] she judging what I'm doing? Is she—Does she think this is too intense? Not intense?” Participant 2 noted this underlying stressor, sharing “Everyone's doing their own thing, to make sure that they're at the best of their capability. Um, it's very competitive.”

Many of the participants also acknowledged that some of the workload did come from administrative expectations beyond classroom teaching. These participants specifically referred to the “extras” of senior project, advisory, and intersession—all graduation requirements, and all part of teacher responsibilities in addition to their teaching load. Three of the participants

explicitly mentioned the ‘holy grail’ of eliminating student failures as an unreasonably high expectation from leadership. Here, the need to revisit the important values of the school and school district, including the mission and vision, is important. The teachers in this study largely believed in the importance of these “extras,” and believed in the ability of all students to be successful, but those beliefs became subsumed by the overwhelming workload and general exhaustion of everyday teaching. School leadership needs to explicitly revisit the values and reasons behind these “extras” that are not truly extra, but requirements. Moreover, they should ask the practitioners how they can be supported in these outside-of-classroom responsibilities, and look for creative ways to include time and support into the school year calendar and daily bell schedule.

Additionally, the need to provide effective feedback to students, especially with regard to student writing, was a focus of several of the study participants. This is partly due to the nature of the subjects they teach, but the idea of endless piles of grading was a common stressor. Each participant felt the feedback was important and made students better writers and speakers, but lamented the time demands imposed by providing this level of feedback. Two of the participants acknowledged that they were unable to meet grading deadlines, and letting go of those deadlines was one way they found their own balance and supported their own resilience, although the looming pile of work continued to be a stressor.

Mullen et al. (2021) explicitly suggested streamlining teacher workload through practices such as supporting collaborative planning, updating grading practices, using technology, and monitoring teacher workload as ways leaders can support teacher resilience. For this HAS, collaborative planning is already built into the school culture through established professional learning communities (PLCs) which meet at least weekly during the school day. Leadership

should continue to encourage teachers to be more selective in their grading, including finding ways to use peer feedback practices and workshop models for writing to help ease the grading burden. In this particular HAS, this may involve directly telling teachers to grade less or grade differently, as several of the participants talked about their self-imposed need to ensure students were receiving thorough feedback on all of their work. Another recommended action would be to explore technology, such as emerging artificial intelligence (AI) tools created specifically for school use, to provide different types of feedback to students. While the initial learning curve for such tools is steep, requiring teachers to learn how to write effective prompts to reach the desired goals, there is tremendous potential for these tools to eventually reduce teacher workload.

GET 4, “Colleagues are both a great support and a stressor” was well supported by resilience research. Multiple researchers have reported findings that caring and supportive relationships are a strong protective factor for resilience (Benard, 1991; Cann et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Ebbert et al., 2019; Garmezy, 1991; Haydon, 2018; Masten et al., 1990; Mullen et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Truebridge, 2014; Werner & Smith, 2001). Colleagues and relationships with colleagues are part of both the microsystem and the mesosystem of an individual’s social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 2005b), and interactions with colleagues across these levels strongly impact an individual’s ability to demonstrate resilience (Ungar, 2011a). Indeed, Oldfield and Ainsworth (2022) found that contextual factors such as relationships with colleagues had a much larger impact on resilience than personal or individual factors. This was echoed by Cann et al. (2021), who determined that teacher perceptions of a trusting and collaborative environment had the greatest positive impact on their wellbeing.

In the context of this HAS, those relationships with colleagues were centered on the professional learning community (PLC). A high-functioning PLC involved supportive professional relationships (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019), collaborative planning (Mullen et al., 2021), and opportunity for shared decision making (Richards et al., 2016). These professional supports were external protective factors supporting resilience. However, when the PLC was not high-functioning, the lack of caring and supportive relationships could undermine resilience. As noted by Participant 1, when reflecting on a PLC with colleagues they respected as fellow teachers, “It just wasn’t—we were so diametrically—so different, that there was—collaboration was impossible without probably someone to facilitate.” In this case, and similar cases related by study participants, the role of leadership is to step in and work with the members of the PLC to facilitate difficult conversations. These conversations may be about content, goals, pedagogy, grading, or any of the myriad decisions a teacher makes while working with students. When teachers hold themselves and others to high standards, as previously noted in this HAS, they often have strong beliefs about teaching and learning. Effective collaboration requires not only shared goals, but clear communication, listening skills, and often compromise. When teachers are unable to collaborate effectively, leaders must take direct action. While such action might involve changing members of a PLC for a future year, more immediate action is often needed. Leaders can facilitate communication through the use of protocols supplied by professional organizations supporting PLC work, which can also provide PLC refreshers for veteran members. PLCs should be required to establish norms for meetings, and hold each other to those norms. New teachers should receive specific mentoring on effective PLCs as part of the established mentor program. Additionally, leaders can model the use of data in PLC decision

making. Ultimately, leaders need to demonstrate social and emotional competence (Cann et al., 2021) in facilitating effective communication to support professional collaboration.

Developing high-functioning PLCs is essential to both culture and resilience in the HAS under study, as collegial relationships have been identified as an important external protective factor for resilience (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019). However, other relationships also emerged from this study as important to teacher resilience. The humanities courses in the study site were team-taught, and leaders must attend to the dynamics of the teaching team. Participants in the study appreciated the care given to assigning teaching partnerships, and the support offered when teaching teams were struggling to be effective together. Additionally, peer coaching could be employed effectively, as the district has recently implemented a formal peer coaching program. The leadership team could both recommend effective coaches and make suggestions for matching peers in a manner which would be beneficial to both the observer/coach and the teacher requesting the help. Although the program is not an administrative or evaluative process, support from leadership could make it more effective and valuable.

It is clear from the analysis of participant responses in this IPA study that relationships were a key component of the experience of resilience in a high achieving school. Relationships were central to GET 2 (leadership) and GET 4 (colleagues), and also incorporated into GET 1 (meaningful work with students) and GET 3 (high expectations). This finding follows from the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a), as relationships are part of an individual's social ecologies. While the larger community and the more immediate mesosystem of student families (parents), as well as the larger political exosystem might be expected to impact a teacher's resilience, these social ecologies did not surface in a meaningful way in participant responses. In this limited study of a particular HAS

environment, relationships were the primary protective factor in teacher resilience, mirroring the findings of multiple resilience researchers (Benard, 1991; Cann et al., 2022; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Ebbert et al., 2019; Garmezy, 1991; Haydon, 2018; Masten et al., 1990; Mullen et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Truebridge, 2014; Werner & Smith, 2001).

Plan for Assuming a Leadership Role for Disseminating Findings

The findings of this IPA study are specific to the experience of the teachers at the HAS study site. However, the study site is not the only HAS school in the state, region, or country. While each HAS possesses unique variables, the general findings could be helpful to educational leaders of other HASs or to educational leaders in general. While none of the findings presented are new to the body of resilience research, the ongoing concerns about teacher resilience and the need to support educators at all levels makes the dissemination of these findings relevant and appropriate.

The researcher had the opportunity to attend the New England Educational Research Organization (NEERO) conference in 2024, and intends to submit a proposal to present this research during the 2025 conference. Additionally, the findings would be relevant to members of the state affiliate of the Association of School Principals (ASP), which conducts a Leadership Academy each June, and the researcher will submit a proposal to present at this academy. The state affiliate of ASCD (formerly the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development) actively disseminates research through newsletters, seminars, podcasts, and conferences, and the researcher will seek to share these findings through one of those means. Finally, the 2025 American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting theme is “Research,

Remedy, and Repair: Toward Just Educational Renewal” and the researcher submitted a proposal to present these research findings.

Implications for the Future

When this research study began, educational institutions were emerging from the COVID-19 years of intermittent school closures (Zviedrite et al., 2024). Educators were subject to the tremendous stress involved with the behavioral and academic challenges of students who had undergone interrupted schooling and social isolation through the pandemic. At the conclusion of this study, although the effects of the pandemic are waning, the stress levels remain high. According to an October 2023 press release from the National Center for Education Statistics, 86% of public schools continue to face challenges in hiring teachers, with a dearth of qualified applicants given as the major reason for the challenges (Delarosa & Robelen, 2023). These national hiring challenges are also evident in the HAS of this particular study, emphasizing the need to support teacher resilience as a positive bulwark against teacher attrition.

As noted by Participant 6, “fit” is an important part of the interview process at the study site. “I think new people, for the most part, they fit in seamlessly here and I think that's in part because of the interview process and people do want to come to [this school]. So you do get a certain quality here.” Given the importance of relationships with colleagues in supporting teacher resilience, the importance of fit must not be overlooked. With a reduced pool of qualified applicants, it may be tempting to fill any open position as quickly as possible. However, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of high expectations and strong interpersonal relationships in supporting teacher resilience. The interview process must continue to include potential partners and PLC members as part of any interview committee, and their voices must continue to be an important part of any selection process to fill vacancies.

The importance of the PLC was emphasized by several of the participants. Intentional work on developing high-functioning PLCs, already begun during the previous year at the study site, must continue. The technology now exists to easily use common assessment data in educational decision-making at the PLC level, and PLC teams need instruction and practice in using this data. Protocols exist to guide this work, available from a number of professional organizations. Educational leaders must guide and facilitate this work, meeting each PLC at its current level of functioning and moving it forward into true high-level collaboration.

Team-teaching is an integral part of humanities courses at the study site, and the importance of a good partnership was emphasized by the six teachers who are or had been part of a teaching team. Professional development on team teaching, whether through use of a formal outside consultant or program, or through peer coaching and facilitated teacher rounds, is recommended to develop or strengthen the necessary interpersonal and pedagogical skills needed for success. This is also part of the emphasis on relationships as an external protective factor for resilience. If a partnership is struggling, leaders must actively intervene to support both teachers in successful collaboration.

Finally, educational leaders must engage in intentional promoting of a positive school culture through building trust, exhibiting empathy, demonstrating social and emotional competence in difficult situations, communicating clearly, and ensuring teachers feel valued in their work. A positive school culture is an important external protective factor for teacher resilience (Cann et al., 2021; Drew & Sosnowski, 2019), and such a culture must be continuously nurtured. Leaders must listen to teacher concerns and continue to involve them in decision-making (Cann et al., 2021), or a positive school culture can quickly turn negative. Leaders can influence the school climate through managing negative social contagion by choosing to focus

on positive relationships and a sense of vision and pride (Cann et al., 2022). Positive organizations are characterized by an emphasis on teacher resilience and flourishing (Cameron et al., 2003), and the actions of school leaders can support or undermine this positive working environment.

Personal Reflections and Shifts

The vast majority of my career in education was spent as a classroom teacher. As a teacher, I learned about leadership through observing my leaders and their interactions with me and my colleagues. Over the past seven years in a leadership position, I have used those observations, and reflections on my own interactions with colleagues, to develop my own leadership style. However, the past three years of immersion in classes on leadership, scholarly and professional literature on leadership and resilience, and personal interaction with a variety of educational leaders as part of this doctoral program have helped me to understand and articulate the importance of positive, supportive leadership in all aspects of education.

As a Scholar

As the Chair of my dissertation committee frequently reminds me, I am now a resilience researcher. As a trained scientist, it was difficult for me to reconcile that role with the idea of research instilled in me through so many years of the controlled study gold standard. However, my interest in resilience as part of positive organizations has only increased through the process of conducting my literature review and then conducting and analyzing research with practicing educators. The value of this qualitative research, and in analyzing the words and experiences of the practitioners in the field, has supported my transition from science research to social science research.

It is impossible to read all of the scholarly literature on teacher resilience. When “teacher resilience” is entered into Google Scholar as a search term, over 1.5 million results are returned (Google Scholar, 23 June 2024). Google Scholar alerts for key articles used in the literature review for this dissertation sends new articles to my email inbox at least weekly. Recognizing the need to narrow my interest and focus as a resilience researcher and scholar, I intend to expand beyond the current study by first investigating the experiences of resilience among science and math teachers in the same HAS. Beyond that immediate interest, I am fascinated by the impact of teacher resilience on students, in both their social emotional wellbeing and their academic achievement. I will continue to familiarize myself with research in this area, in hopes of a positive impact within my organization. My focus on teacher resilience will continue to be grounded in positive organizational scholarship and an appreciative stance (Cameron et al. 2003).

As a Practitioner

My role as a building-level leader has been impacted by this research. As I sat with teachers outside of my areas of expertise, listening to their lived experiences, I was able to reflect upon my own leadership role and style. The methodology of an IPA study required me to interpret the participants’ own interpretations of their experiences. I gained appreciation for my colleagues on the building leadership team as participants related myriad ways in which they felt supported. I also became explicitly aware of leadership sources of teacher frustration and stress, allowing me to reflect on how those I lead would interpret my words and actions.

I was never a teacher in the school in which I am a leader, so conducting this study has provided me a window into teacher perspectives, and given me a greater understanding and appreciation of the stresses and rewards of being a teacher in a HAS. The literature review I

conducted led me to studies describing effective ways leaders could support teacher resilience, and I was able to see the true impact of leadership actions through listening to the study participants. It became clear as I analyzed the data that maintaining high standards for themselves, their colleagues, their students, and their leaders were an essential part of the culture of this HAS. Moving forward, I will continue to support these high standards through hiring practices, walk-through observations and feedback, informal conversations, clear, effective communication, and mentorship.

As an Educational Leader

As a result of conducting this IPA study, I find myself wondering how my leadership actions impact those I lead. I continue to view myself as a positive school leader, but now have the findings from this study and my literature review to connect that vague notion of “positive” with specific actions to support teacher resilience. Am I ensuring that my teachers feel valued in their work? Do I give them voice and agency (Cann et al., 2021)? Do they have supportive professional relationships (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019)? Am I clear in my communication because, as noted by Brene Brown (2018), “Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.” (p. 48)?

As I answer these questions, I also need to very deliberately nurture relationships with and between the teachers with whom I work. The findings of this study make clear that positive relationships are of vital importance in supporting teacher resilience. As I work to support teachers, I need to ask, as Brown (2018) recommends, “What does support from me look like?” (p. 35), and listen to their expressed needs. Making a conscious decision to cultivate and display the five facets of trust: benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2007) will support positive relationships with teachers, even if I cannot always provide what they ask me for. Additionally, stepping into difficult PLC situations to

facilitate and ensure that all voices feel heard and valued will help to nature positive relationships between colleagues.

In my own experience as a classroom teacher, leaders who could inspire and communicate a larger purpose while supporting and encouraging the creativity and agency of teachers as professionals served as a motivating force for me to continually grow and improve as a professional. Now as a leader, I have sought to be the transformational leader described in the previous sentence. As I reflect upon my role and my passion for supporting teacher resilience as they deliver high quality education for all students, I am re-energized to be that positive, empathetic, listening leader reminding teachers of their strengths and supporting them in their continued growth and resilience.

Overall Summary

For this research, resilience is defined as “the dynamic and negotiated process within individuals (internal) and between individuals and their environments (external) for the resources and supports to adapt and define themselves as healthy amid adversity, threat, trauma, and/or everyday stress” (Truebridge, 2014, p. 12). Under the theoretical framework of the social ecological theory of resilience (Ungar, 2011a), and through the concept of resilience as a process that can be nurtured and developed rather than a trait that an individual possesses or not, this IPA study examined the phenomenon of teacher resilience in a high achieving school from the perspective of 10 classroom teachers.

Although the individual participants had unique social ecologies within the environment of a HAS, four group experiential themes emerged. These four themes:

- Resilience results from meaningful work and finding the balance
- Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress

- High expectations and an overwhelming workload both support and challenge resilience
- Colleagues are both a great support and a stressor

emphasize the importance of caring professional relationships, high expectations, and meaningful work as protective factors supporting resilience and mitigating adversity. These themes echo the three interrelated environmental protective factors identified by Truebridge (2014):

- Caring relationships—provide a sense of connectedness and belonging; demonstrate “being there”; exude compassion and trust.
- High expectations—convey a focus on strengths; stabilize routines; offer positive messaging in the belief of others as one is both challenged and supported at the same time.
- Opportunities to participate and contribute—contribute to personal power, inclusion, and self-efficacy; awaken the power and gifts of “service”; and instill responsibility, voice, and choice. (pp. 15-16)

It is incumbent upon educational leaders to support the resilience of the teachers they lead through the development and nurturing of positive organizational structures (Cameron et al., 2003) that facilitate trust, clear communication, teacher agency, and positive professional relationships. In a time where the teaching profession is characterized by stress and uncertainty (Diliberti et al., 2021), a focus on supporting teacher resilience in all educational settings will benefit both teachers and the students they serve.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today as part of this research study on teacher resilience in a high achieving school. Your unique perspective and experiences as a teacher in a high achieving school are important to this understanding. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

I want to begin by assuring you of confidentiality. Your identity and any information you provide will be treated with the strictest confidence. Interview transcripts will be anonymized and stored securely. Only pseudonyms will be used in the final report.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw, your responses up to that point will still be included in the analysis unless you ask for them to be excluded. A decision to withdraw will not impact your relationship with me.

This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Southern New Hampshire University and adheres to School District policy. Thank you for signing the consent form. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions:

1. Tell me a little about your history. What brought you to teaching in general, and this school in particular?
2. Let's talk about your LED. Can you tell me more about that experience?
3. What is it like to be a teacher at this school?
4. What makes you feel resilient as a teacher?
 - a. How or why do these things make you feel resilient or help you adapt?

5. How does leadership play a role (positive, negative, or both) in your experience of resilience?
6. Tell me about a time when you felt stressed by being a teacher here.
7. How does leadership play a role in your stress (positive, negative, or both)?
8. Describe what you consider to be supports in your teaching life.
 - a. What makes these feel supportive?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about being a teacher here?

Thank you so much for your time today.

Appendix B

Lived Experience Description Protocol

Adapted from Vagle (2014, pp. 87-88)

For this research, resilience is considered to be “the dynamic and negotiated process within individuals (internal) and between individuals and their environments (external) for the resources and supports to adapt and define themselves as healthy amid adversity, threat, trauma, and/or everyday stress” (Truebridge, 2014, p. 12)

Please describe a specific time during the past year when you felt you demonstrated resilience as a teacher in this school. You do not need to interpret the experience or make generalizations. Think about a specific experience or moment in time. After you have chosen the specific moment or experience to describe, please consider the following guidelines as you write a brief description:

1. Think about the experience chronologically.
2. Describe what you saw, what was said, what you heard, how you felt, what you thought as relevant to the experience.
3. Try to describe the experience as if you are watching it as a movie.
4. Describe the experience as you lived through it.
5. Write in a straightforward manner, as if you were speaking, without embellishments.
6. Please use pseudonyms if you need to use names in this description.

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

This item appeared in The Sunday Email (sent by the study site principal each Sunday of the school year):

Martha Pond is beginning the research phase of her doctoral work on teacher resilience in a high achieving school. She would like to interview teachers who have been at [study site school] for at least 5 years to hear about their experiences. The total time commitment from you would be approximately 60-90 minutes. If you are interested in participating, please email Martha at martha.pond@snhu.edu, provide your preferred email address for correspondence, and she will reach out to you.

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form for Research into the Experience of Teacher Resilience in a High Achieving School

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Martha Pond, who is a doctoral candidate at Southern New Hampshire University.

You are invited to participate in a research study about your experiences with resilience as a teacher in a high achieving school.

You will be asked to provide a written description of a time you felt resilient as a teacher in this school, and then participate in a one-to-one interview about your experiences with stress, resilience and actions that leadership take that may increase or diminish your resilience as a teacher in this environment. The written description and interview combined will take about 90 minutes of your time.

The potential risks associated with this study are personal discomfort as you recall instances of stress or diminished resilience. We expected the project to benefit you in the following ways. You will contribute to the knowledge base of teacher resilience in high achieving schools, and this research may have direct impact on future leadership actions.

If you have decided to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time with no penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason with no penalty.

In addition, your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. You will be identified by a unique identifier number in all research material. In any published results, you will be identified solely by a pseudonym. All files will be password-protected. Transcripts will be shared with you before they are used in the final analysis to ensure accuracy. You will provide explicit permission for the use of direct quotations in published materials. Audio and video files resulting from the interviews will be deleted upon successful completion of the researcher's doctoral degree.

If you have any questions regarding this project, you may contact the researcher at 1-603-475-5854 or pondmjrun@gmail.com. If you have questions regarding your rights as research participant or any concerns regarding this project, you may report them – confidentially, if you wish – to the University Campus Institutional Review Board Chairperson at IRB@snhu.edu.

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the research.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____
 IRB Approval Number: IRB-FY2023-72 IRB Expiration Date: N/A

Appendix E

Sample Analytic Memos

Interview 5 Memo

The subject was very positive and open about experiences here. The focus was on the demands of the job and the constant need to make it better. She commented on how planning took more time the more experienced she became because she recognized the need to improve aspects and focused on doing that. She also wanted to make sure she didn't let her partner down. She admitted to struggles with PLCs, but most of her focus was on her own work and her own stresses with work-life balance. She talked about being conflict-avoidant, and very focused on getting work done while here. She talked about the extras, but felt they were important for kids and giving them the best experience—always bringing the “A game.” She is still trying to find the way to balance all of the competing demands and satisfy her own need to be good at everything. She would not teach anywhere else, but could see herself leaving teaching if she cannot make the balance work. She also talked about being lucky (every subject so far has) to work with kids whose basic needs are met. She said the stresses here are just different than stresses elsewhere—it's a trade-off. She talked about communication a lot—that is the biggest way admin can help.

Interview 10 Memo

This felt the most like a conversation. The participant was visibly frustrated with admin over an incident the previous day, but put that aside to really think about her own experience. I asked explicitly about parents because she did not mention them. We ended up restarting the recording at the end because we were chatting after the conclusion and she asked me to turn the recording back on. She then talked about the constant need to make things better or different, and how she

wasn't sure where that pressure or expectation came from. There were similarities with other interviews on the level of expectation, the holy grail, the unsettled feeling when admin relationships were strained, and mostly the importance of colleagues.

Appendix F

Sample Table of Personal Experiential Themes from Subject Analysis (Composite Sample)

Theme	Line	Quote
<u>Theme: Holding each other to high expectations</u>		
This school's expectations were very different	73-83	And when I started here, it was like a whole different world, like the kids actually did their work. And there was an expectation where if you didn't do it, you were going to get points taken off. It wasn't 10 days and then if you complained to the administrator, the administrator would say, oh, give them another 10 days to get something done and don't forget, you have to call the parents and fill out all this paperwork in order to get a kid to get their work done. Kids were held to a higher standard
There are expectations on students and teachers	241-243	On students, yeah, sorry. And teachers too. I feel like there's an expectation on teachers that like you are actually.
The superintendent set the standard high for teachers	253-256	he shook my hand and he said, congratulations on making it to [school] and just remember you may have been the best somewhere else, but here we're all the best so you're just one of us.
Everyone at [this school] works hard	262-265	I'm like it's true though because everyone rises above like everyone wants like to come up with something new, nobody wants to kind of like sit and do the same things
Other schools are stuck in a rut	266-270	I feel like they're stuck in 1995, like, it's the same stuff. It's the same worksheets, it's the same. Like lists, it's this, it's always the same and everybody kind of gets, like, stuck in a rut.
I continue to grow as a teacher here	277-282	But um, I feel like there's a constant growth. Here for teachers, whereas but, like, at my old school, at my prior school, there wasn't, we would just kind of just chugging along, and if we wanted to create something great, if we didn't then, it didn't matter.
We model hard work for our students	282-285	And I think that's the same for students because the students see us working hard and they work hard whereas there it was more of a behavior thing.
I demonstrate resilience as I adapt to constant changes in education	315-317	Um, I think. Because of all the changes, I feel like every single year everything changes
We should want to keep changing and growing as teachers	487-494	Yes. I feel like I'm constantly being challenged and every time I turn around, I'm like, well, what can we do to make this better? And um, it's like at the beginning when you first start teaching that veteran teacher always says to don't worry in like five or 10 years, you'll be fine. You'll have more time on your hands because you'll have it all figured out. No like 20 years in and I'm still like recreating the wheel. But I think that's what we should be doing.
I want others to maintain the same consistent behavior standards	604-611	Just because I'm pacing in there. That doesn't mean that [the library assistants] should then have to deal with everybody deciding to come afterwards. Um, I just don't know if there's like a consistent, and there is there's rules for when you have duty in there. And it does say if you're on managed time, you can stay and if you're not, you're going to be asked to leave.
I hold myself to a high standard	653	No. I hold myself to a really high standard.
We push each other to be better here	875-880	And then here, it was like, everyone was ready to go at all times. Everyone's ready to help each other. There was so much energy and like, people actually cared, and it was such a big difference. So, and I think that's the reason why we're a top school here.

(continued)

Theme	Line	Quote
<u>Theme: Administration as a support</u>		
Administration supports us in trying something new	270-274	And I don't feel like that's happening here because I feel like there's an expectation from administration. There's a lot of support to say, hey, this is what's new, let's kind of do this. Hey, this is what's new. Let's do this.
I appreciate being able to talk directly and honestly with my administrator	404-410	So I'll say, if I'm having like if we're having a situation like in our department, and I have a strong administrator, I know that we can all go down there and we can all go. So if I know we're having an issue, I know we can all go down to [him] and we can say to him. This is what's happening.
I know my administrator will help us problem-solve	411-414	We need to do this, we need to do this and he'll problem solve with us, he'll work with us and he will—he's—he'll communicate.
It's important to see that administration cares about the progress of schools and teachers	457-463	I think, knowing that the administration is consistent and fair and actually cares about like the progress of the school rather than just them being there. I don't even know what else you would really want to do as an administrator. I can't even imagine like not wanting to see your teachers and your school progress
I feel comfortable talking with administration here	499-500	Yes, I feel like I can go and I can talk to [different administrators] about like, really anything that I need.
I need to know that administrators will have my back	508-511	For me is to feel like I have a backup system, like there's somebody who has my back at all times, not that like, I've ever any type of would ever needed it.
I want to be trusted as a professional	521-526	here like I feel like we have freedom, we're treated as professionals and if you're treated as a professional, you're going to act like a professional. Maybe not always. But I think like, theoretically it sounds I think that's a big difference. The minutia that happens at other places.
I don't think I would ever be unsupported here	841-842	No never. I don't even think I've ever had that happen.
<u>Theme: Relationships with colleagues</u>		
PLC culture is unique and important	303-308	I think that the PLC culture here—and that didn't exist in a lot of the other places that I worked on. So, like, we would have meetings and like, certainly there was like camaraderie, but I think my experience has been, like, we sort of all hold each other to a high standard.
PLCs are not all high-functioning	308-311	I'm not saying that every PLC I've ever been in has been like really well functioning or that, like everything has always been so smooth.
Previous jobs were isolating	311-316	But in other places that I went, it was like you went into your classroom, you did what you did, no one shared anything, no one really asked what you were doing. And so it was a little bit like being on an island.
Collaboration helps me be a better teacher	315-321	And here, I'm a better teacher from working here from like learning how to be a co-teacher with my partner who I've been with [partner] now, this is year 12 of being together. Um, that was a huge learning curve, but also we make each other better because like, I, we never want to let each other down.
I avoid confrontation	537-540	I probably rely on other people to complain about the things that I'm upset about. Which is bad, but it's probably the truth. I'm I avoid confrontation in all aspects of my life.
I view my role as peacemaker in PLC	562-566	I try to be really diplomatic and give my opinion without sounding bratty, I guess or that's not really the best word, but we've had like some contentious plc's and like because I try to avoid conflict I think I usually try to smooth it over.
Most PLCs work fairly well	567-569	I think this year has been pretty good and most years have been decent even if there are like little issues here and there.

(continued)

Theme	Line	Quote
Dysfunctional PLCs are a product of whole group dysfunction	569-671	We've had some that have just been completely dysfunctional but that's of result of like the whole group and not just
Leadership helps when they know PLCs are struggling	573-577	I think leadership does help with it. Like there's usually changes that are made or I think also, sometimes if there are years where there's like definitely issues happening that [my dean] is aware of she comes and sits in more frequently in a PLC.
It's difficult when colleagues aren't collaborative	580-587	There are some people who don't like to teach Humanities and so they choose to teach in a different way which just like makes it difficult when we're planning Humanities classes or it's definitely, you know, things like that or planning, common assessments can sometimes be a little bit tricky when someone says, well, like I'm definitely not going to do that, you know. Okay.
It's difficult when colleagues don't communicate	588-589	Or doesn't communicate what they are going to do until after they've done it.
Failure to work with a PLC belong to that individual	589-593	I think although it isn't always functioning great, I think there is opportunity for a voice and getting our voices in and I do think [my dean] helps when she knows that there's like something, maybe boiling.
PLCs give us an opportunity to have our voices heard	595-599	I have supports in the building like [partner] is a big support because we've, we always at least teach one class together and we help each other throughout the day,
My partner is a huge support on a daily basis	738-741	whatever I do in my advisory, I share with him and vice versa. So if I get like the popcorn cart, like it's signed out for the day so that he takes the popcorn and we just like plan it out that way. So that's like a huge. It seems like a small thing but it's actually like a huge help
We share resources and help each other	743-748	we try to help each other with our, you know, coaching and all of those sorts of. We just try to support each other. Like if I know he has a game then I try to like fill in like little gaps so he has a little time and he does the same thing for me.
We help each other on stressful, busy days	748-753	I'm not like the type of person who I don't attend like lots of work related, like social events because I would don't have a lot of free time. So when I do, if I have time to do that or rather go out with my friends or my family,
Socialization happens away from school and colleagues	754-758	I do feel like I there's a lot of people in this building that I really um, really like and respect and who are good supports when I need help with something. So I feel like there's a lot of people I can go to here to ask a question or say I'm like worried about this or whatever and they will help me.
My colleagues are a source of support and I respect them	758-764	I think although it isn't always functioning great, I think There is opportunity for a voice and getting our voices in and I do think [my administrator] helps when she knows that there's like something, maybe boiling.
<u>Theme: Workload and pressure as a source of stress</u>		
I was exhausted and ready to give up	132-134	but I think by about May, I, I was starting to give up like I just was like, starting to give up
I have felt discouraged as a teacher over the last few years	269-271	The last two years have been a challenge to me as a teacher to like, wake up and see the value in what I'm doing and like, come back and try to do better. Get them to do better. That's been challenging.
Our job is overwhelming	311-316	Because we're asked to do too many things. We really are, there's not enough hours, like my husband said to me, he's like he's like your grades aren't due. You've been like not here and I'm like, he has no idea of the stack of papers I have to grade right now.

(continued)

Theme	Line	Quote
There is not enough time to do all we need to do	319-327	But during the school day, there aren't enough hours. I'm on two, plc's like you're doing senior project. You're getting ready for intercession. You're trying to plan stuff for your advisory. You're answering emails and you're trying to like the, the list of kids we have that are troubled that I'm constantly like talking to their case manager, their counselor, the APS, like hunting kids down, like.
I'm too tired to demonstrate resilience	388	Not right now. (laughs) I'm so tired.
The amount of grading is stressful	393-394	Like I just keep thinking about the stack. The stack is like, killing me a little bit, right now.
At times I feel tired and discouraged	414-418	Though, there have been a few times this year where I'm like, I don't know. I don't know, like how much longer I can do this? It's like. It's kind of killing me a little bit.
This holy grail is not the right message	745-747	I will say that, um. holy grail was not the right message for the year. (laughs) It's been a real struggle for people.
People work too hard to be given an unattainable task	751-754	The holy grail is an unattainable task and so when you have people who work so hard already, and you set up the year with an unattainable task. It colors the whole year.
Parents are more stressful at the honors level	850-854	Parents uh, more stressful at the honors level. And they're not as stressful here. In fact, I feel like at the [college prep] level parents are more like I don't know, we've had a lot of parents just like be very appreciative of everything we do.
Parents can become adversarial over grades	863-868	And, um, but at the honors level, it's a little more like, like, um, adversarial. What do you mean my kid got a C on this? Yeah, they got a C, like this one grade like, you, there's a lot of room for improvement. There's no, like, it's all about the grade point average
Parent communication at honors is more stressful	948-952	You're going to have all those emails. Not that we don't write emails to parents but like it's the emails from parents that are like. What do you mean about this grade? And like, Why is? I don't know, there's a lot more questioning of and having to explain yourself to people.
This job doesn't get easier over time	859-861	I'm like I kept saying to myself, you know, like the first year's gonna be hard But every year's gonna get easier. And the one thing that has happened here is that not any year has gotten easier.
There is an implied pressure to keep changing and not rely on old materials	865-869	it's an implied pressure to not do the same thing and so we're always making and doing here which is not a thing that happened my first go around
It has not gotten easier	975-979	But it's an interesting thing because I because my first year was a deer in the headlights. Second year didn't get easier. Third year, didn't get easier. And year of year seven, it's like not really easier.
The expectation to be better is part of our culture	979-983	I don't know who puts that expectation on. But like, you're always trying to be better and do better. And so you're, you're wondering like how to get at things in different ways.
I didn't feel the same pressure in a previous school	863-868	but I didn't have that same pressure not to And I always wanted to do better but I didn't have the same pressure to remake my stuff year to year change things
Grading is always a stress	992-994	it's never gotten easier. I've never figured out how to not have the pile of stuff to grade.
I don't know the source of the pressure	1005-1006	There's just a weird pressure but I don't know where it it's coming from.

(continued)

Theme	Line	Quote
The pressure doesn't come from leadership	1006-1011	It's not coming from you guys. Like not you and [my dean], I don't think like Because I don't interact with [my dean] unless she like comes to my room or like I come seek her out. It's not like she's like, you need to do X, Y and Z like so I don't know. I don't know.
Teaching has not gotten easier	1013-1017	It's like no, it's never gotten easier. And I was hoping it was because I was like when I taught the first time I didn't have kids. And now I've got kids and like it's even worse, right?

Appendix G

Summary Table of Personal Experiential Themes

Theme	Participant Number				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	Developing self-efficacy	Reliance on mentor	Education as a passion	Being supported in finding the passion for teaching	Finding the passion for teaching
2	Appreciative of the advantages	Finding her place as an educator	Developing self-efficacy	High expectations - internal and external	Coaching as a stress and a passion
3	Stressful feelings involving lack of control	Growth as an educator	Relationships and conflicts with colleagues	Colleagues as a support system	Developing self-efficacy
4	Colleagues as a support system	Teacher-student relationships	Communication and support from leadership	Support of students as a priority	High expectations and workload stress
5	Struggles to collaborate effectively	Relationships with colleagues	Concerns about parent influence on standards	Importance of participant leadership	Thinking about change
6	Leadership as a support system	Importance of communication	Relationships with students	The need for constant adjustment and flexibility as a stressor	Parents as a stressor and a support
7	Concerns about direction of school priorities	Developing self-efficacy	Support systems in and out of school	Efficacy as a source of resilience	A culture of achievement and success
8	Awareness of own limitations	Relationships with leadership	Leadership as a source of stress	Leadership communication as a stressor	Relationships with colleagues
9	Awareness of student need	School as place of support and challenge	Impact of job stresses		Relationships with leadership
10	Impact of community/parents				Supporting my own resilience

(continued)

Theme	Participant Number				
	6	7	8	9	10
1	Developing efficacy as a teacher	Opening a new school	Growth in self-efficacy as a teacher	Teaching as a lifestyle	Finding my place as a teacher
2	Holding myself to a high standard	Setting and maintaining high standards and expectations	Holding students to high expectations	Efficacy as a teacher	Self-efficacy as a teacher
3	Struggles with colleagues in PLC	Colleagues as a source of support	Holding each other to high expectations	Resiliency as part of the job	Academic challenges with students
4	Struggles with partnerships	Colleagues as a source of stress	Colleagues as a support system	Artificial intelligence as a stressor in education	Behavioral challenges with students
5	Colleagues as a support	Finding the balance	Workload stress	Time as a stressor	Colleagues as a teaching support system
6	Developing resiliency	Leadership as a support	Relationships with parents	Administrator incompetence as a stressor	Colleagues as a source of joy and resilience
7	This school is different from other places	Leadership as a stressor	Administration as a support	Frustration with an administrative process	Workload as a source of stress
8	The extra demands as a source of stress	Relationships with students	Administration as a source of stress	Leadership as a stressor	Leadership as a source of stress
9	Administration as a source of support (usually)	Holding the students to standards		Leadership as a source of support	Leadership as a source of support
10		Holding the parents to standards			

Appendix H

Group Experiential Themes (GET) and Supporting Quotations

GET 1: Resilience results from meaningful work and finding the balance.

But I believe so strongly in those things for the students. And so, it's sort of reminding myself like that. (#4, 163-165)

I mean, I think that seeing the result of my work in the kids that reminds me of my resilience and, like, makes me feel like I'm actually making progress. And that not all of my work is for naught. (#4, 197-201)

And then I had to take care of myself and I think that was an eye opener like Covid, too. You have to take care of yourself first, or you can't be there for, for anyone else. (#7, 244-247)

Just to kind of, like, stick with it long enough through some of the really, really hard times like hybrid learning or having my own small children or behaviors and administration that isn't supportive, like, you know that they're—at some point it is going to change. (#8, 339-344)

And I think, like, those pieces are where the resiliency is in this profession. Specifically, I don't think it's necessarily always about me. I think it's really about, like, my part in the bigger system than it is anything, because it is more about the example and thinking about the bigger picture, then it is about thinking about me. I thought about me then it'd be a very different thing, but (laughs) (#9, 376-384)

But we came in every day and every day I'd look at [my partner] and I'm like, okay today it's a new day, and we're gonna try this thing or we're gonna, like, don't—we're not gonna give up on them (#10, 129-132)

I think this is a really good place to work. I think we're lucky. It's like a bubble. I—if I ever leave teaching it will be, I left. It won't be that I left here to go somewhere else. So, I think this is the best place there is to teach. I, well, I'm not just saying that I actually believe it. (#5, 770-775)

We do all this for them and putting them at the center of, like, the work. And so, you know, I think there's sort of the academics but then there's also, like, the extras, right? (#4, 165-169)

The last two years have been a challenge to me as a teacher to, like, wake up and see the value in what I'm doing and, like, come back and try to do better. Get them to do better. That's been challenging. (#10, 269-271)

Subtheme 1a: Meaningful work and student need

It's that give and take, I love working with students that legitimately are dealing with complicated things, and that's what I feel like I sacrifice this other stuff so that I get to know this. (#1, 310-313)

And I think for me what I've—over the years—what I realized is that I'm here to teach people how to read, write, speak. At the end of the day, nothing matters outside of that. (#1, 364-367)

Like you don't give up on people and you don't, you don't give up on kids (#2, 593-595)

I think what makes me feel resilient is my interactions with the students. For example. I know I did a really amazing job in my last advisory (#3, 315-317)

It's one of the most rewarding things that I do. I like to think that what I do here defines me. (#3, 273-274)

But, I really, like, if that—if like, that's the one takeaway, like even through all the stress and sort of, like, the high expectations. Like, I believe in what we do. (#4, 659-661)

I'm gonna be a teacher. I know I'm good at that. Um, I know I had good success. (#6, 70-71)

I have a tough time with kids who aren't self-motivating. And that's been something I've needed to work on so that in and of itself has taken some resilience to just try to reach them somehow.

(#6, 127-131)

So then it's just trying and trying and trying and that led to some burnout for a while and then you recalibrate and you get right back to it (#6, 278-281)

And I was like, you know what, I—I do want to teach. Like, this is what this is what I'm supposed to do. (#10, 30-32)

I don't know if I can call myself, but I think I try to be resilient here because I want to be the best teacher that I can be. (#10, 399-401)

And I love that we can change and we don't sort of resort to like, well, this is the way we've always done it. So, this is the way we're going to do it. I think that's super important (#4, 441-444)

Every school comes with its, like, benefits and its challenges. And I will take the challenges of this, like, a rigorous school. (#5, 264-266)

But the time that we actually have dedicated in our schedule to work with one another to make our curriculum, make—make things better for kids is just ideal here. Doesn't happen everywhere. (#7, 303-307)

I think you have to be resourceful and try to figure out each individual kid and how, how to reach them. Because what works for one doesn't work for the next one. So, you got to figure that out. You can't give up. (#2, 602-606)

They need you. It's actually in your practice like you need to be at the top of your game. You need to believe in them when they don't believe in themselves even though they're, they're getting that from other people. They need to see that from their instructor. (#2, 330-335)

I am fearful of a job that doesn't give me like doesn't give me, like, stimulation or make me feel like I'm doing something of importance. Not that I think I'm doing something so important but I

have a task. I feel like I know what I'm doing and I do think that my job makes a difference. (#5, 289-294)

But [the principal] rang a bell with me recently, when he said like this, these kids get one chance at high school. We need to be there for them and, and that helps. I always now think about that and how you're right. Like these kids, I feel like I've done the same thing over and over and over again. But every kid that is in there is right there. This is their first time in this class and this is their first time in, like, with me in this room and so I really do have to bring it for them and, and it's, it's super—I think it's important for all of us to keep remembering that. (#7, 227-237)

I'm trying more to be that person for them. And I think that, I think that the reason why I come here every day is for them. (#7, 351-353)

Was that, was the whole entire IB curriculum. Is that we're expecting these kids to do so much more into like, not necessarily, like, do anything different than any other school, but to think about things differently and that's what I really appreciated. (#8, 112-117)

So it doesn't just, like, end up in the trash so they can see that feedback and then they can use it for their next one. And the difference is just, it's wild to me how much better they're getting at it. (#8, 155-158)

I'm like, [partner], we have to teach all kids like not just the easy ones, not just the ones we don't have to chase down, like, and so this is the challenge, like how do we help these kids? That's, that's what keeps pushing me is, like, I don't want just the easy path, but this is not, it's definitely not an easy path. This this belt of kids, (#10, 427-433)

Subtheme 1b: The struggle to find the balance and support their own resilience

It was my first job, like, and I'm still here. (#1, 54)

Yep, here I am. (#4, 58-60)

Um, I mean, I think so because I showed back up the next day (laughs). (#9, 364-365)

I don't know, would I call myself resilient? I guess so, because like the last years have been hard and I, like, I'm still here. (#10, 412-414)

I don't even know if I would use that word to describe me. (#1, 323-324)

I know if the word is an interesting word because I don't think anybody sees themselves that way and it's a word that you don't use to describe yourself. (#1, 724-727)

I don't know what makes me resilient because of partially I feel like I'm not resilient. I'm just such a creature of habit that staying is easier than going and change is really hard. (#5, 401-405)

But it feels like those things are being pushed as the priority. And that's not really what I'm good at. I can really help someone write a thesis statement. I really don't know how to give an Advisory experience because I also—I just—it's just not me. This is me; this is not. (#1, 465-469)

And so, there are these things that I think, over the last couple of years, where I've just had to build a bit of a barrier. Um, you know, these things can't happen for me to make sure that I can teach reading, writing, speaking. (#1, 383-386)

So, those type of things make all of the other things. The not so pleasant things. They overshadow it to a point where it doesn't matter (#3, 326-328)

I don't work in the summer. Like I take—I try to, like, be—I take full advantage of the summer and like, I tell myself, like you're not gonna work in the summer because the fall is gonna be a dead out sprint. (#5, 214-218)

I just have started to, like, shift my mindset a lot. I used to get very, very stressed out. (#5, 208-209)

I'm much better now at realizing what my strengths and what my where my capabilities are and that I don't have to be everything that everybody else is as well. (#6, 281-284)

But now me going home now is my declaration of being done. And I think that has been a good, good reset for me. (#6, 300-302)

My time at home and my time and my personal life is my priority. (#9, 81-82)

The grading is annoying but, like it takes longer, like I never meet the two-week deadline but I don't stress about that anymore. (#9, 666-668)

Do I have the time to always do that? No, but especially now, like, I really try super hard and, like, I've been doing this for years to just not bring work home and like now, it's even harder to bring work home. So I try to be really efficient. (#9, 803-808)

Not right now. (laughs) I'm so tired. (#10, 388)

Though, there have been a few times this year where I'm like, I don't know. I don't know, like, how much longer I can do this? It's like. It's kind of killing me a little bit. (#10, 414-418)

It makes me worried, you know, I—I'm not doing what I could do, I'm not doing enough for them. Because I could be doing a better job, but I—I can't. (#3, 552-554)

I see a lot of like letting go sometimes, especially now with, like, being mom and having other things in my life of just sort of being, like, all right? Well, like, those papers aren't going to get graded this week. We'll try for next week and like, but knowing that sort of, like, big picture.

That's not gonna, like, you know, make or break anyone (#4, 604-613)

I don't get, like, the angry emails. I mean I have before, like, I mean everybody has gotten them before but like, uh, and but again, that doesn't, it also wouldn't, doesn't bother me anymore. (#8, 786-790)

Sometimes you have to look back and be, and Covid, even changed that a little bit where we're like, wait, why am I working here for all of these hours? And why am I putting in this time? (#7, 120-124)

GET 2: Leadership is a source of support more than a source of stress

It's not coming from you guys. Like not you and [my dean], I don't think, like, because I don't interact with [my dean] unless she, like, comes to my room or, like, I come seek her out. It's not like she's, like, you need to do X, Y and Z, like, so I don't know. I don't know. (#10, 1006-1011)

[This school] doesn't get everything right, but everything is done with intent. There's a purpose. There's a reason. (#6, 167-169)

And so that's why I really wanted to stay and work because I believed in the vision of it and I believed in where the school was going and I liked that there were all of the collaborative pieces available. (#9, 49-53)

A general statement would be people don't realize how good they have it while they have it and then it would be very, very tough if any of you were replaced, I think. And I think those who may not have that sentiment, just don't understand because maybe they haven't worked in other places, (#2, 745-749)

I don't have a warm fuzzy relationship with my supervisor. But I know that if I need that supervisor, they'll be there. They'll absolutely be there. And that's okay. (#3, 502-505)

Sort of the, like, agreement between like the teachers and the leadership of, like, these things can't all get done. And so, like, you know. Let's make sure we all we have the same priorities in mind. (#4, 508-512)

This vision that we sort of set out with of, you know, leadership isn't this sort of, like, removed idea of, like, people sitting in their offices, but they're leading as, like, a member of the community. (#4, 241-244)

We're pretty good community here overall teaching staff wise. That's not the case elsewhere for sure. And I think culture and crafting that as a leader is important to do and it's hard to do, but [this school] found a way to overall make this place, kind of a community. (#6, 465-470)

But I'm still here because she was very supportive right? Like you, you guys, like I can't—I can't attest to what you do as a dean. I can only attest to you, like how you've listened to me even though I'm not in your department and whatever but, like, you know she was like, we all have those days. That's a real day. I'm like, and I did learn from that. And we talked about some of the things I learned (#10, 637-633)

100% failed that day. Um, but I'm still here because of how supportive she is, right? Because she wasn't like, you're like the worst teacher I've ever seen. (#10, 653-656)

I love how he, like, tries to steer us each year. You know, he has an overarching theme for the year and a message and stuff. (#10, 742-745)

Then there's this feeling that we're more about community building than developing knowledge. And that bothers me. (#1, 451-452)

I don't think they do. I don't like, I don't, I don't have stress with them. (#2, 911-912)

Subtheme 2a: Leadership as a source of support

I've been really grateful over dealing with, like, sticky situations with parents, where things come out of the blue and you're like, wait, what? What's happening? Like what did I say (#1, 532-535)

Anytime I've ever needed something the direct line to me, has always been, like, here you go.

What do you need? How can I get it? How can I get it faster to you? Like what? Let me find out that answer. (#2, 920-923)

Leadership in a positive way. They're there. The encouragement is there. (#3, 371-372)

And I really trust the leadership team at the high school. (#4, 277-278)

I don't always necessarily agree with everyone's—like, his decisions all the time but I really, like, trust him and trust that I could talk to him about it (#4, 281-284)

But I really believe that the whole leadership team is really, like, trying to make the best decision in the moment for everyone. (#4, 286-288)

[My administrator]'s doing a fabulous job because he's a good communicator. And he really lets us know that he has our back on stuff, or if he doesn't know the answer to something, he lets us know. (#4, 262-266)

I feel like I can be myself and do my job to the best of my abilities. (#5, 269-270)

I think having a, having a warning about those parents, like those parents. If they're on our roster and you know that they're like, heavy hitters, it is good to know that. So that's, like, one way administration I think can help and also I think that you guys do when you can, so if you know I think it, you're pretty good at giving heads up like this parent like got really angry. (#5, 667-674)

So they know I work hard but I also think that, like, it's understood that we're doing a lot of work in our personal time and we're like functioning as professionals. Um, and to me that's like worth a lot. (#5, 277-281)

I think leadership does help with it. Like, there's usually changes that are made or I think also, sometimes if there are years where there's, like, definitely issues happening that [my dean] is aware of she comes and sits in more frequently in a PLC. (#5, 573-577)

But I think what keeps me here is the fact that both of the people who I've who have been, like, the head leaders of the school and the people who I work with who are the deans and the, you know, assistant principals have I think been pretty clear in their expectations of us and fair (#5, 501-506)

Out there what I thought was just like, teaching 101, I see is not the norm out there and it's in a lot of places. It's just they hire teachers and here go do, go teach. (#6, 145-148)

And you know, I know you have people that might take advantage of things here, but for the most part it's clear we trust you to be a professional. Go do your job, the best way how. And we'll correct anything that might need correcting, but I think that's the biggest difference, you know? (#6, 236-242)

I just feel like administration here, for one, for the most part, at least from an outsider's perspective, there seems to be more of a team. (#6, 221-223)

There seems to be again that that intent. But also there's an attempt to not have that 'we're the administration you're the teachers, we dictate and everything filters down.' There's also here a lot more trust in our professionalism. (#6, 224-228)

We do have the support from Admin and from other people to make sure that we're, like, raising our bar too, and making sure that we're not letting kids fall through the cracks, (#7, 294-297)

Having them feel, feeling like they're one of us. I do feel like everyone has an open-door policy. I can go and talk to anyone I need to at any time. (#7, 373-375)

I do feel like, like, everybody has your back. If you, you know, have a problem with someone, they do seem to have—or a parent or a kid or anything—they do seem to have your back (#7, 375-379)

Um but when, like, [administrators] come in I get a full transcript. I get an analysis and, like, I'll get like a 0.75 or 0.5 with like an explanation and it's thorough and it gives me recommendations on things that maybe I could try. Or things that this any type of observation and that's actually really, really helpful for me. (#8, 426-432)

And I don't feel like that's happening here because I feel like there's an expectation from administration. There's a lot of support to say, hey, this is what's new, let's kind of do this. Hey, this is what's new. Let's do this. (#8, 270-274)

I think, knowing that the administration is consistent and fair and actually cares about like the progress of the school rather than just them being there. I don't even know what else you would really want to do as an administrator. I can't even imagine like not wanting to see your teachers and your school progress (#8, 457-463)

For me is to feel like I have a backup system, like there's somebody who has my back at all times, not that, like, I've ever any type of would ever needed it. (#8, 508-511)

Here, I feel like we have freedom, we're treated as professionals and if you're treated as a professional, you're going to act like a professional. Maybe not always. But I think, like, theoretically it sounds, I think that's a big difference. The minutia that happens at other places. (#8, 521-526)

Like, it's nice when you guys say like there's nothing necessary for us to do, so we're canceling, a staff meeting or, you know, whatever. Like that, I think has helped. (#9, 729-732)

So that was good, like, I think that to me, like, helped me feel a little bit more resolved. (#9, 514-515)

Um your doors are open, you're out in the halls and I appreciate that. (#9, 544-546)

PLCs are infrequently visited. But I think, at least for me, the last number of years, they've been frequently in visited—infrequently visited, excuse me—but I think that's because I've been on very functional PLCs and I know that, like, and I say that because when I've been on dysfunctional PLCs, there's been more of a presence and an appearance and so, like, it's things like that. (#9, 546-554)

He, I feel like, demonstrates a lot of trust, I think in the staff and I think like that is a common thing that I hear said (#9, 570-572)

Again I, I think your availability, like doors are always open. Even doors that, like, maybe I don't always feel like I'm authentically heard. Those doors are still open so, like, I can check the box and feel a little better (#9, 751-755)

We need to do this, we need to do this and he'll problem solve with us, he'll work with us and he will—he's—he'll communicate. (#8, 411-414)

Subtheme 2b: Leadership as a source of stress

I think that in that role, you just—you gotta hold the line because I have a hard time holding a line. Right? I'm very—you care about kids. When you start to care about kids, you try to, like, help them as much as you can. But there also is a point where, like, they have to understand that there's a line. Like, I've helped you out. Now, like, what are you actually gonna do here?

(#10, 721-728)

And there have been times where I felt like they should have had my back. And they didn't. For whatever reason. (#3, 345-347)

And we're just a big school. And so it's, it's hard, like, there's—it's hard to be totally transparent and have everything be communicated because there's just so many people and so much going on all the time. (#4, 288-292)

I think sometimes there is a lot like more asked of us, like a lot put on our plate. And some of it is just, like, timing and how that messaging is like conveyed at times that are, like, not very convenient for them. That time that those messages and feeling like I can't—like I can't process this right now. I can't do this right now. (#4, 413-419)

[District leader] seemed to just question everything and [the principal] didn't seem to be standing up to that and that was really, really frustrating. And maybe he was but he wasn't willing to, like, say that he was standing up to it. And so those times were just, it felt, like, like things were crumbling, like who we were, like our identity was crumbling. (#4, 378-384)

I don't blame, like, the, the principal or the, like, deans or anything like that. I just I do sometimes feel like, oh, okay, we're talking about how we can, like, lessen our load. But, like, then four more things will be, like, put on our plate. (#5, 521-525)

But it's like, you're still asking me to do, like, I'm still being asked to do this. So, in one sense, it's good that it's recognized, but it's also like, Okay, you recognize, this is more, but, like, I still have to do it. (#6, 365-369)

Sometimes, I think we could have a little bit more discipline with some kiddos (#7, 379-381)

I do feel like sometimes there's inconsistencies amongst the APs. (#7, 391-393)

But then, if I make it, I'm a colleague telling another colleague what to do, it's like your own children telling them, telling each other what to do, that doesn't work. So mom has to do it. Or dad has to do it, so that they don't get mad at each other. (#7, 565-570)

Now I'm like, well, of course, you're being, like, this is not a good decision. Like, they need—students need to be taught consequences. They need to be like, and they need to have things explained to them, but they also can't get away with it. (#8, 367-372)

Inconsistent. I feel like we're hearing only when I'm in there during block three, I'm hearing 'it needs to be quiet' and you can't be in there if you're on, if you're, if it's lunch time and it's managed time, but then I'm also hearing 'Oh, it's fine if they're in here, if everyone's in here, and they're talking.' (#8, 583-588)

That I found incredibly frustrating and honestly wasteful and it ended up in hours of my time wasted and all of these different routes were gone down that did not need to go, like, to go down whatsoever. Um, but like, that's what I'm frustrated with, I think the most. (#9, 226-231)

So, like, I felt like my expertise and my understanding and knowledge of it was completely sidelined because that specific individual didn't have a clue as to what they were looking at. And so, it just kind of felt like I wasn't trusted in like my ability to be professional and do my job in the way that which I've been trained by the district that I work in. And then also like for it to—like, it's hard for me to, to be the one who has to educate someone who is supposed to be one, making very serious decisions for people and two, that is, like, supposed to be in charge of me and, like, be my leader. Like, I have a very hard time with that personally. (#9, 199-211)

So, whatever. I just find that, I don't give a resolution and things are not resolved. Um, when I send them to one compared to when I send them to another, (#9, 347-350)

Yeah, in—incompetence, Martha. That's the—that's the biggest one I think for me. And, like, lack of knowledge and understanding (#9, 891-900)

A common thing that I hear said often is that, like, if there's going to be accountability, [Assistant Principal]'s going to be the person to actually hold accountability. (#9, 572-575)

And so, it just kind of felt like I wasn't trusted in like my ability to be professional and do my job in the way that which I've been trained by the district that I work in. (#9, 202-206)

Like, I'm trying to be a professional, they're trying to not get in trouble. I think it's, like, I can't stand the fact that they're treated equally when it is that the two—the two objectives are incredibly different. So then I don't think that's considered a lot. (#9, 920-925)

The process. Like you said, the process that I went through um, and the lack of trust that I felt I was given in that process is really what was more upsetting to me. (#9, 158-162)

I think the other thing that gets in the way is the, the false questions, or like, the at least the appearance of it being a false question. Like it seems like decisions have already been made. So why bother asking, just make the decision. (#9, 910-915)

Like decreasing failures is just a ridic—a ridiculous ask. There is some reason, there's a reasonableness to failing, we learn through failure and sometimes you do have to fail. (#10, 803-806)

The holy grail is an unattainable task and so when you have people who work so hard already, and you set up the year with an unattainable task. It colors the whole year. (#10, 751-754)

Well, I mean I feel like [the principal] told us a couple years ago I want to take something off your plate. Nothing has ever, ever come off our plate. In fact, I feel like there's more on it. (#10, 489-492)

Like, WIN is a bigger workload then not, and I understand the value of WIN, but like, when a kid doesn't show up, I'm certainly, like asking me to email and say, like I asked, like is one more thing, one more email I'm sending instead of grading a paper, Like, that's the piece of WIN. Like, if there was some system that leadership could come up with where it's not on teachers to track, like, if there was a scheduling thing, where kids sign up and we just take attendance and it's reported and I don't have to write or document, that would be a great that would be a great thing. I would be all in on WIN (#10, 492-504)

Because some kids understand there are lines, and some kids don't, and need an adult to hold a firm line. And the kids who are not having a firm line, think they can do whatever they want to do, and that makes our job harder as teachers. (#10, 551-556)

Yeah, so just communication. I think. When communication isn't working, I guess, in any part of this job that is stressful. (#2, 793-795)

All the sort of nuance that comes with that, and if you say this but, like, what are we really expecting to do? And just, like, tell us what we're actually expected to do (#4, 493-496)

You should just basically tell people 'this is gonna be hard, but it needs to get done.' Not everybody responds to that though. (#6, 379-381)

It's been a like the some of the paradoxical [sic] messaging about it, like has been hard to decipher, like about, like, really what is needed. And I think, like, that—that's clouded this year a bit too.

So then we talk about adding a stress. There's an added stress. (#10, 823-829)

GET 3: High expectations and an overwhelming workload both support and challenge resilience

I think because we are all—I mean, it's like being on the best team. And everybody wants to be captain, like, that's what it feels like. (#2, 939-942)

You know you're always going to bring in your best effort; you know that you're always going to do what you can to stand out, right? Because you want to add value, you don't want to detract value. (#2, 942-946)

And we're a whole school of, like, type A teachers who need to, like, do the thing at the highest level. (#4, 484-486)

Everyone thinks that, like, the longer you're in teaching the easier it gets but my experience has been the better I get at this job, the harder it is, because the expectations for myself, like I can't

just reuse things every year. I—and I understand a lot better how to give kids feedback. (#5, 135-140)

It's an overwhelming feeling when you are trying to be good at a job like this because it's just—you're never, you're always going to need to work to be better, I guess. (#5, 368-371)

When I first started, um, more so than now, there was a definite, like, keeping up with the Joneses for me. Um, and oftentimes I would feel like, oh why aren't I doing that? (#6, 271-274)

And so it was hard, I think, at the beginning of it was, like our message from the people that hired us were like, you're gonna work real hard and they call it, like, come to Jesus meeting or whatever it is here now. (#7, 81-86)

And then when we have new people coming in and saying, sometimes saying, Wow. Like well, I'm not doing that. This isn't in my contract. And we're like, well, no, this is just always what we've done. This is how you're supposed to work, this is how you should. (#7, 115-120)

He shook my hand and he said, congratulations on making it to [this district] and just remember, you may have been the best somewhere else, but here we're all the best so you're just one of us. (#8, 253-256)

And um, it's like at the beginning when you first start teaching, that veteran teacher always says to don't worry, in like five or 10 years, you'll be fine. You'll have more time on your hands because you'll have it all figured out. No, like 20 years in and I'm still, like, recreating the wheel. But I think that's what we should be doing. (#8, 487-494)

It's an implied pressure to not do the same thing, and so we're always making and doing here which is not a thing that happened my first go around (#10, 859-861)

I don't know who puts that expectation on. But like, you're always trying to be better and do better. And so you're, you're wondering like how to get at things in different ways. (#10, 975-979)

Every school comes with its, like, benefits and its challenges. And I will take the challenges of this, like, a rigorous school. (#5, 264-266)

Subtheme 3a: Holding each other to high standards

We also know how to challenge each other too, which is really nice. (#1, 600-602)

I am the fastest person to take someone's criticism, be like, okay, how can I fix it? Like, what do you need for me? What am I not doing? (#2, 518-521)

When you're at a top performing place asking for help. Kind of has to—you have to admit that like, you're not at your best. (#2, 479-482)

Everyone's doing their own thing, to make sure that they're at the best of their capability. Um, it's very competitive. (#2, 950-952)

But I would argue, you know, everyone else is too, in that way. But yeah, if you mess up? It's not good. So, but I don't know if that's a bad thing. I think I look at that as a valuable... (#2, 962-966)

I think it holds us to account a little bit and makes us all, I don't know, work harder, which is stressful. (#5, 334-336)

I think my experience has been like we sort of all hold each other to a high standard. (#5, 307-309)

I just see that, like, culturally around the school. Like, I think people are always—It feels like someone is always doing something that makes me realize like, oh I could do this a little bit better—like, I can be a little bit of a better advisor than I am (#5, 327-331)

This year, it's just been kind of like, oh my gosh, a lot of wake-up calls. I feel like I'm just falling short of my own expectations (#6, 71-74)

But I find myself worrying a little bit. She judging what I'm doing? Is she? Does she think this is too intense? Not intense? Is she comparing English and going, Oh yeah. They like English better. Again. That's just my internal. (#6, 558-562)

I feel like I'm constantly being challenged and every time I turn around, I'm like, well, what can we do to make this better? (#8, 485-487)

We've been constantly working real hard and I want to work real hard for these people. (#7, 97-99)

All the people that I work with and the people, like, we set this standard really, really high. (#7, 99-100)

I want it to be true that we all still hold each other to those standards and I do think we do. (#7, 138-139)

I really, I feel like a broken record but I really do feel like we, we push each other to be better in ours, and we do have the support from Admin and from other people to make sure that we're, like, raising our bar too, and making sure that we're not letting kids fall through the cracks, and we're not letting each other just kind of, like, float. (#7, 292-298)

No. I hold myself to a really high standard. (#8, 653)

I think I'm really lucky that I've worked at a place that has forced me to grow in different ways. I don't think this is a place where you can stay and not grow. (#2, 983-986)

I think that the PLC culture here—and that didn't exist in a lot of the other places that I worked on. So, like, we would have meetings and like, certainly there was like camaraderie, but I think my experience has been, like, we sort of all hold each other to a high standard. (#5, 303-308)

So in other words, I don't feel our curriculum is as rigorous as it used to be. And I think that that has happened a little bit outside this building just the trying to make the parents happy and I think that that's a big mistake. (#3, 521-525)

Subtheme 3b: The workload is a result of the expectations

You're not, like, super organized on any given day, it could just blow up in your face. (#1, 291-293)

Those feelings of, like, I'm not doing my job, or those feelings of I'm not doing enough or I—I—I—I'm just not doing what I'm supposed to be doing. (#3, 185-188)

Can be super stressful with everything that's asked of us, you know, like all the extras of Advisory and Senior Project and Intercession. (#4, 160-163)

There is a lot like more asked of us, like a lot put on our plate. (#4, 413-414)

It's a double-edged sword because it's like, oh, it's like, we're always changing and, like, trying to like, you know, flex on the spot to, like, figure out the next thing. So, those are the, like, the little things, like the day-to-day things that I think it's stressful. (#4, 444-451)

There's just so many things that we're expected to do here that we wouldn't be expected to do somewhere else. Intercession. Advisory. (#5, 336-338)

And I think people here know, we're working really hard all of the time. (#5, 270-272)

I just feel like I think, ultimately, it's that the expectation of so much to—to do, like, but one of the things that [this school] drives on is the fact that it does things like Intercession. It does Advisory. It does Senior Project. (#6, 311-315)

I'm like, it's true though, because everyone rises above, like everyone wants, like, to come up with something new, nobody wants to kind of, like, sit and do the same things. (#8, 262-265)

So it's like, managing that and the planning to make sure that it is appropriate, dynamic, differentiated, all of those pieces. And I'm not just, like, reusing the same things over and over and over again. Um, because I think that's not always the—in the best interest of everybody. (#9, 613-619)

But the only way I can do that is to just spend, like, an enormous amount of time outside of school in my free time grading their essays and putting feedback on it. And there's no—there is no shortcut to that. It just has to get done. Um, I can't procrastinate it because if I do that, I can't um, teach my next lessons. (#5, 143-148)

They're going to use it. They're already using it. They're going to use it in their later life and their jobs are going to develop in a way that like we can't imagine anyway, so you might as well try and help them figure it out. So they're not making the mistake like that one student did when the consequences are real. (#9, 155-157)

But we would have been working hard for those kids. Whether we were given the impossible task or not. The unattainable task. (#10, 799-801)

I've seen the effects of a lapse in communication or whatever with an angry parent. So I, I think those sorts of things drive anxiety, as well. (#5, 349-353)

But I do think, I mean, there's, there's a lot of expectation on us, and usually the—there's acknowledgment of that expectation. That it's a lot and sometimes, there's not. And sort of, you know, I guess, like, there's the expectation of things to be done and how well it needs to be done. (#4, 478-484)

Go to school, work, and every minute that I have, like, I don't eat lunch in that, like, you know, the staff room, that's a choice but like, I mean that time I work through my lunch, I work through

the Advisory that's not my Advisory. Any, any extra like minutes of the day that I'm at school, I'm working, which is, I'm sure true for most people. (#5, 176-183)

A lot of just feeling overwhelmed all of the time and thinking, like, how can I—what kind of like—what can I do? (#5, 210-212)

I feel like my stress is being added to all of the time. Like, I feel like things are being put on my plate and I'm like, one more thing (#5, 514-516)

Like, we're all working so hard. Um, and it just doesn't feel like you cannot work hard, because you have to be ready for the next day. (#5, 357-360)

We always say we don't have enough—enough time and nobody has enough time. (#7, 301-303)

Like, let's start a new book because we don't like this book anymore. Okay, now our new book takes a lot of work to get that in there and so it's our—we're our own enemy. Worst enemies are that sometimes. (#7, 614-618)

Um, I have piles and piles and piles of grading to do, because there's so much feedback. And maybe that's a me thing too. (#8, 531-533)

Um, I mean, it's like all of the... It's really time. Like, I don't feel like I have enough time to do the basic things that I need to do in order to just be like a functional classroom teacher (#9, 606-609)

Like, you know we have a two-week turnaround for grades that's, like, impossible with the number of kids I have and, like, the type of work that I'm supposed to be evaluating for where they're at level-wise (#9, 609-613)

We spent a lot of time like planning new things and making new assessments. (#10, 229-230)

I don't really grade much on my prep, and thank God we PLC because that's when we, like, plan and like, sort of think about what we're going to do and what that assessment is going to look

like. And we're building that together, but they're just not enough hours in the day to do all the things. (#10, 327-333)

It's never gotten easier. I've never figured out how to not have the pile of stuff to grade. (#10, 992-994)

GET 4: Colleagues are both a great support and a stressor

I've always equated partnerships seriously to like roommate or college roommate. The first few months, like when you first meet them, you're like, oh they're great. We're—I don't—I don't care if you make your bed, or I don't care if you are up and I'm in bed, no problem. And then the little things just start to just start to get at you. And it's hard. It's hard to do. That's that partnership is hard to do. (#6, 585-592)

I think that's the most stressful for me is, like, when any of our personal—or personal, like, relationships are compromised because of this place when it shouldn't be that—that's what's best for kids (#7, 516-519)

The PLC was just one of those, like, places—not of collaboration, of stress. (#1, 165-167)

I try to be really diplomatic and give my opinion without sounding bratty, I guess or that's not really the best word, but we've had like some contentious plc's and, like, because I try to avoid conflict I, think I usually try to smooth it over. (#5, 562-566)

We thought—we were hoping we were gonna have the same PLC, which is—was—is great this year. Last year, we had a rocky PLC. This year we have a great really super collaborative PLC.

I'm like [partner], we're gonna have a great PLC (#10, 441-446)

Subtheme 4a: Colleagues are a support system

Talking things out with her, has always been really helpful on how to navigate teaching. (#1, 577)

It's those individual, um, connections that they can be—feel so much better always, um, because they're the ones that are living in it too. (#1, 585-587)

Someone who can take an incident, not create judgment on the incident, and look at it, clearly and say, Yeah, you shouldn't have done that. Try this instead, or no, that was great. You're being too hard on yourself. She was really professional. So I do lean on her sometimes (#2, 879-885)

I love working with some of the teachers. We collaborate on the best way to help a student. Uh, I am able to learn from them. (#3, 274-277)

But just that act of listening, just it's a reset button like on your computer. It's that reset button and I'm good. (#3, 424-426)

Because I love them all and that's I think part of what keeps me at [this school] is that I really—I love my colleagues. (#4, 142-144)

A huge part of helping keep me afloat and like, I could not have done last year without them, like I would have drowned because it was so hard, (#4, 219-222)

I really feel like I have the best department, like the six of us. Like, I have like my best friends and colleagues who I trust, like, with anything, you know, like, there's never any hesitation to share. (#4, 517-520)

I have supports in the building, like [my partner] is a big support because we've, we always at least teach one class together and we help each other throughout the day, (#5, 738-741)

Whereas in the teaching role it's very much a community I feel like, so that was, that's what I really enjoy. (#6, 186-188)

Whereas here I have the office, I've got [my partner]. I've got my colleagues to just, just be talking things out and laugh with them, and vent with them as well. (#6, 198-201)

So that's again, the people just make a difference. And that's not the case everywhere, like we're pretty good community here overall teaching staff wise. That's not the case elsewhere for sure.

(#6, 463-467)

There's just this welcoming environment with—that's sharing. That's collaborative. It's like, here's all of my stuff. I taught this class. Here's all of my stuff. You do whatever you want with it. (#6, 484-487)

I do feel like we still do have that, but we're all running our own rat race all the time. And so sometimes you have to realize you have, take a minute and appreciate the people that are around you (#7, 263-267)

And then here, it was like, everyone was ready to go at all times. Everyone's ready to help each other. There was so much energy and like, people actually cared, and it was such a big difference. So, and I think that's the reason why we're a top school here. (#8, 875-880)

Oh, the other señoras. All of them and we all rely on each other too. Like if I need something, I know one of them is there in a heartbeat. (#8, 709-711)

If I'm like, looking for something, if I need, like, help coming up with an idea. I know that I can say, [colleague] look at this and she'll fix it, and be like [another colleague], this looks weird.

Can you fix it? And like [different colleague], look this over. I can have anybody look at it. They will they'll give me feedback on it or they'll say, Why are you doing this? I have this and they'll send me it already completed and it's awesome. (#8, 217-225)

I know that I can go to certain people or places or whatever. (#9, 808-810)

I think I was keeping [him] afloat, like trying to be positive (#10, 179-180)

Um, here like people, like we work so hard together. So that's what I think keeps people going. Is the collegiality and the professionalism here (#10, 300-303)

It helps to have a co-teacher who you can talk with. Because I don't always feel like I'm my best, right or that I've done the best job and you can you've got someone in the room and that you can be like, do you think that worked, or like what did you think of that? Like, what could we do to make that better versus being in the room by yourself. (#10, 400-408)

I actually like being a teacher here. Because, we have really good colleagues. And two really supportive deans. Like, and counsel, like counseling. Like there's just so much support and so much ability to talk to people who will empathize and help you and listen to you and strategize with you and share with you. (#10, 279-285)

Is the collegiality and the professionalism here and the actual care that people have for one another. And I think, like, without that, it would totally fall apart. (#10, 302-305)

It's colleagues, Martha. It's like those, like everybody I talk to in this building . [Teacher], like, I mean, like, we, we have amazing people here. (#10, 896-899)

That has allowed us to then to carry that over into, like, our work and so, like, you know, someone's helping you through something with like, has you self vulnerable like that? Like, you're not going to be afraid to be, like, this test went really badly, like, I think that that's part of it. (#4, 577-583)

My eight years before. I just lucked out and had amazing PLCs. They were collaborative, we calibrated. (#6, 77-79)

Like, there's a lot of venting in PLC and, like, trying to work out—Why is this happening or why is this not going whatever, like either the way it's supposed to, or why are they just not doing it? (#9, 782-785)

And so, being on a good PLC this year has been just, like, reinvigorating and helpful, you know. The PLC is important. It starts there. (Emphatic) (#10, 475-478)

Subtheme 4b: Colleagues can be a stressor

So, you're working with a partner, you're working with PLC that has two subjects and so they have to negotiate and figure that out. Um, and then a lot of times in our department, we are multiple PLC. So, like, negotiating the humanities versus like the small PLC or whatever little elective that you have, that has multiple people teaching. (#1, 65-71)

I don't know, as someone who was new into that PLC I wanted, I guess I was waiting for something else (#1, 128-130)

So, there's that and then there's this other level where you have this PLC that may or may not be functioning and you might be on two of them. (#1, 345-347)

It was just basically like I need to figure out. How to manage this move forward. Grow from it. (#2, 869-871)

Their actions and their words made me feel undervalued and insignificant. (#3, 188-189)

I still feel the same way with certain teachers. Yes, I don't think that'll ever change. They have a mindset and I'm not gonna make it my job to change their mindset that has to come from within them. (#3, 238-242)

So, I let it go. Instead of bringing it to my supervisor, instead of creating more tension or whatever, I chose to let it go. (#3, 179-182)

But the whole purpose is to have those conversations. It sort of felt like we weren't getting a whole lot being said. (#1, 122-123)

It just wasn't, we were so diametrically so different that there was collaboration was impossible without probably someone to facilitate (#1, 175-177)

You have all these other teachers who probably have really good reasons for wanting the specific goals that they have. And so how, how do we, how do we compromise? How do we get to that point? (#1, 626-629)

I think although it isn't always functioning great, I think there is opportunity for a voice and getting our voices in and I do think [my dean] helps when she knows that there's like something, maybe boiling. (#5, 593-599)

That's been frustrating because we're trying to figure out the course itself and where we want to take the kids and what skills they should have. And for them it's oh, we just we do this. [My partner] and I are like, but what's the why, you know? So that's about the sort of that's—that's been trying. (#6, 109-114)

I've had a lot of bad PLCs because I've been with [a different team] more times than not of my seven years here. I think just two years I was not in their PLC and they're very hard to work with. They're great teachers, they know their stuff, they just don't like to collaborate. They don't—like, they've got their thing that they want to do. And they don't want to, like, they don't like other people's ideas or at least they always give that impression, they don't like your ideas. (#10, 466-475)