Understanding the Factors that Build Teacher Resilience

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I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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"It always seems impossible until it's done."

Nelson Mandela

Abstract

The alarmingly high rates of teacher attrition in the UK and abroad are perhaps unsurprising given that teaching is consistently ranked among the top most stressful occupations. Up until relatively recently, researchers have sought to address this problem by investigating the causes of teacher stress and burnout, and the coping strategies that teachers may use in response to feeling stressed and burnt out. However, this has facilitated a deficit approach to understanding the problem, with teachers viewed as personally responsible for their stress and burnout because they have failed to engage in strategies to 'cope' with their problem. Rather than focusing on the idea of 'coping' with a 'problem', this research adopted a 'what-works' approach and investigated teacher resilience. This qualitative research adopted a phenomenological approach and data was collected over two phases using semi-structured interviews. In total, 30 participants were interviewed; 25 experienced mainstream class teachers in phase one of data collection and 5 mainstream primary school teachers in phase two of data collection. NVivo9 supported a thematic approach to data analysis, which identified themes in the strategies and major processes that facilitated the experience of teacher resilience. The findings reveal that complex interactions exist between the personal and environmental factors that facilitate the experience teacher resilience during professional challenges. The participants' conceptualisations of teacher resilience are compared and contrasted with previous research and theory-based literature on teacher resilience, and directions for future research are suggested. Implications for Educational Psychologists are discussed, including systemic interventions at the individual teacher and whole school level.

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Chapter One: Introduction

It is not always easy for teachers to define exactly what different people mean by the term 'successful educator', and more varied understandings of this term appear to exist among individuals within the education community than among those outside of it. High pressure and high expectations to be a successful educator, whatever the intended meaning, comes from a variety of sources and has a negative impact on the alarmingly high rates of teacher stress, teacher burnout, and teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2002; Borman & Dowling, 2008). There is widespread acknowledgement in psychology and education research, and in theory-based literature, that teachers have always experienced many of the demands that they currently face (Kyriacou, 2011; Larrivee, 2012). What is perplexing is *why* so many teachers continue to experience stress, long after the causes and alarming consequences for teachers and their pupils have been identified. Certainly, factors exist that have yet to be fully addressed by research and government initiatives aimed at reducing teachers' stress and increasing teachers' motivation and commitment.

The proposed research seeks to promote a new way forward on this issue by encouraging a move beyond research on teacher stress, towards deepening knowledge and understanding of teacher resilience. By providing rich insights into the experience of teacher resilience, the research hopes to illuminate how education professionals can build teacher resilience, and a desire within teachers to make teaching a lifelong profession. This is useful in light of reports that 'unprecedented numbers' of teachers are leaving the profession

(OECD, 2001; Scheopner, 2010; Borman & Dowling, 2008), and that the number of teachers who leave the profession within the first five years can range from one third to one half (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Evidence that emotional experiences impact on teachers' abilities to be rational and objective has led many professionals to argue that understanding the role of emotions is essential for the development of effective education programmes (O'Hanlon, 2000; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Fox-Wilson, 2004; Black-Hawkins, Florian & Rouse, 2007). Specifically, if teachers are to make valuable contributions to the lives of their learners, they must understand the role that their own emotions have in shaping their attitudes and responses to challenging behaviour (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Teachers with high resilience are more likely to encourage their students to have good mental health, feel safe in the classroom, and promote resilience in their pupils (Gu & Day, 2007). Furthermore, investigations into teacher motivation and commitment has led to widespread acknowledgement that a better understanding of teacher resilience is crucial for the development of education settings where teachers, and consequently pupil learning, thrives (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Gu & Day, 2007; Kyriacou, 2011). In light of arguments that the well-being of children and young people is inextricably linked to the well-being of their teachers, this research will make a timely contribution to the literature on how schools can promote positive learning environments (Day & Gu, 2009).

In my current role as Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), I have observed and met with many teachers who confide in me their feeling of high stress and burnout. This concerns me because very often this situation is not consistent across the school setting, and instead, varying levels of teacher stress and burnout exist. In addition, a wealth of literature highlights the detrimental impact of a negative emotional climate on pupil learning and progress (Hoy, 2013; Day & Qing, 2009; Gu & Day, 2013). When teacher stress becomes a barrier to pupil progress, I believe that Educational Psychologists (EPs) are obliged to consider and reflect upon this issue with the teacher and school. It is hoped that a better understanding of teacher perspectives on teacher resilience will have a positive influence on EP practice and enhance the impact that the profession has on pupils' lives and school communities.

1.1 Main Research Question

How do experienced mainstream schoolteachers conceptualise teacher resilience?

1.2 Sub questions

a) How do experienced mainstream class teachers understand teacher resilience?
b) What factors do experienced mainstream teachers identify as helpful for promoting teacher resilience?
c) What school processes promote teacher resilience?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the context of the current research by providing a thematic overview of key literature that is relevant to the investigation of teacher resilience. Whilst alternative ways of orienting a reader to research do exist (including presenting related research chronologically, or study by study), a thematic approach was selected in light of recommendations that this is a good way of conducting and reporting on literature reviews when the volume of research on a topic area is limited, and the extent of the readers' access or exposure to the research topic is unknown (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013).

According to Hofstee (2006), a good literature review is comprehensive, critical, and contextualised. It is suggested that this can be achieved by providing a theory base, a survey of published work that is relevant to the current research and a critical analysis of that work. The current chapter therefore involves a discussion and critical analysis of major explanatory theories, research and non-research-based literature on teacher stress and teacher resilience. It is intended that this approach will support the reader to appreciate the significance of the findings and interpretations of the current research.

The selection process for the literature review consisted of the following processes: deciding on keyword descriptors, choosing databases, establishing database search criteria, performing the database searches, choosing relevant articles and evaluating articles. The key search descriptors

chosen were 'resilience' and 'teacher'. Since this is an emerging area of research, the terms 'stress', 'burnout', 'coping' and 'motivation' were also selected. Education, psychology, social science and health science databases were searched (e.g. Science direct, Psych articles), along with specific publisher databases (e.g. Taylor & Francis Online) and websites regarding teacher resilience. The search was limited to publications in English and published between 2000-2013, where full access was available via the Institute of Education e-library catalogue. I have, on occasion, included literature published prior to 2000 (for example Lazarus & Folkman, 1987), where the findings and/or theories have made a significant contribution to the current knowledge and understanding of teacher resilience.

2.1 <u>Teacher Stress: Definitions and Prevalence</u>

Teaching in schools is stressful for many teachers, and a wealth of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methodology research exists and provides information on different aspects of this issue (Kyriacou, 2011, 2001; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). The term 'teacher stress' has been conceptualised by researchers in three main ways. Some theorists refer to it as an event or situation that is physically harmful to teachers (Kyriacou, 2011) and many studies have adopted this approach during investigations of the sources of teacher stress (Fisher, 2011; Kokkinos, 2007; Johnson et al., 2005). Other researchers (Johnston, 2013; Ferguson, Frost, & Hall, 2012) refer to Kyriacou's (2001) definition and describe teacher stress as "an unpleasant experience by a teacher that leads to negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression resulting from some aspect

of their work" (Kyriacou, ibid, p.28). Finally, some researchers adopt a transactional model, which suggests that teacher stress is the consequence of an appraisal mechanism (Chang, 2009). Within the literature, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1987) is the most commonly cited model of teacher stress. This model emphasises that the experience of teacher stress is the result of the teacher's cognitive, evaluative and motivational processes in response to an external threat. Some researchers have argued that this 'appraisal theory' offers some explanation for why similar challenging situations evoke different emotional responses from teachers within and between school settings (Chang, 2009; McCarthy et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2009).

Teaching has long been recognised as an 'emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating' profession (Lambert, O'Donnell, Kusherman, & McCarthy, 2006, p. 105), and teacher stress has been measured in a variety of different ways. In the UK, many researchers have measured the prevalence of teacher stress using self-report questionnaires and surveys. Johnson et al., (2005), for example, used A Shortened Stress Evaluation Tool (ASSET) questionnaire to compare the experience of occupational stress in 25 different organisational settings and found that teachers had the poorest psychological and physical health, and lowest levels of job satisfaction, across all occupations. In addition, teachers were found to be experiencing higher levels of stress and lower job satisfaction than both head teachers and teaching assistants, neither of whom scored above the norm. In light of other research discussing the good reliability and validity of the ASSET questionnaire (Faragher, Cooper & Cartwright, 2004; Johnson & Cooper, 2003), the findings from this study

may offer a good insight into the extent of the issue. Although the findings are somewhat dated, the suggestion that stress for teachers is a significant issue within the education sector is supported by more recent research. For example, a recent comparison study of work-related stress levels using the Labour Force Survey has ranked teaching as one of the top three most stressful occupations in the UK for the past 6 years (http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/stress.pdf, accessed on 17/03/2012). This national survey was completed by over 1 million participants and is therefore believed to reveal representative insights into the incidence of workplace stress in the UK. Both studies present reliable and valid data that can be used to identify general trends in the UK population and compare different groups. Nevertheless, the quality of the findings in both studies may be limited by a self-selecting sampling bias. It is possible that the findings only represent the views of a 'survival population' (Kyriacou, 2011, p.163), namely, individuals who are able to cope with high-stress careers. At the time of the study, individuals who could not manage the stress would have either not applied or already left the profession. This implies that the incidence of teacher stress that was reported in this research may be an underestimation of what teachers really experience.

Research measuring the prevalence of teacher stress has also focused on comparison studies of classroom teachers working in different contexts, for example, across different education settings (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harness, 2001), and in different countries (Coulter & Abney, 2009). Although some research papers allude to the notion that the prevalence of teacher stress is higher in mainstream schools than special schools (Roach, 2009;

Laavin, 2012), recent empirical research on this issue presents a mixed picture. Roach (2009), for example, compared the burnout and job satisfaction scores of classroom teachers working in mainstream and specialist provision, and found that the mainstream teachers scored higher for burnout than the special school teachers. Furthermore, since there was no significant difference in job satisfaction scores between school settings and no relationship between burnout and job satisfaction, the results suggest that levels of job satisfaction do not contribute to feelings of teacher burnout. One explanation for this finding is that the role expectations of the classroom teachers in specialist provision may have differed from the mainstream classroom teachers. Since the special school teachers had specifically chosen to work in a specialist setting, factors other than context could have mediated their lower levels of burnout. In addition, the research findings are based on a small sample (N=32) therefore other research, with larger sample sizes, would be required before making generalisations from this study to the wider teaching population.

Furthermore, other research on the impact of school context on levels of teacher burnout does not support Roach's (2009) findings. Laavin (2012) used a self-report questionnaire to compare the perceptions of elementary mainstream class teachers, special school teachers and teachers from a special education service who were integrated into mainstream schools. The participant's role, school's characteristic and feelings of teacher stress and burnout were compared, and the results indicated common levels of teacher stress and burnout across different contexts. When compared with Roach's (2009) study, the larger sample size in this study (N=302) suggests that the

findings may be more representative of the wider teaching community than the findings from Roach's (2009) research. Nevertheless, the application of Laavin's (2012) findings to the English context is limited because the research was not conducted on teachers working in English schools. In addition, the questionnaire has limited evidence of good reliability and validity since it was developed for the purposes of this study. Future research may seek to conduct the investigation with a self-report questionnaire that is used more frequently in research on teacher stress, for example the Index of Teaching Stress (Greene, Abidin & Kmetz, 1997) or the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1986), which would enable more rigorous comparisons with other studies on teacher stress.

In relation to teachers working in different countries, research indicates that the prevalence of high teacher stress is an international concern (MacBeath & Clark, 2005; Wilkinson, Ingvarson, Kleinhenz, & Beavis, 2005; Coulter & Abney, 2009). Coulter and Abney (2009) explored this issue and found that teachers working in international settings experience lower levels of teacher burnout when compared with teachers working in their country of origin. Differences in school context were identified as the main factor mediating burnout for the participants, and a significant volume of quantitative research (Milner & Khoza, 2008; Klassen, Usher & Bong, 2010) and qualitative research using interviews (e.g. Shernoff, Mehta, Atkins, Torf, & Spencer, 2011) supports this assertion. Nevertheless, the issue of representative sampling impacts on the validity of the findings from this study; the authors conclusions may not be relevant to teachers working in English schools. In addition, the trustworthiness of the findings is weakened because the

demographic qualities of the teachers working internationally could have

differed in a variety of different ways from teachers working in their birth

country (e.g. age, marital status, and career and life aspirations) and these

aspects were not controlled for.

In a recent critique of using self-report questionnaires to investigate teacher

stress, Kyriacou (2011) argues that any conclusions that have been

generated from research using this methodology should always be interpreted

with caution. Firstly, many self-report questionnaires do not account for

individual variations in stress intensity, and this is problematic because stress

is a subjective experience that has different meanings for different people

((http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/stress.pdf, accessed on

17/03/2012); while some individuals report experiencing stress when they feel

slightly annoyed, others will reserve use of the term for times where they feel

significant distress and rage. Secondly, information on context is often

unaccounted for which is problematic because teachers' stress levels can

vary depending on the type of professional challenge they are confronted with

(Klassen & Chui, 2011). Lastly, the relationship between frequency of event

and intensity of stress is frequently overlooked. Self-report questionnaires do

not usually account for how the differences in this relationship, namely low-

level high frequency stressors versus high-level low frequency stressors, have

been equated. In terms of the claims that are being made, these

methodological issues affect the quality of the research that has so far been

discussed in this chapter.

2.2   Sources of Teacher Stress

Many researchers have investigated the sources of teacher stress and identified that some teaching contexts are greater sources of teacher stress than others. This includes teaching in difficult schools (Olsen & Anderson, 2007), and teaching children identified with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (Greene, Beszterczey, Katzenstein, Park, & Goring, 2002). In reviewing the literature on the sources of teacher stress, Montgomery and Rupp (2005) draw upon the seminal work of Kyriacou (2001) to argue that common aspects of school life cause stress for all teachers, and that the main sources of stress include:

"teaching pupils who lack motivation; maintaining discipline in the classroom; confronting general time pressures and workloads demands; being exposed to large amounts of change; being evaluated by others; having difficult or challenging relationships with colleagues, administration or management; and being exposed to generally poor work conditions" (Kyriacou, ibid, p.29).

Other research into the sources of teacher stress has investigated individual contributory factors in order to understand why, when faced with the same types of professional challenge, some teachers report much higher levels of teacher stress than others (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). A large proportion of the research on this issue has investigated the relationship between personality type and teacher burnout (Pishghadam & Sahebjam, 2012; Cano-García, Padilla-Muñoz, Carrasco-Orti, 2005). Pishghadam and Sahebjam (2012), for

example, administered the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the NEO five factor inventory, and the Emotional Quotient Inventory to 147 teachers working in private English language schools in Iran, and found that levels of neuroticism and extroversion were among the best predictors of teacher burnout. Futhermore, Cano-García, Padilla-Muñoz, Carrasco-Orti (2005) identified high agreeableness to be a protective factor against teacher burnout and low agreeableness to be a vulnerability factor for teacher burnout. Since it is acknowledged that teacher burnout is the result of ongoing teacher stress (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005), these research papers contribute an important perspective for the current literature review. However, as neither study involved teachers working in English schools, the reader must remain cautious of making generalisations from these findings to the English context. Research on the influence of personality factors on teacher's stress levels for English teachers is somewhat limited. However, Jepson and Forrest (2006) used snowball sampling to identify 95 teachers from schools in the UK, including primary (68%) and secondary schools (32%), with an average length of time spent teaching as 12.3 years. Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their perceived level of stress and categorised their behaviour as either Type A or Type B using the Bortner Scale (Bortner, 1969). This scale has been found to have high reliability and as a result has been used extensively in psychological research. Type A behaviours significantly predicted perceived stress, and a moderate positive effect was found between achievement strivings and teacher stress. The results suggest that when highly motivated and ambitious teachers are presented with unavoidable stressors, it is likely that their perceptions of stress will increase. Jepson and Forrest (2006) therefore argue that personality traits can mediate the existing

effects of environmental stressors for teachers, and that teacher stress is likely to have the greatest negative impact on teachers who are motivated to strive for high levels of achievement. These findings add validity to previous research on this aspect of teacher stress (Jex et al., 2002), which also suggests a strong positive relationship between achievement strivings and environmental stressors. However, the author's conclusions must be interpreted with caution due to sampling issues. Although snowball sampling is recognised in other research as a useful strategy to increase the chances of targeting professionals who are willing to share their experiences (Morrison, 2007), it has created a sampling bias which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other teachers working in this context.

Research comparing teacher stress levels across different contexts presents a mixed picture on the importance of school context as a mediating factor for the prevalence of teacher stress (Galton & MacBeath, 2008; Milner & Khoza, 2008). Milner and Khoza (2008), for example, explore this issue in their research comparing the teacher stress levels and perceptions of school climate of South African classroom teachers in two secondary schools with excellent pupil success rates and two secondary schools with very low pupil success rates. A self-report questionnaire was used to assess participant's stress levels, the sources of their teacher stress, and their perception of their school's climate. The results suggest that although the organisational climate differed significantly across the settings, statistical differences did not exist between teachers' overall stress levels or in the sources of stress across the different settings; this appears to indicate that there is not a relationship between organisational climate and teacher stress levels. However, it is

important to note that the demographic of the participants in all four schools was South African, predominantly male, middle aged, and had substantial teaching experience. This demographic is not consistent with the demographic of the English teaching work force (which is predominantly female), and therefore the results need to be interpreted with caution. Another limitation of this study is that the quantitative results do not provide depth or richness of information on teachers' experiences.

Longitudinal research on teachers working in the UK suggests that school context may play an important mediating role in teacher stress levels (Wilhelm, Dewhust-Savellis & Parker, 2000; Galton, MacBeath, 2008, MacBeath, Galton, Steward & Page, 2004). In a seminal 15 year review on why teachers leave and why they stay in teaching, Wilhelm et al., (2000) collected data from 156 teachers on self report measures at 5 yearly intervals, along with semi structured interviews investigating teachers' work, social networks, patterns of illness and coping strategies for stress and depression. The findings suggest that systemic factors related to school culture played a mediating role in whether or not the participants chose to stay in the profession. Furthermore, participants working in schools that gave them academic freedom and provided them with the opportunity to voice their disagreements with school policies, were more likely to have stayed in teaching.

In a five year longitudinal study, Galton and MacBeath explored the lives of UK teachers and identified the effects of policy changes on their teaching practice and their main concerns about a life in teaching (Galton & MacBeath,

2002; MacBeath & Galton, 2004). The research was carried out over two phases; in primary schools information was gathered using 267 questionnaires and 20 interviews, and in secondary schools where information was gathered from 233 questionnaires and 40 interviews. The authors suggest that teachers' responses revealed 'intensification', characterised as the "loss of autonomy, and a sense of no longer being in control of how and what one teaches" (Galton & MacBeath, 2008, p.1), to be a significant pressure for teachers. Furthermore, intensification was linked to beliefs that the purpose of new initiatives is to control teacher performance rather than to increase pupil achievement. The use of a large UK sample and triangulation within the research design means that this research addresses some of the previous limitations of research already discussed in this literature review. These longitudinal studies do illuminate the impact of context on teachers' emotions. However, none of them specifically addresses the relationship between teacher stress and context.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2009) investigated the relationship between school climate, teacher burnout and job satisfaction by comparing Norwegian classroom teachers perceptions on supervisory support, time pressure, relations to parents and autonomy, with the three dimensions of teacher burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment). Emotional exhaustion was most strongly related to time pressure, whereas depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment were most strongly related to teachers' relations with parents. In another international study conducted in Norway exploring this issue, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) reported that emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction were

found to be predictive of motivation to leave the teaching profession. In addition, feelings of 'belonging' and 'emotional exhaustion' were identified as key factors mediating the impact of school context variables on job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession. This research supports previous questionnaire-based research into features of school climate (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008) identifying parent/community relations, administration and student behavioral values) as possible mediators of teacher stress and job satisfaction for 320 classroom teachers, working across all grades of education, in 17 rural schools in America. Furthermore, this research also support the transactional models of teacher stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987); the results suggest that the experience of teacher stress and burnout are influenced by teachers appraisals of environmental features within their school climate and, more specifically, the extent to which they feel personally affected by these features. Grayson and Alvarez (op.cit) propose that teacher stress is experienced when aspects of school culture contribute to reductions in job satisfaction, and that intervention programmes aimed at reducing teacher stress must therefore be mindful of, and respond to, teachers' appraisals of their school climate.

Furthermore, research into the effects of school climate on teacher stress has led to increased recognition that more attention should be placed upon supporting schools to develop mechanisms that enhance teachers' perceptions of choice and control over their teaching and positive relationships with pupils, parents, supervisors and colleagues (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Kyriacou, 2011). In response to this, a main focus area for

whole school interventions to reduce teacher stress has been to explore the influence of changes to school climate on teachers perceived levels of stress and burnout (Kyriacou, 2011). Covell et al. (2009) reported on a whole school reform of school climate that was designed to reduce pupil disengagement through the introduction of a values framework that promoted knowledge, understanding and support for children's rights. This framework was introduced into 15 infant, junior and primary schools, and applied to all aspects of school life including school policies, rules, curriculum and pedagogy). Covell et al. (2009) used questionnaire data to explore the impact of this initiative on teacher burnout in each school over the first three years of the reform. Data was collected from 127 teachers across all 15 schools (four infant, five primary and six junior) at the first time of measure, from 69 teachers at 13 schools (five infant, three primary and six junior) at the second time of measure, and from 100 teachers from 12 schools (three infant, four primary and five junior) at the third time of measure. In schools where the framework was fully implemented, participants reported lower levels of burnout over the three years of study when compared with participants in schools where the framework had been only been partially implemented. Increased student participation, characterised by socially responsible and rights respecting behaviours in the classroom, was found to improve teacher-pupil relationships and facilitate an increased sense of teacher self-efficacy. These findings support previous research findings suggesting that negative teacher-pupil relationships can lead teachers to experience increases in the feelings associated with burnout (Liu & Meyer, 2005). It is unfortunate that participants withdrew from the study at the second and third times of measure, since reductions in response rate can lower the validity of the

research findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). However the lowest response rate (54.8 percent) is in line with the response rates from other questionnaire based research on teacher burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Hastings & Brown, 2002; Fernet, Guay, Senécal et al., 2012). Furthermore the range of socio-economic, geographical areas along with the representative demographic of teachers who participated in the study, strengthens the likelihood of transferable research findings if this intervention were to be replicated in other schools in England. Future research aimed at strengthening the reliability of this data and generalising to the wider English teaching community could usefully replicate this intervention across a larger group of schools in other shire counties, and inner city Local Authorities, in England.

2.3   Coping Strategies for Teacher Stress

When an individual encounters an event that they perceive as stressful, they may engage in a 'coping strategy' by modifying their behaviour in order to first, stop the stressful experience, and second, disguise or alter the emotions that the situation led them to experience. A large portion of the research on teacher stress focuses on exploring the coping strategies that teachers use and the influence of different coping strategies on teacher stress levels (Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla, 2013; Betoret & Artiga, 2010; Austin, Shah & Munce, 2005; Kyriacou, 2001; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Most of this research classifies teachers' coping strategies using the two categories

proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) namely, 'direct action' strategies and 'palliative' strategies. Direct action strategies are 'problem-focused' and involve identifying and eliminating the demand that is causing the stress. This means engaging in an action that removes the source of the stress and includes identifying alternatives, developing professional knowledge and understanding of the problem and learning new teaching methods. By contrast, palliative strategies are 'emotion-focused' and are not aimed at eliminating the source of stress. Instead, the aim is to reduce feelings of negative stress that are attached to the source of stress. This involves either changing how the situation is perceived, or engaging in an activity that enables the individual to regain or retain the feeling of being relaxed. Palliative techniques are frequently used in response to situations that are perceived as irreversible, and include avoidance behaviour, physical exercise and positive reappraisal of the situation (Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla, 2013).

Research suggests that coping strategies may mediate the level of stress that teachers experience in response to professional challenges (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). Furthermore, teachers who fail to engage in coping strategies that promote their own emotional wellbeing have been found to be more susceptible to burnout (Chaplain, 2003; Betoret & Artiga, 2010; Austin, Shah & Muncer, 2005). Austin, Shah and Muncer (2005) carried out a pilot study of teacher coping strategies in two schools and found that teachers who used more direct action coping strategies had lower levels of teacher stress than teachers who used more emotion focused coping strategies. The authors suggest that some coping strategies are more effective than others at reducing teacher stress. Although the quality of the findings is limited by the

small sample of schools, other research with larger sample sizes supports the authors' conclusions (Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla, 2013; Austin, Shah & Munce, 2005). For example, in a study of 288 primary and secondary teachers, Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla (2013) explored the relations between teacher stress, burnout and coping strategies and found that the use of avoidance coping strategies can predict high levels of teacher stress and burnout. Furthermore, teachers who stated that they approached problems in a positive manner and engaged in problem solving strategies reported lower levels of teacher burnout (Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla, 2013). Although this study was limited to Greek teachers, and therefore not representative of all teachers, the findings are consistent with the results from other research on the relationship between coping strategies and teacher burnout (Betoret & Artiga, 2010; Austin, Shah & Munce, 2005).

In their correlational meta-analysis of 65 quantitative studies on teacher stress, Montgomery and Rupp (2005) identified that how a teacher appraises an event influences not only their ability to control their emotional response to the situation, but also whether or not they successfully manage an event that they perceive as challenging. Furthermore, the authors identified that teachers' subjective perceptions of the quality of their school environment, and the support structures available to them from home and at work, influence the choice of coping strategies they use and whether or not stressful situations are managed effectively.

Although Montgomery and Rupp's' (2005) review identifies research that suggests a relationship between school context and teacher stress, a strong feature of research on coping strategies is the focus on isolating individual

qualities of teachers who experience teacher stress and burnout (Kyriacou, 2001; Holmes, 2005; Chaplain & Freeman, 1996). Howard and Johnson (2004) criticise this focus for placing the responsibility of stopping and/or preventing stress and burnout on individual teachers. They suggest that it has contributed to widespread acceptance of a deficit model for understanding teacher stress, which assumes that teacher stress and burnout indicates individual weakness. As a more positive way forward, Howard and Johnson (2004) recommend a shift away from a deficit model, and propose that future research should adopt a resilience perspective; moving away from concentrating on what some teachers do to create the experience of stress and burnout, towards exploring the qualities of resilient teachers. Moreover, the authors propose that to enable teachers to move beyond teacher stress and burnout, it is necessary to examine the processes that allow some teachers to overcome the challenging circumstances in which they work and be resilient. This research contributed to a paradigm shift towards a positive 'what-works' approach to research on reducing teacher stress and raising teacher motivation and commitment.

2.4 <u>Resilience</u>

The concept of resilience first emerged within the disciplines of psychiatry and developmental psychology, where the findings of longitudinal studies indicated that half to two-thirds of children growing up with exposure to significantly negative life experiences (for example those facing poverty, abuse, neglect and those whose parents experience criminality or poor mental health) develop positively and thrive (Rutter, 1985, 1987). The discovery of

this phenomenon fuelled a plethora of research aimed at discovering what constitutes resilience. Early research on the personal attributes or characteristics that may determine resilience suggested that a person's ability to be resilient can depend upon whether or not negative life outcomes have been avoided (Werner & Smith, 1992; Garmezy, Masten & Tellegen, 1984). Although this focus provided useful insights into the process of positive adaptation in the face of adversity, it also received widespread criticism for encouraging a culture of blame and helplessness. Furthermore, many experts on resilience questioned the uncomfortable implications of this somewhat essentialist approach to defining resilience (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Garmezy, 1991; Bernard, 1993). Bernard (1993), for example, points out that the assumption that resilience is something that individuals either have or do not have, implies that individuals are personally responsible if they experience negative life outcomes.

Other research exploring the absence or development of resilience has been heavily influenced by positive psychology (Lopez & Snyder, 2011), and focuses on identifying underlying factors that protect individuals from experiencing adversity (Garmezy, 1991; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 2012). This research supports Rutter's (1999) notion of 'steeling effects' and the idea that overcoming adverse life experiences develops a person's capacity to successfully avoid future significant risks and therefore builds resilience. Research in this area has identified that people display varying levels of resilience throughout their lifetime (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), and that environmental factors have considerably more mediation over resilience than was originally implied in early resilience research on the relations

between individual characteristics and resilience (Oswald, Johnson & Howard, 2003; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner & Smith, 1992). In addition, this research suggests that resilience is a process of positive adaptation, and that it can be developed via the development of specific competencies. Although such research has highlighted the importance of context, it is not without criticism. According to Edwards (2007), this interactionist model of resilience is arguably normative, since it suggests a separation between individuals and their context. Furthermore, it is has been problematic because it has encouraged the development of a large volume of unsuccessful single service interventions. Many of these interventions have been unsuccessful because they do not consider the interaction between an individual and their environment or the type of environment that is required to enable individuals to engage with interventions that can promote resilience.

Edwards (2010) argues that research on resilience should not only make explorations into the capacity for personal adaptation and an ability to 'bounce back' from adversity, but also uncover the social situations and practices that a person engages with that enable resilience to develop. Edwards (ibid) used evidence from two studies of social exclusion in England to move the definition of resilience beyond the notion that it is a capacity to withstand adversity, towards the view that resilience is an iterative process (Edwards, 2007). Edwards (ibid) uses the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework to argue that, in order for resilience to develop, individuals must engage responsibly with their world. The CHAT framework proposes that individual learning and development will only take place in environmental

settings that have the resources to enable thinking and acting (Cole, 1996). Development is perceived as an iterative process; individuals shape and are shaped by the world in which they live:

> "We act on our worlds using the conceptual and material artifacts available to us, but we also shape the world by our actions on it"
>
> (p.256, Edwards, 2007)

When used to inform the study of resilience, Edwards (2010) suggests that this theoretical framework has two implications: first, that resilience should be viewed as the capacity to personally contribute towards and also use the resources that are available in any given setting; and second, that in order to further the development of our knowledge and understanding of resilience, research should analyse the relationship between individual and systemic processes. Over the past five years, a growing body of evidence in support of this conceptualisation has contributed to a paradigm shift, with resilience now conceptualised as a multi-dimensional process of positive adaptation that involves developmental progression and is dependent upon a number of interrelated contextual factors (Ungar, 2008; Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011; Cohen et al., 2011). The notion of positive adaptation is supported by a wealth of socio-ecological research and theory-based literature on resilience (Walker, 2012; Folke et al., 2010; Walker & Westley, 2011).

In an attempt to establish an up-to-date definition of resilience, Cohen et al., (2011) examine the literature base and suggest that resilience is best conceptualised as a "dynamic process which is contingent on...psychological,

biological and environmental-contextual processes, (along with) individual attributes, family aspects and the social environment" (p. 8). Despite these efforts, the exact definition of resilience remains highly topical and, as a result, no universal definition exists. Ahern, Ark & Byers, (2008) have suggested that controversy continues as a result of disagreements over whether or not resilience should be conceptualised as a personal trait, a process, or an outcome. As an alternative explanation, Cohen et al., (2011) suggest that differences in conceptualisations exist when comparing research that concerns teachers, social workers and psychologists because of differences in the nature of these professions. Whilst it is reasonable to assume that the philosophical standpoints from which different professions have emerged could influence the direction of resilience research within each respective discipline, it is perhaps an oversimplification to imply that that this is the source of the disparity. In support of this, Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) identify the absence of any consistency regarding an agreed theoretical basis in most research on resilience. Furthermore, research on teacher resilience among education professionals indicates that a definition of this construct is neither universally nor nationally agreed (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011).

Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) suggest that the reason for a lack of clarity regarding the definition of resilience is that operationalisation of the term 'resilience' varies across studies, including disparity in the way that adversity is examined and how 'positive adjustment' is defined. In addition, there is considerable disagreement over whether the phenomenon constitutes a personal trait or a dynamic process, and researchers use the term interchangeably instead of stating which conceptualisation their work is

focused upon. The authors recommend that research on 'competence despite adversity' should always be referred to as 'resilience' rather than 'resiliency', since the latter is frequently used in everyday language to refer to a discrete personal attribute, and is therefore misleading. A large volume of research into teacher resilience continues to ignore the concerns and recommendations that were highlighted by Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000), and more recent publications echo their concerns and recommendations for future research (Gu & Day, 2007; Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011).

2.5   Teacher Resilience

Up until relatively recently, the concept of 'teacher resilience' has been notably absent from the literature on resilience, with research predominantly focused upon childhood studies and those who have overcome extreme and significant adversity (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). Day et al., (2009) suggests that because the sources of teacher stress occur for many teachers on a daily basis, teachers require a daily resilience. As a result, it is argued that, in addition to researching the factors that enable teachers to respond to events involving extreme adversity, research on teacher resilience should also focus on uncovering the processes that allow teachers to be resilient on a daily basis. Across the majority of theory-based literature on teacher resilience, there is a lack of consensus regarding the most useful conceptual framework for understanding teacher resilience. There is acknowledgement that a complex range of interacting factors shapes the resilience of teachers in either a developmental or a cyclical way (Bobek, 2002; LeCornu, 2009;

Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011; Sammons et al., 2007; Gu & Day, 2007, 2013). Multiple conceptualisations of teacher resilience have contributed to uncertainty regarding how best to examine the phenomenon; nonetheless it has been argued that they are necessary in order to illuminate the multidimensional nature of resilience (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011).

In a recent review of literature on teacher resilience, Beltman, Mansfield & Price (ibid) note that although a range of conceptualisations of teacher resilience do exist, there is a significant absence of research on teachers' views on what teacher resilience means. Instead, the focus of research appears directed towards one of three aspects of teacher resilience: individual factors, contextual factors and teachers' views on their work context. To date, the majority of research papers focused on sustaining teacher commitment and motivation in the face of adversity do not specifically explore teacher resilience (Sinclair, 2008; Sammons et al., 2007; Klassen & Chui, 2010; Day et al., 2006). Nonetheless, their conclusions have extended understandings of what sustains teacher motivation and commitment in response to adversity and for this reason have been included in the current review of literature.

Research exploring the associations between individual characteristics and teacher resilience suggests that motivation is an important mediator of commitment to teaching. (Sinclair, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2012). Sinclair (2008), for example, investigated the motivation and commitment of 211 Australian student teachers by asking them to complete the Motivational Orientations to Teach Survey (MOT-S) questionnaire. This mixed method's survey tool was administered to participants at the beginning of their first

semester of the teaching course, and again after 5 months. The research investigated entry and changing motivation, commitment to teaching and the effect of the initial teacher education coursework and practicum on motivation and commitment. The findings suggest that although all participants encountered significant challenges and adversity, when the reality of teaching matched entry motivations, the participants showed increased commitment for teaching. This included finding the experience of working with children as rewarding as expected, the nature of teaching work desirable and their self-evaluation of their suitability as a potential teacher to be positive.

By contrast, low motivation and commitment to teaching were reported in participants whose placement experiences did not match their initial expectations about the nature of teaching work. In addition, participants who maintained their unrealistic entry motivations about the working conditions of teachers (e.g. short working hours and long holidays) were less committed to their teaching course after experiencing a contradicting reality on placement. The teachers who changed their unrealistic entry motivations towards more realistic motivations (e.g. a desire to work with children) were more likely to stay committed to teaching in the face of experiences that contradicted with their original motivations for teaching. Research validating this survey tool suggests that these findings have high reliability (Sinclair, Dowson & McInerney, 2006). In addition, other international research on motivation and commitment supports these findings and therefore strengthens the trustworthiness of the research findings (Watt & Richardson, 2008).

Nevertheless, the generalisability of the findings to the UK teaching context is questionable because the study focused predominantly on female primary student teachers from Australian universities. In addition, student teachers who did not complete the first term of their teacher training courses were not included in the sample; firstly they had left the course prior to the administration of the second questionnaire. This meant that the sample was not representative of the views of all the students who had started the course, and secondly, it may be that factors other than motivation and commitment influenced the final sample to stay. In response to this criticism, the authors note that the attrition rate for the course was low and that there were student teachers who indicated that they may not be completing their initial teacher education courses past the first semester or entering teaching upon its completion. This meant that the views of student teachers with low commitment and motivation were represented. Nevertheless, further research exploring the multidimensional structure of motivations to teach with UK teachers, including secondary school teachers, those with varying years of experience and those with different forms of initial teacher training, would be required to strengthen the quality of the conclusions that are drawn from these findings.

A large volume of other research on individual characteristics suggests that a teacher's self-efficacy and confidence can support them to overcome challenging situations and increase motivation and commitment to teaching (Chan, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch & Barber, 2010; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009). In a study of 1,430 practising teachers in Canada, Klassen and Chiu

(2010) explored the relationships between teacher self-efficacy beliefs and job stress, job satisfaction and contextual factors, and also how self-efficacy beliefs relate to years of teaching experience. In support of previous research in this area, the findings indicate that job-related stress and the years of teachers' experience were related to teachers' self-efficacy, which in turn influenced job satisfaction. In contrast with previous research, reporting that teachers' self-efficacy increases with years of experience (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007) and remains relatively stable once established (Bandura, 1997), this study found a nonlinear relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their years of experience. Self-efficacy increased with experience for early and mid-career stage teachers and declined for teachers in the late stages of their career. This relationship was also reported in relation to teachers' confidence in engaging students, managing student behaviour and using effective instructional strategies. Furthermore, job satisfaction was found to play a direct role in teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management and instructional strategies, but not in relation to self-efficacy for student engagement. The authors propose that these findings suggest that the links between job satisfaction and different aspects of a teachers' self-efficacy can vary. In addition, it is suggested that a pattern of change occurs in a teacher's confidence in their teaching skills; increasing through their early years and into their mid-career years and declining as they enter the later stages of their careers. This research provides a contrasting insight into the development of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The large sample size and use of conceptually validated measures of self-efficacy strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings, however, all participants came from one province in Canada,

therefore the findings may have limited generalisability to other contexts. To evaluate the quality of the claims, future research could focus on longitudinal studies of middle and late-career stage teachers' motivation beliefs.

In seeking to illuminate the relations between contextual factors and teacher resilience, Howard and Johnson (2004) explored the coping strategies of ten resilient teachers, aged 20-49, working in three disadvantaged school contexts. This sample included nine female and one male teacher and every interviewee had held their position in the school for a minimum of two years. The authors investigated whether the teachers who had been identified as coping very well in response to high occupational stress were engaging in similar coping strategies to those identified in the literature on child and adolescent resilience (Rutter, 1985; Garmezy, 1985; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1992; Gore & Eckenrode, 1994; Howard & Johnson, 2000).

The analysis of data was primarily deductive, since the authors used literature on theories of protective factors in childhood and adolescence to inform the theoretical basis of their research. At the time of this study, when other research on teacher resilience was very limited, this approach was useful in assisting the authors to develop a testable conceptual framework for teacher resilience. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the data analysis to also incorporate inductive elements, and provided the opportunity to capture new and emerging themes that past research has not identified. This flexibility meant that the research questions were not restricted to an evaluation of pre-

existing theories, and that the findings could contribute to new theories related to the characteristics of teacher resilience (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Howard and Johnson (2004) used typical case sampling (Patton, 2005) to select teachers who were identified by the school Principal to have "persistently and successfully coped with stress" (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.405). The authors also provided Le Compte and Dworkin's (1991) definition of teacher burnout, which describes this construct as linked to a combination of feelings that a teacher experiences, including feeling "that their work is meaningless and that they are powerless, alienated and isolated" (p.400).

Whilst the purposive sampling strategy used in this study can be criticised for creating a bias sample that reduced the generalisability of the evidence, achieving a bias sample was in fact a desired and intended outcome (Mertens, 2005). By targeting a specific cohort, purposive sampling supported Howard and Johnson's (2004) goal of fully illuminating their point of enquiry and generating in depth knowledge and understanding on the concept of teacher resilience.

Nontheless, the decision to ask the Principal of each school to identify teachers that they perceived as meeting the criteria for resilience can be criticised for two reasons. First, this process may not be the most effective strategy for determining teachers that are not experiencing stress or burnout. The sampling method assumed that the Principal of each school had an extensive enough knowledge of each teacher's feelings to be able to discriminate those that were experiencing burnout from those that were not. It

is possible that the participant sample was made up of teachers who were experiencing high stress and burnout but met the resilience criteria because they were very good at masking their true feelings of stress and burnout to the Principal. In support of this criticism, other research indicates that one characteristic of individuals who are not coping effectively with stress is to keep this information from their colleagues (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). As an alternative, administering a self-report questionnaire to all teachers within each school (e.g. the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1986) may have given teachers not wishing to disclose their true feelings to their employers the confidence to reveal their true thoughts and feelings. In this way, Howard and Johnson (2004) could have gathered a more valid sample of teachers. Another option could have been to conduct a series of classroom observations in addition to interviewing. This could have been a useful strategy for evaluating whether or not the responses given during interviews matched each teacher's described professional conduct. Whilst the notion of fabricated responses is unlikely in this study, this type of methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978) may have strengthened the reliability of the research findings.

Second, it is unclear whether or not teachers in the school were made aware of the sampling methodology. For an employee to know that they have been selected by their manager as an example of good teaching practice may influence them to respond in the interview in a manner that they believe is desirable. This behaviour is frequently referred to as respondent bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and has significant implications for the validity of Howard and Johnson's (2004) data. It is possible that the participants may have felt

pressured to provide responses of what they believed their Principal and/or the interviewer would like to hear and consequently not revealed their true perceptions and experiences.

The findings indicate that "a sense of agency, a strong support group (including a competent and caring leadership team), pride in achievements and competence in areas of personal importance" (Howard & Johnson, 2004 p.316) were factors that enabled the participants to successfully manage their experiences of high occupational stress. In addition, the comment that "teachers firmly believed they had learnt the strategies and dispositions that made them resilient" (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.415) implies a means by which individual schools and education faculties could empower other teachers with a resilience that enables job satisfaction and a desire to make teaching a lifelong profession.

In the UK, the majority of the literature on teacher resilience is based on a four-year longitudinal mixed method's study of career long 'Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness' (VITAE) (Day et al., 2006). This research involved 300 teachers in 100 primary and secondary schools across seven local authorities. The researchers were keen to identify teachers with varying levels of effectiveness and illuminate possible causes for this variation. Measures of teachers' perceived effectiveness were collected via twice yearly semi-structured interviews and face-to-face interviews with teachers, along with document analysis and interviews with groups of pupils and with school leaders. Data on teachers' effectiveness was also collected

by examining improvements in pupil progress and attainment across the academic year.

In a report on the findings from the VITAE research, Gu and Day (2007) state that teacher commitment varied according to professional life phase and teacher identity, and that these were affected by home and work context. Furthermore, it is suggested that an ability to manage the influences from work and home context on professional life phase and identity, mediates teacher resilience. The influences that teachers described were categorised into three dimensions: personal (home life), situated (school life) and professional values and beliefs. These dimensions were found to be unstable and co-dependent, with change in one dimension impacting on teachers' ability to manage the other dimensions.

Gu and Day (ibid) argue that the findings from the VITAE research indicate that core values including a sense of meaning and moral purpose, along with original motivations for pursuing a career in teaching, increase a teacher's capacity to be emotionally strong and professionally competent, and provide them with teacher resilience that enables them to successfully overcome professionally challenging situations. In addition, the authors suggest that situated factors including leadership of school and department, staff collegiality, teacher–pupil relationships and behaviour of pupils, have a mediating effect on commitment and teacher identity including self-efficacy. The authors use vignettes from the interviews of three participants to illuminate the interacting role of personal and environmental factors on

teacher resilience. Although these are not representative of the whole sample, the authors also report that the profiles of these three participants were typical of teachers within the same professional life phases. Furthermore, the personal, situated and professional factors that these three teachers identified as impacting on their commitment and effectiveness, and their strategies for successfully managing these factors, were identified as being typical of other teachers in the same professional life phase. The authors suggest that future research focusing on quality teacher retention, characterised by sustained motivation, commitment and effectiveness, should seek to uncover the nature of the resilience that supports teachers to successfully overcome the personal, situated and professional factors that challenge their commitment. In examining teachers' conceptualisations of teacher resilience, and their lived experiences of the phenomenon, the current research aims to provide rich insights on this topic.

Other research on the factors that mediate teacher resilience has found that coping strategies can play an important role in supporting teachers to overcome recurring setbacks (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009). In their research on the patterns in novice teachers' resilience strategies, Castro, Kelly and Shih (2009) explored the reasons why "many teachers are affected by the same conditions that contribute to their colleagues leaving the profession but chose to stay" (Williams, 2003. p. 74). This qualitative study involved 15 first-year teachers working in high need areas in mainstream rural (n = 5), and urban (n= 5) settings and special school settings (n = 5). The rural teachers were all secondary school teachers, most of the special education teachers taught children at primary school age, and there were three primary school

and two secondary school teachers working in urban settings. In addition, the participants had subject specialisms in a variety of different areas, including Science, Mathematics, Art, Latin, Life Skills, and bilingual education. The authors categorised the resilience strategies that the novice teachers used into the following four broad categories: help-seeking, problem-solving, managing difficult relationships and seeking rejuvenation/renewal. As the discussion chapter of this thesis will indicate, there are complex relationships between this particular study and my own research findings. Help-seeking strategies were those where the novice teacher relied on the support of others to obtain information and resources. Specific examples included utilising support from mentors, developing allies to help resolve problems and advocating for themselves to ensure they had good classroom resources. The role of mentors as a contextual protective factor that can support teachers to overcome professional challenges is highlighted in other studies (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Shank, 2005). In addition, other research has highlighted the importance of reciprocal, mutually supportive personal, professional and peer relationships for promoting teacher resilience. (Sammons et al, 2007). These findings also provide empirical support for Edwards' (2010) conclusions that teacher resilience requires personal agency, as previously discussed in this chapter.

Castro, Kelly and Shih (2009) define problem-solving strategies as a process of resolving classroom challenges, and were distinct from help-seeking strategies in that they did not always involve seeking support from others. This included the strategy of trial and error, whereby teachers attempted to problem-solve independently. Although this was usually helpful in solving the

immediate problem, it usually led to unforeseen additional classroom problems. Castro, Kelly and Shih (2009) report that novice teachers also discussed resilience strategies for managing challenging relationships, including difficult relationships with parents, co-teachers, teacher assistants, and school administrators. The most commonly used strategy for this type of situation was to recruit another member of staff to act as a buffer to help minimise the impact of a negative relationship, or as an ally to discuss the situation and/or accompany them when interacting with the difficult person. A wealth of other research in this area has identified that relationships with administrators and colleagues can have a significant mediating role on teacher's ability to overcome professional challenges (Jarzabkowski, 2002; McCormack & Gore, 2008; Schlichte, Yssel & Merbler, 2005) and supports the validity of this finding.

Castro, Kelly and Shih (2009) also identified that 'avoidance' was used, whereby the novice teachers either avoided interacting with the difficult person, referred them to a buffer-person or side-stepped them. This latter strategy was typically used when the difficult person was an administrator or person in a high status position. Collecting documentation was also used as a strategy to overcome the challenging relationships. Finally, the authors identified that the novice teachers engaged in a range of rejuvenation and renewal strategies, including establishing a good work/home life balance, caring for their own personal, physical, and emotional well-being outside of the classroom, and obtaining satisfaction while teaching. For many of the participants this involved developing a philosophy of self-preservation or self-care, articulated through realistic beliefs about how much of their personal

time they should dedicate to their teaching work. The authors argue that these rejuvenation and renewal strategies represented the most important resilience strategies that participants discussed. In order to generate data that could have significance for beginning teachers working in a variety of different contexts, this research (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009) included a diverse sample of teachers. However, this means that the findings have limited applicability to teachers at other stages in their career. In addition, the research was limited to American teachers and so research on teachers in other countries would be needed to validate the findings.

Other research has reported on contextual factors such as professional development (Anderson & Olsen, 2006) and relationships with students (Hirschkorn, 2009) as protective factors for teachers' resilience. One possible explanation why these factors were not cited in the research by Castro, Kelly & Shih (2009) is that these other factors are identified as more important by teachers at later stages of their career. The current research adds to the literature on contextual factors that can support teacher resilience by focusing on teachers at other professional stages of their career, and by exploring the influence of teacher-pupil relationships on teacher resilience.

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed key literature that is relevant to the investigation of teacher resilience and, in doing so, has identified that a large volume of the research on teacher resilience has been heavily underpinned by a sociological perspective. This perspective emphasises a move away from

research investigating possible interactions between teacher resilience, teacher stress, and coping strategies (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Gu & Day, 2007; Edwards, 2007). The current research and aims to address the limitations that have been discussed in this chapter by testing the following working definition of teacher resilience:

The experience of teacher resilience is dependent on teachers actively engaging in an iterative process of positive adaptation in response to their encounters with professional challenges.

It is hoped that by exploring the perspective of experienced teachers working in mainstream schools in England, the current research will add to the validity of the current literature on teacher resilience, and provide rich insights into the process that facilitates the experience of this phenomenon.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological choices that were made in order to answer the research questions. It begins with a discussion of the epistemological position that was adopted, and then provides an overview of the research design. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the data collection, analysis and interpretation procedures, and ends by detailing how ethical issues were addressed throughout the research.

3.1   Epistemological Position

In order to answer the research questions, a phenomenological approach was adopted; therefore the epistemological position of this research is underpinned by the ontological assumptions of phenomenology. The phenomenological approach focuses on exploring the subjective experiences of individuals in order to learn and understand a particular phenomenon (Lewis & Staehler, 2011). A phenomenon can be described as something that humans directly experience through their senses but that, at present, has not been fully analysed or explained (Denscombe, 2007). For phenomenologists, individuals do not passively conform to social rules in their surroundings, but instead use their own interpretations of their experiences to attach meanings to, and create order within, their social world. Phenomenologists argue that meaning and order are created in the social world through individuals forming their own personal interpretations of the events that they experience. This implies that similar events can be perceived and understood differently, and therefore there is no single universal reality. Instead, multiple realities are

believed to exist, which vary between people, groups and cultures (Denscombe, 2007). For this reason, the task of obtaining accurate knowledge about a phenomenon (in this case 'teacher resilience') is achieved by investigating the subjective experiences of those who have encountered it (Denscombe, 2007). Phenomenologists are interested in *how* something manifests itself or appears in the social world, and it is argued that research advances knowledge and understanding when personal experiences of a phenomenon are captured (Lewis & Staehler, 2011).

Having accepted the ontological assumption that no reality is absolute (Denscombe, 2007), the current research employed qualitative phenomenological methodology to gain insight into a time and context dependent reality. Such an approach is suited to small-scale research (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and generated rich descriptions of teacher resilience. In-depth insights into this complex phenomenon were useful in light of literature indicating the lack of consensus regarding definitions of teacher resilience and the absence of teacher voice on this issue. By exploring teachers' conceptualisations of this phenomenon, and illuminating their rich and detailed experiences, the current research aims to extend understandings of how teacher resilience may be usefully thought of and understood by education professionals.

3.2   Research Overview

The current research explores the construct 'teacher resilience' from the perspective of experienced mainstream schoolteachers. The

phenomenological perspective informed the research design, and data was collected via individual semi-structured interviews over two phases. In phase one, 25 experienced mainstream primary and secondary school teachers were interviewed. In phase two 5 additional experienced mainstream primary school teachers working in one school were interviewed. In both phases of the research the analysis and interpretation of interview data was supported by thematic analysis and the use of NVIVO9 computer coding software.

3.3   Data Collection Procedures

In order to decide upon the most appropriate method of data collection, a range of methods were identified and the qualities of each method that could serve to either enhance or detract from the benefits of their use were evaluated (Anderson & Ferguson, 2007). The use of a 'tacit knowledge inventory' (Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, et al., 2011) involving a situational-judgement format was considered for the current research. Participants could have been presented with short vignettes of situations involving professional challenges identified as main causes of teacher stress, and asked to comment on how they would feel in that situation, what they would do, and why. Alternatively, teachers could have been given the vignettes and a list of possible responses, and be asked to rate how much they agreed with each response on a Likert scale. The utility of this latter approach has been found in research that compares the tacit knowledge of different social groups of people, and has been employed in a range of studies of highly domain-specific tacit knowledge (McDaniel & Nguyen, 2001; Weekley & Ployhart, 2006; Cianciolo *et al*., 2006). Nonetheless, the findings from research

exploring the development of teacher tacit knowledge in novice and experienced teachers indicate that the use of this approach would not have been appropriate for the current research (Elliot et al., 2011). Elliot et al., (2011) report that although experienced teachers differ significantly in their capacity to identify poor solutions to situational problems, they do not differ significantly from novice teachers in their skills at identifying good solutions to these same problems. The authors suggest that "tacit knowledge in this particular domain is not so much a matter of learning how best to approach a problem so much as it is about learning how to avoid making a really bad decision" (op.cit. p.98). These findings indicate that a tacit knowledge inventory may have been useful if the research aim had been to identify teacher responses on strategies that are not effective in managing stressful situations. However, the current research adopted a positive 'what-works' approach and this required the investigation of teacher resilience. The findings also indicate that asking teachers to explain what they would do in response to made-up professionally challenging scenarios could lead to idealised responses that are unrealistic and unmanageable for teachers. This is because in real-life scenarios, a teacher's decision to engage in their response is influenced by a range of factors including their emotions. Real life professionally challenging scenarios could not be replicated for the current research for ethical reasons. For example, it would not have been ethical to recreate the emotional response to the high stress involved when a parent becomes aggressive, and then ask a teacher to state what they would do. In support of this claim, research suggests that teachers often consider the ways in which they frequently respond to professional challenges to be inappropriate, and that their inappropriate responses are usually due to their

heightened negative emotional state at the time of the event (Berliner, 2005).

Elliot (2011) suggests that although most teachers can differentiate between

sound/poor strategies, they do not consistently act in accordance with their

judgments on best practice in their daily practice. The author argues that this

is because strategy selection and its execution may be compounded by the

presence of anxiety or stress. In order to understand the concept of teacher

resilience and the processes that can promote this experience for teachers,

the current research must therefore explore lived scenarios where teachers

have experienced teacher resilience.

In consideration of alternative data collection methods, literature on the

relationship that exists between the mode of qualitative data collection and the

detail and quality of teachers' responses was reviewed and evaluated

(Anderson & Ferguson, 2007). Research suggests that teachers' difficulties in

articulating responses to issues or questions during individual interviews can

be overcome using focus groups because group members will work together

to construct meaning (Anderson & Ferguson, 2007). Therefore, the

opportunity to engage in an interactive discussion could have enabled

teachers to extend and build upon their initial ideas about teacher resilience.

Furthermore, other research indicates that use of focus groups for the current

study could have led to the collection of a wide range of shared and conflicting

responses within a relatively short space of time (Halcomb et al., 2007). In

light of previous literature on this topic suggesting that teacher resilience is a

multidimensional concept (Gu & Day, 2007), investigating conflicting views

based on participants' differing interpretations of the world could have led to

detailed and insightful illuminations on the research topic (Grant & Fitzgerald, 2005).

However, other research on the influence of groups on participant responses highlights potential limitations in using focus groups to collect information on teachers' conceptualisations of teacher resilience (Ferguson & Anderson, 2007; Kruger & Casey, 2000). Since the purpose of the focus group is to 'promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure' (Kruger & Casey, 2000), it is assumed that a group dynamic will serve to enhance participants' confidence in discussing and sharing their views on the research topic. This is problematic for the current research because the perception of what constitutes a 'professional challenge' is highly personal and subjective, and could be a sensitive issue that participants may not feel comfortable discussing in a group. Furthermore participants may not have wanted to disclose their professional challenges, and how they managed the situation, in the presence of other teachers. Possible reasons for reluctance include the view that providing these details may lead other members of the group to view them as a poorly skilled teacher, and the desire to avoid the possibility of other members of the group commenting on their professional conduct (Berliner, 2005). In addition, the emergence of conflicting views on what constitutes an experience of teacher resilience could have negatively impacted on participant responses i.e. it could have discouraged teachers from sharing their unique experiences, and encouraged them to align with dominant individuals within the group in an effort to achieve a group consensus (Bloor, et al., 2001). In support of this claim, Anderson and Fergusons' (2007) research using focus groups to investigate teachers' views

on pedagogy suggests that, even in focus groups of experienced expert teachers, hierarchical differentiations of either power, age, experience and expertise can influence participants' responses. The focus group seemed to empower dominant group members to override views that conflicted with their own, and speak for longer periods of time than the more reserved group members. In addition, some participants reported feeling intimidated by dominant group members, and did not contribute their views for fear of disapproval and because they felt there would be a lack of necessary repartee and support that is needed when disclosing difficult or sensitive experiences. Furthermore, the research also found that any pauses in a participant's response were viewed as opportunities for others to either jump in and state their own view, or articulate the response that they thought their fellow group member was thinking of. This meant that participants who struggled to articulate their views did not always have time to consolidate their thoughts. These findings imply that that the use of focus groups for the current research could have reduced the scope for all teachers to make important contributions to the research topic.

Electronic interviewing offers a range of advantages for researchers when compared with more traditional methods of data collection such as face-to-face interviews (Opdenakker, 2006). A large sample can be accessed with relative ease, and data analysis is assisted since the data is already transcribed (Anderson & Ferguson, 2007). In addition, many of the time, space, and financial constraints associated with other qualitative data collection methods can be avoided (Anderson & Ferguson, op.cit, 2006). Currently there is a lack of clarity on the level of richness that email

interviewing can offer. Some researchers have concluded that it provides insights into thought processes and in depth data (James & Busher, 2006), while others conclude that, when compared with face-to-face interviews, electronic responses lack depth and exploration of meaning (Davis et al. 2004), and lead to less thoughtful responses (Shuy, 2002). Furthermore, Kazmer and Xie (2008) found that email interviewing can lead to thoughtful, in-depth data, but does not seem to provide adequate access to thought processes.

Despite these benefits, research on the functional and methodological effects of using email to conduct semi-structured interviews indicates that email interviewing can have higher attrition rates than face to face interviewing (Mann & Stewart, 2002; Meho 2006), and has the potential to create data collection problems if the interviewee shares their interview with others who are potential interviewees, which can reduce data quality (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). In addition, research indicates that subtlety and nuance can be difficult to interpret from electronic responses, since information that is conveyed through body language and intonation are lost. This means that, at the point of analysis and interpretation, the researcher does not know how easy it was for participants to articulate their responses or how long it took for respondents to consolidate their thought processes. Furthermore, there is limited opportunity for the researcher to clarify participants' meanings or probe on interesting responses, and this limits the capacity of this method to provide rich and detailed responses. In relation to the current research, these limitations indicate that participants may not have provided responses that are trustworthy reflections of their beliefs. Since teachers can experience difficulty

articulating their reflections on their practice, electronic questions were thought less likely to facilitate rich responses, because there is no opportunity for probing of ambiguous or interesting topics (Kazmer & Xie, 2008).

After examining a range of interview designs available to qualitative researchers, a semi-structured interview schedule was chosen because of the flexibility and time that this technique permits for researchers and respondents to clarify themes and issues during data collection (Barbour & Shostak, 2005). It is well documented that the questioning format of semi-structured interviews facilitates participants to provide rich and detailed responses in relation to their own beliefs, attitudes and professional knowledge (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). This is particularly pertinent to the current research project in light of the complexities involved in accessing a teacher's craft or tacit knowledge, that is, the personal, unshared knowledge and experiences that teachers use to inform their practice (Hiebert & Gallimore, 2002). A range of literature has reported on the difficulties that experienced teachers have when they are required to articulate their knowledge about teaching (McIntyre & Hagger, 1993). Hiebert and Gallimore (2002) suggest that many teachers encounter this difficulty because they do not dedicate a regular space in which to reflect over the strategies that they employ in order to carry out their job. Furthermore, research indicates that teachers are not usually asked to articulate the thoughts and actions that they carry out on a routine basis in ordinary classrooms, and so are unlikely to have developed narratives in response to questions on their craft knowledge (Rigano & Ritchie, 1999). These difficulties have been identified as a key obstacle in developing a useful knowledge base for the teaching profession (Hagger &

McIntyre, 2006; Hiebert & Gallimore, 2002). In the current research, the opportunity to use probes and additional questions during the interview enabled the interviewer to follow up any responses that were ambiguous or interesting. Furthermore, it supported participants to reflect on their practice, and ensured that their thoughts were clearly articulated (Robson, 2011).

3.3.1 Constructing the Interview Schedules

For both phases of data collection, recommendations within the literature on developing a strong qualitative interview schedule were reviewed, and this informed the inclusion of questions and probes to illuminate the behaviours, opinions, feelings and knowledge of participants (King & Horrocks, 2010). To ensure that the phase 1 interview schedule had a clear focus on the topic of teacher resilience, the development of interview questions was supported by a three-stage process of question analysis and evaluation. In stage one, provisional questions were identified by engaging in a literature review of research using interviews on issues that are relevant to the investigation of teacher resilience. Kvale (1996) warns that unless careful consideration is given to the theoretical approach before the interviews have been conducted, it is possible that interview data may not contain the information that is required for theoretical interpretations. In the current research, this included research by Patterson, Collins and Abbots (2004) on teacher resilience in urban schools, research exploring the strategies that make some teachers resistant to stress and burnout (Howard & Johnson, 2004) and research exploring the concept of teacher resilience (Gu & Day, 2007, Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011).

In a discussion over the range of questioning formats that are available for interviewers to employ, Robson (2011) advises researchers who strive to elicit the best possible responses from interviewees to develop questions that invite their participants to describe specific events that they perceive as important. In addition, Hagger and McIntyre (2006) suggest that to overcome the difficulties inherent in accessing teachers' craft knowledge, interviewers should ask open questions that invite teachers to describe experiences of their own practice, encourage teachers to explain why and how things had been achieved and include probes which provide teachers with scope to expand upon their responses. It is argued that this process is useful in assisting the process of reflection because it can provide respondents with a clear structure and guide for their thought processes.

In light of these suggestions, participants were asked to identify specific examples of professional challenges where they had experienced teacher resilience, and then explain how they had responded to these situations. Participants were also invited to recall examples of when they had been supported in their work and reflect on the impact that these experiences have had on their teacher resilience. Structuring the questions in this way enabled participants to identify specific, as opposed to general, ways that they had experienced teacher resilience in a clear and articulate manner. This was important because teacher resilience is an abstract concept and as a result can be difficult to measure. Asking participants to provide concrete examples enabled the responses to be compared and shared meanings to be identified.

This first draft of provisional interview questions (see Appendix I (a)) was discussed during a supervision meeting with my academic and EP supervisor. Each question was evaluated to consider how strongly the wording related to the research questions. The key points that were raised during this supervision, and amendments that were made to the interview schedule as a result of this evaluation process, can be found in Appendix 1 (a). Stage two involved asking a panel of experts in the field to review the second draft of interview questions (see Appendix I (b)). The panel was shown the interview schedule and asked to compare the questions with their own knowledge of the constructs being measured. The panel consisted of one leading researcher in the field of teacher resilience in the UK, 5 mainstream secondary school teachers and 5 mainstream primary school teachers. Members of the panel were asked to review the questions and offer suggestions for improvements. This enabled the identification of possible misinterpretation and the opportunity to eliminate jargon as much as possible. In order to guide this process, the panel was also given the title of the research project and the following questions:

1) Please read the interview schedule for content and relevance.

2) Are the questions relevant to teacher resilience?

3) Please look at the language used. Can it be improved by rephrasing any of the questions?

4) Please look at the format? Can it be improved and if so, how?

5) Please list any other comments for improvement.

In light of the feedback from this process a series of adaptations were made to the interview schedule. The key points that were raised during the supervision, and details of the amendments that were made to draft two as a result of this process, are provided in Appendix I (b). The use of a panel of experts is a popular means by which researchers seek to increase the content validity of their data (Polit & Beck, 2006), and is a recommended strategy for ensuring that questions are not limited by the researchers' way of thinking or experience on the topic area (Davis, 1992). In order to maximise the likelihood that a breadth of opinions would be gathered, members of the panel were not well known by the researcher. The key points that were raised by the panel, and details of the amendments as a result of this process, are provided in Appendix I (c).

Following the data analysis and interpretation of phase 1 interviews, a range of theoretical issues arose which impacted on how teacher resilience was to be conceptualised. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation of phase one interview data produced contradicting conceptualisations of teacher resilience that would require further exploration if rich insights on how teacher resilience is built were to be gathered. Detailed information regarding the participants contradicting conceptualisations of teacher resilience can be found in chapter 4. One possible cause of the contradictions is that the participants were not given a definition of resilience. Wengraf (2001) suggests that to be confident that a participant is sharing the meaning that they attach to an abstract concept, a large amount of empirical indicators are required which make the researcher's question clear, detailed and specific. However, during development of the phase one interview schedule it was identified that

providing a definition of teacher resilience may have led the participants towards stating a conceptualisation of resilience underpinned by the adoption of preconceived stances or theories rather than reflection on their own personal experiences.

In order to establish more clarity and specificity on how teacher resilience is conceptualised by teachers, the second phase of interviews was designed to explore the contradicting conceptualisations of teacher resilience that had been identified in the phase one interview data, and identify how facilitators for teacher resilience can interact when the phenomenon occurs. This ensured that the development of the phase two interview schedule was influenced by teachers' responses rather than by previous literature. The phase two interview schedule included questions that invited participants to engage in practical reasoning for their actions, which included providing rationales for the behaviours they engaged in during their experiences of teacher resilience. Fenstermacher & Richardson, (1993, p. 103) suggest that this strategy encourages experienced teachers to provide more sophisticated and well grounded responses, 'thereby enhancing the teacher's ability to think more deeply and powerfully about his (*sic*) action' (p. 104). In the current research, this involved probing teachers to find out why the strategies had been helpful.

The development of the phase two interview schedule involved three stages. Stage one involved discussing three drafts of the interview schedule during three supervision meetings with my academic and EP supervisor. The purpose of these supervisions was to consider how closely each interview

question related to the research questions, and why the questions were likely to lead to responses that added further depth and insights on teacher resilience. Details of the key points, and amendments, arising from these discussions can be found in Appendix II (a, b and c). The second stage in this process involved piloting the interview schedule on a female teacher with more than 10 years' classroom teaching experience working in the same school as potential phase two participants (see Appendix II (d)). During this pilot phase the participant commented that teacher resilience was a complex construct and difficult to conceptualise. She appeared to experience difficulty linking her own lived experiences to the theoretical conceptualisations from phase one data analysis and therefore produced very short answers. To address this issue, stage three involved revisiting research methodologies for accessing teachers' craft knowledge. One question was removed and two questions were changed, with the aim of more effectively supporting participants to reflect on whether or not their lived experiences of teacher resilience were similar to the conceptualisations that were identified in phase 1 of data collection. This involved expanding the questions so that, rather than investigating teachers' views on the appropriateness of a descriptive statement about teacher resilience, teachers were asked to reflect on professional challenges where they had experienced teacher resilience. This aimed to ensure that all teachers were thinking about the same type of experience. The final version of the phase two interview schedule can be found in Appendix II (e).

3.3.2 <u>Participant Selection</u>

A key element of data collection involves the selection of participants that will be most able to answer the research questions (Edwards & Schleicher, 2004). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) propose that the series of choices a researcher makes in relation to the identity of their participants affects both the integrity of research and the results themselves. For this reason the influence of population, time and accessibility were all reflected upon before selecting participants and starting data collection. The selection of participants was also informed by the consideration of a range of sampling strategies. According to Curtis et al., (2000) the two main approaches for sampling in qualitative research are 'theoretical sampling,' which is designed to generate theory and carried out during data collection, and 'purposeful sampling,' which is completed *a priori* and informed by the research questions. In light of descriptions of purposeful sampling as a strategy that involves 'selecting information-rich cases for study in depth' (Patton, 1999, p.169) it was felt helpful to use this approach to guide the formation of the participant criteria. Adopting this approach involved the consideration of a range of purposeful sampling approaches, and in both phases of data collection 'concept sampling' (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) was used to select participants who had real life experience of teacher resilience.

Experienced teachers were selected for interviewing, with 'experienced teachers' defined as those with ten or more years of qualified classroom teaching experience. Purposive sampling is a recommended strategy for carrying out research to increase the depth of understanding about

phenomena (Mertens, 2005), and was therefore felt to be useful for this research. The phase one participant sample included 25 male and female teachers working in mainstream primary and secondary school settings. The phase two participant sample included five female teachers from the same primary school setting, each with over ten years of qualified classroom teaching experience.

In phase 1 of data collection, new participants were identified and interviewed until it was felt that participants had stopped stating new ways of defining teacher resilience and were no longer revealing new information on the concept of teacher resilience; this required data analysis to begin after the first interview. In phase two of data collection the concept of saturation was not used; the research questions were reconsidered and a small sample size was felt to be most likely to answer the aims of the research. A smaller sample size made it possible to generate numerous concepts and ideas from each single interview, and capture in depth knowledge to help further explore the issues that arising from phase 1 analysis and interpretation. This in-depth focus on a smaller group of participants enabled enhanced exploration of the relationship between teacher stress and teacher resilience, and the personal and context factors that can promote teacher resilience (Yin, 2009). A summary of demographic information on the participant in both phases of data collection is provided in Appendix III; all names have been anonymised to ensure participant confidentiality.

When considering the selection of participants, Denscombe (2007) warns of the dangers inherent in not using the proper channels of authority to invite

participants to take part in research. In relation to the current study, these dangers relate to Headteachers becoming agitated if they learn that members of their teaching staff have participated in the research. This could cause a difficult relationship between the respondent and their Headteacher and lead to the respondent withdrawing their consent to use their data. To gain interest from teachers, an information poster was designed and sent to every school in the county that I currently work in as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, via the county council schools.net intranet. Twenty-one participants were identified as a result of the pre-existing contacts that I had with teachers working in senior leadership positions in schools around England. These teachers put the information poster in their staff rooms, publicised the research in their staff meetings and invited teachers who met the sampling criteria to participate in the research. One social networking website was useful in gaining interest from two participants. In addition, I also changed my school allocation at the end of the second year of my fieldwork placement. This enabled the development of new relationships with other teachers working in senior leadership roles in schools and helped to identify seven more participants for the research.

The Deputy or Head teacher from each participant's school was contacted via telephone before their interview. During this telephone call the aims and potential benefits of the research were explained, and their consent for the interview to take place was obtained. Following this, the time and date of each interview were negotiated with individual participants, and each participant was contacted the day before the interview as a reminder and check that they were still happy to participate at the agreed time and date. This process was

informed by recommendations of Denscombe (2007) who describes tight organisation as a fundamental skill that is required of researchers. Before their interview each participant received a summary of the research (see Appendix IV); this explained the overall purpose of the research project and the intended research aims. All participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to their interview (see Appendix V).

3.3.3   Researcher Bias

During the interview process it was felt important to avoid any situations where presumptions over my own knowledge, power and social status could influence participants to respond in a particular manner (Barbour & Shostack, 2005). Shuy (2003) proposes that some people find it difficult to provide responses that accurately represent their knowledge when they are interviewed because they feel intimidated by the interviewer and subsequently experience a loss of power. In addition, Yin (2009) suggests that, rather than providing accurate responses, interviewee's may sometimes provide responses that they believe portray them in a favourable light or that the interviewer expects. Bordieu (1991) refers to the control that researchers can exert over their respondents as '*symbolic violence'*, and cautions that such behaviour on the part of the researcher limits their capacity to obtain the true thoughts and experiences of their participants.

To refrain from imposing my own thoughts and beliefs upon participants, a range of recommended careful questioning techniques were employed during the interviews, including adopting the language of the participants (Barbour &

Shostak, 2005), maintaining momentum and guiding interviewees to stay on track (Yin, 2009). Both interview schedules and the interview itself were designed to promote the equal status of the interviewer and the participant. First, indications of unequal status were avoided in the interview schedule by not using power statements such as "I want you to describe..." and instead using passive-voice equivalents, such as "Can you describe...." Second, the interview schedule refrained from using formal language; rather, conversational language was used and abundant positive feedback was provided. Third, all interviews began with an explicit statement from the interviewer of how important and valuable the respondent's contribution was to the research. These techniques are acknowledged in theory-based literature on interviews as effective strategies for distributing power equally between the interviewer and the participant and for encouraging interviewees to provide clear and complete responses (Knox & Burkard, 2009; Opdenakker, 2006).

A reflexive approach was adopted to increase the likelihood of capturing each respondent's own perspective. This involved refraining from adding any new ideas or concepts whilst listening to participants' responses (Barbour & Shostak, 2005), along with '*the ability to put aside personal feelings and preconceptions*' (Ahern, 1999, p.408) whilst interviewing. During the interview process, some participants did encourage me to make judgement comments on their responses. Since the purpose of the interview was to capture evidence and not to change individuals, all invitations from interviewees to give advice or approval regarding their beliefs and actions were declined (Patton, 2003).

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

In order to capture and analyse the data that is created during semi-structured interviews, researchers must consider various strategies for retrieving, handling and interpreting their data (Kvale, 2007). Gibbs (2008) argues that the term 'analysis' implies a form of transformation, and that by having clear analytical procedures within this process of transformation, researchers can create "insightful, trustworthy and even original analysis" (Gibbs, 2008, p.1). Within the literature, there is disagreement over what is meant by the 'transformation' of data. Some researchers emphasise the data handling processes that support a structured approach to managing the sheer volume of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Kvale, 2007), whilst others focus on the process of imaginative and speculative data interpretation (Angrosino, 2007). It appears that most writers about qualitative research recommend considering both elements simultaneously, starting with data handling procedures and then moving onto interpretative analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Flick, 2009; Gibbs, 2011).

3.5 Data Handling

In the current research, high quality recordings were obtained by selecting quiet locations to conduct interviews and confirming that responses were clearly audible on the audio-recorder. With participants' permission, a full audio recording record of each interview was obtained; the interviews ranged from 20-70 minutes in duration. The interviewer asked interviewees if they

were happy to have their interview recorded, and explained their right to withdraw if they did not feel comfortable with this method of data collection. In addition, interviews were transcribed verbatim and sent to participants for member checking (see Appendix VI for an example of one full interview transcript). A letter accompanied each transcript inviting participants to amend or delete any responses that they perceived as inaccurate representations of their views and send the revised version back in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope (see Appendix VII). A copy of each transcription was also emailed to participants in the hope of maximising the response rate from participants.

3.6 Data Interpretation

In order to provide structure and clarity to the large volume of information that participants provided during the interview process, I engaged in two stages of interview interpretation. The first stage occurred during the interviews, and is often referred to as a 'self-correcting' interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I interpreted the participants' responses, condensed them to be clearer and more concise, and then fed them back to the participant. The participant then had the opportunity to state whether or not my interpretation was an accurate representation of their perspective. In addition, I invited them to expand upon their comments if I felt their response was ambiguous. The second stage of interpretation was carried out using a thematic approach to data analysis. The popularity of this approach has been largely attributed to the flexibility that, when compared with other analytical methods, it provides for identifying patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In contrast to methods

such as grounded theory or interpretive phenomenological analysis, thematic

analysis is a more widely accessible tool since it is not restricted by many of

the theoretical constraints of a specific epistemological stance. Concerns with

using a thematic approach to data analysis include debate among writers of

qualitative research regarding what thematic analysis involves (Braun &

Clarke, 2006), and a lack of detail regarding the process of thematic analysis

within reports on qualitative research (Braun & Wilkinson, 2003). To address

these limitations, this chapter provides a clear description of the thematic

analysis process.

Computer-assisted qualitative data-analysis software NVIVO9 was used to

support the thematic analysis, and enhance the credibility of the research

findings. To gain familiarity with the breadth and depth of information in the

interviews, each audio recording was listened to and each transcription read

through before coding began. Following this, 'meaning units' (Kvale &

Brinkman, 2009) as expressed by the interviewees were isolated, condensed

and restated as simply as possible as sub themes. This involved searching

across each interview transcript to identify repeated patterns of meaning and

common conceptualisations. This coding technique allowed a structural

analysis of participants' responses, and patterns and differences in the

personal beliefs and lived experiences to be identified (Gall, Gall & Borg,

2007).

An inductive approach was adopted to identify meaningful patterns in the data

(Frith & Gleeson, 2004). This ensured that themes were strongly linked to the

data, without the use of a pre-formed coding framework based on teacher

resilience research. The stage at which the reading of relevant literature should take place divides experts in the field. Braun & Clarke (2006), for example, caution on the dangers of early engagement. They suggest that it can narrow the scope of a researcher's ability to recognise undiscovered and crucial aspects of a research topic, because the researcher can develop a bias towards identifying features of the data that fit into the pre-existing themes that they have learned. Nevertheless, a theory-driven analysis can equip the analyst with an enhanced ability to identify more subtle and nuanced aspects of the data.

When considering the level at which themes were to be identified, the issue of semantic vs. latent analysis was explored. In order to provide a rich description of the entire data set, a semantic approach was chosen, which meant identifying the surface meanings of the data. As an alternative, a latent approach could have been chosen involving analysing underlying meanings or patterns in participants' responses (Boyatzis, 1998). However, analysis at the latent level was not felt to be appropriate because it usually involves focusing on one specific question or theme across the entire data set, and therefore many themes can be unreported. Furthermore, this form of analysis is often associated with the constructionist paradigm (Burr, 2003), which proposes that meanings and experiences are influenced by the range of discourses that are used within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Initially the data from transcripts 1-9 was grouped into the fourteen themes below:

- Positive aspects of the work place

- Definitions of teacher resilience

- Definitions of burnout

- Strategies to recover from burnout

- Resilience has changed

- Resilience has stayed the same

- Changes to staff meetings

- Personal beliefs about teaching

- Personal strategies to stay positive

- Helpful processes to promote thriving

- Support from other people

- Strategies to cope with challenges

- Supportive school team

The collection of data extracts that related to each of these initial fourteen themes were grouped within NVIVO9 into isolated files; an example of all quotes that were captured in relation to the themes 'Positive Aspects of the Work Place' and 'Definitions of Resilience' can be found in Appendix VIII and Appendix IX respectively.

When considering the amount of data that constituted an overarching theme, strict rules were not adhered to regarding the space within each transcript. Instead, importance was placed on the relevance of the theme in relation to

the research questions and sub-questions. The prevalence of a theme can be measured in a range of different ways, including recording the number of participants who articulate a theme, recording whether or not a theme is mentioned by a participant, or recording the number of times each individual theme is mentioned across all data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During both phases of data analysis, the themes that were identified, coded and analysed were representative of the entire data set. This strategy is considered a useful strategy for reporting on under researched areas, where knowledge of participants' views on the research topic is limited (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In order to review and refine the themes, all collated data extracts were re-read to ensure that the groupings had been organised to form coherent evidence of consistent patterns in the entire data set. Individual data extracts for each theme were then collated to identify interesting features of the extracts, assess how these contributed to the overall research question and sub questions and consider the implications of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage in the analysis process led to the development of additional sub themes. When a new sub theme was produced each transcript was re read to establish whether other quotes could be coded into this new sub theme. For example, I started with 'Definitions of Resilience' and identified that many participants had referred to teacher resilience as an ability. For this reason, all 25 transcripts were coded for examples where participants had referred to teacher resilience as an ability.

Table 1: Sub Themes And Corresponding Transcript Number Where Teacher Resilience Has Been Defined As An Ability

Sub themes	Transcript number
Continue teaching despite a range of different difficult work situations	T1, T2, T3, T9, T13, T15, T16, T18, T20, T21, T22, T25
Bounce back	T5, T12
Remember why you first went into teaching	T5, T10, T12
Stay positive	T6, T7, T17
Adjust your teaching practice	T7
Maintain your values on high quality teaching	T7
Feel strong enough to make your voice heard by the SLT	T7, T20
Maintain inner strength	T18, T20
Not be browbeaten by SLT	T7, T20
Maintain good relationship with pupils	T8
Develop and improve your practice	T10, T18
Not be emotionally upset	T11, T19
Understand that everything is not going to be perfect all the time.	T11, T18
Not take the situation personally	T2, T17
Switch off from work issues	T18
Detach from the staff	T19
Not bring home issues into work	T19
Retain good temper	T20
Retain good humour	T20
Draw from a range of strategies	T22
Adapt your teaching practice to respond to the new challenge	T22, T23, T24, T25

The next stage in my thematic approach to data analysis involved engaging in two forms of peer supervision. First, I took a hard copy of the collection of sub themes and over arching themes to a peer group supervision. I discussed the progress of my thematic analysis with four other Trainee Educational Psychologists; together we considered whether all of the sub themes related to the over arching themes, and if there were any other ways of categorising the data. Second, I sent my research questions and sub questions, and hard copies of six phase one transcripts, to a female teacher who had postgraduate experience of conducting thematic analysis at Masters level. I asked her to highlight interesting sentences within each transcript and note down any immediate thoughts on what her highlighted sections might mean in

relation to each of the research questions (an extract of the teacher's hand written notes can be found in Appendix X). I also met with this teacher to engage in 6 x 45 minute discussions of her analysis of each transcript.

At this point I took a two-week break from data analysis. When I returned to my analysis I printed out hard copies of all of the data extracts contained within each theme. I read through the data extracts within each theme again to search for additional similarities and possible nuances in the data that had been previously overlooked. To capture this stage of analysis I made hand written annotations on each hard copy of the data extracts (an example of this can be found in Appendix IX). Reflecting on my coding process in this manner supported me to identify that considerable diversity and range existed between the data extracts within most themes that I had previously formed. Furthermore only the findings from two themes could be reported in a meaningful way, namely 'resilience has changed' and 'resilience has stayed the same'.

Whilst reviewing the collection of data extracts grouped within the category that referred to teacher resilience as an ability, I identified that participants had stated thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that they had experienced when teacher resilience occurred. I looked over the data extracts grouped into the other themes and identified that many of them could also be meaningfully grouped within a category of thoughts, feelings or behaviours. In addition, I identified that many of the data extracts that had been grouped under the theme 'Definitions of Resilience' referred to the professional context where teacher resilience is experienced. Furthermore, I reflected that 'supportive

school culture' as opposed to 'supportive school team' might more successfully capture a wider range of participants' responses that did not relate solely to team members. As a result of these observations, I made the decision to retain the grouping of data extracts that had been coded into the sub themes: 'resilience has changed' and 'resilience has stayed the same', and reject the remaining groupings of the data set. The entire data set was then re-coded in relation to the five broad over arching themes: thoughts, feelings, behaviours, professional challenges and school culture. The data extracts that had been coded into each of these categories were read again to search for recurring language and meanings and develop sub themes. An example of the codes and data extracts that were organised within the over arching theme of thoughts, and then into the sub theme of 'Realistic Role Expectations' can be found in Table 2.

The overarching themes and sub themes were then discussed in 2 supervision meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to consider whether or not the sub themes contained parallels that could be captured by the overarching theme. As a result of this meeting, the subthemes 'professional challenges' and 'Professional qualities of a good teacher' were amended to 'professional context' and 'effective pedagogy' respectively. Where rephrased sub themes were felt to accurately capture the essence of a quotation that was included in another theme, the quotation was also coded

Table 2: An Example Of The Organisation Of Quotations From Transcripts Into The Sub Theme 'Realistic Role Expectations' Within The Over Arching Theme of 'Thoughts.'

Over Arching Theme: Thoughts	
Sub theme	**Transcript number and data extract**
Realistic Role Expectations	**T1,** you aren't wonder woman, think about what is that you can do and what is that you can't do.
	T1, when you first go into teaching, any job, you want to impress you want to be the best, well I always wanted to be the best and I always wanted to impress, and so therefore you never want to say no because you think that's a sign of weakness, which I don't think it is, I think it's actually a sign of strength, so to know what is achievable and what isn't.
	T2, I'm going to have to take the girls class, this lady's class, and do the best I can. And it's just a case of you've got to, you know, do what you can get on with it really.
	T4, they imagine it's going to be like one of those films where you go and end up like rapping in front of a group of black kids, and it's not really like that. I kind of see it, I never went in thinking I could make those big changes but you know I, I know that on a day-to-day basis I can do small things for them which might make difference.
	T6, you've got to be quite honest with yourself, and say what can I actually do, what can I actually manage, and think about the long-term, and maybe that's how you avoid burnout, you know if you are constantly doing everything absolutely at the utmost, you will be working 15 hour days, so I suppose, a self-regulatory strategy would have been, actually expecting a bit less if we talking about marking.
	T7, I think I can still do something in small ways so that's why I still like it.
	T8: there's always times even when things are going okay when there are still problems, you still have problem children, you know, you've got to deal with certain issues.
	T9, you can't do everything, don't feel that you can do everything

into the rephrased sub theme. Details of the sub themes that were identified

within each over arching theme are discussed in Chapter 4.

The coding of phase 2 of data collection was influenced by a series of theoretically interesting meaning-units that had been identified in phase one interview data, and by pre-existing literature on teacher resilience (Patterson, Collins & Abbott, 2004; Gu & Day, 2007; Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). This meant that a deductive approach was initially adopted, whereby a coding framework was developed prior to coding. Phase 2 data was first coded in relation to thoughts, feelings, behaviours and school culture. Additional codes were added after reading through the phase 2 interview transcripts. This permitted the possibility of identifying new themes on the topic of teacher resilience. The coding process for phase two interviews was therefore part concept-driven and part data-driven (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This is a useful strategy for ensuring that a researcher remains attuned to their respondent's views of their reality. It can also reduce the likelihood that previous theories, or the researcher's own beliefs, will be imposed on the data (Charmaz, 2000). Drawing upon previous literature enhanced the complexity of the interpretations of data and provided a clear direction for analysis focused upon gaining rich insights into ambiguous responses in the phase one data set (Braun & Clark, 2006).

In order to review and refine the themes for the phase 2 data, a replication of phase one data analysis was followed. All collated data extracts were read to ensure that the groupings had been organised to form coherent evidence of consistent patterns in the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Sub themes within each over arching theme were subsequently identified. An example of this, in relation to the over arching theme of 'feelings', involved coding the data extracts that mentioned the experience of stress into a series of sub

themes that isolated the relationship between stress and teacher resilience for the teacher, including the sub themes: 'stress increased when teacher resilience increased' and 'stress decreased when teacher resilience decreased'. Full details of the over arching themes and sub themes that were identified within the phase two data set can be found in chapter four.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The undertaking of any research project raises ethical issues for researchers intent on making a valuable and respected contribution to the literature. Whilst appropriate ethical behaviour is widely acknowledged as an essential cornerstone in all effective and meaningful research (Best & Kahn, 2006), there is currently no universal agreement or code for achieving ethics in qualitative research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Some writers of qualitative research recommend remaining cautious of developing fixed ethical rules, principles and procedures at the beginning of a research project (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009); others recognise that this process can provide a useful framework to support good ethical conduct (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The current research is mindful of Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) suggestion that good ethical behaviour is not a 'once only' event and that a researcher should be reviewing their ethical behaviour throughout the research. Furthermore, a number of ethical considerations were identified at the beginning of the research and these were reflecting upon throughout the research. Traditionally, three key positions have provided researchers with a framework for ethical reflection, namely, Kantian Deontology, Utilitarian Ethics of Consequences and Aristotle's Virtue of Ethics. Both Kantian Deontology and

the Utilitarian Ethics of Consequences adopt a somewhat procedural approach to ethics, with the intention of generating undisputable rules, principals and procedures (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This ethical standpoint has been criticised on account of the numerous difficulties involved in seeking to generate rules that can be universally agreed upon (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1988). In a discussion of the ethical uncertainties inherent in qualitative interviewing, Kvale and Brinkman (2009) recommend that rather than following universal rules, "qualitative researchers should primarily cultivate their ability to perceive and judge thickly (i.e. using their practical wisdom)" (p.67). For researchers in search of an approach for this form of ethical decision making, Aristotle's position on ethics may be adopted which, rather than seeking to formulate universal ethical rules, focuses on the development of practical wisdom or 'phronesis'. In order to achieve phronesis, researchers must develop an ability to perceive and describe events in their value-laden contexts, and make ethical decisions for every event independently.

The current research adhered to the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009), and ethical approval was gained from the Departmental Ethics' Committee at the Department of Psychology and Human Development at the Institute of Education, University of London. An ethical framework was developed which focused upon constructing principles for informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time (Barbour & Schostak, 2005; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) advise that for qualitative researchers who are carrying out interviews, "it is often important to remain open to the dilemmas, ambivalences, and conflicts that are bound to arise throughout the research

process" (p.69). In seeking to achieve phronesis, each ethical principle remained in continual assessment and was reflected on throughout the investigation.

3.7.1 Informed Consent

Issues for researchers, in relation to informed consent, relate to the nature of this agreement between researcher and participant. It is questionable as to whether or not full consent to participation may ever be given in qualitative research, since participants are unlikely to hold a complete understanding of the research, or how their views will be reported, before they participate (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) advise that it is important for researchers to take careful consideration of the depth of information that participants are provided with prior to interviewing. Full information about the purpose, whilst overcoming issues of deception, may result in participants picking up researcher bias. In the present study, participants were informed of the research question and sub questions, but did not receive information on research or theory-based literature that relate to the research questions.

To ensure that each participant felt comfortable with the nature of the research, a summary sheet of the study was made available one week prior to interviewing; this explained the overall purpose of the research project and the intended research aims. In addition, my email contact details were given to participants in case they had any questions or queries related to the research. The issue of informed consent was discussed at the start of each interview,

during which participants were reminded of the overall aims of the project and asked to sign a consent form to confirm that they were happy to participate in the research. This ethical issue was again revisited when participants were sent a copy of their interview transcripts for member checking, as participants were asked to delete any comments that they did not wish to be included in data analysis. More information on ensuring that participants had the right to withdraw is discussed in the next two sub sections.

3.7.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The nature of qualitative research means that the data is usually personal and individual, and this can lead to difficulties around upholding confidentiality and anonymity during report writing (Gibbs, 2011). Furthermore, the use of direct quotations from participants can sometimes present an ethical issue because of their potential to identify specific participants and settings (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007).

In the current research, participants' permission was gained in order to include verbatim responses in the research report. In addition, the names of school settings were not included and participants' names were anonymised. Whilst looking for themes in the content of interviews, the difficulties in upholding the agreement of full anonymity and confidentiality were illuminated. The data had been captured in confidence, and consequently any data that had the potential to cause harm to participants could not be included in the final report (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The findings generated from this research would be of great utility for the senior leadership teams of the

schools that interviewees came from; first in relation to the generation of assumptions about each participant's effectiveness, and second in directing improvements for their staff team. However, these outcomes were not the aims of the research or an expected outcome for participants. For these reasons, participants were told that any examples that could be traced to a specific individual or schools would not be included in the report.

A further issue relating to confidentiality was the curious behaviour of some participants of expanding upon previous responses once I had informed them that the interview had finished. Frequently, participants would divulge interesting material that would provide greater illuminations of their experiences of resilience. Such behaviour is acknowledged in the literature to be a common occurrence in interviewing, and has been referred to as 'the-hand-on-the-door' phenomenon (Robson, 2002). This phenomenon raised two ethical dilemmas. First, how best to capture this extended information, second, whether reporting the additional comments would contravene the agreements that had been made to ensure informed consent and confidentiality.

In order to resolve these issues, the audio recorder was kept on until each respondent had been debriefed. The entire interview recording was transcribed for member checking and a covering letter explained that participants could delete information that they wanted omitted from the report. This strategy ensured that each participant consented to the additional material included in the report.

All electronic data was double password protected and hard data (including printed transcripts) was locked in a secure cabinet in my office. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, following the thesis examination process, all hard data will be destroyed and electronic data permanently deleted.

3.7.3 The Right to Withdraw

The personal nature of qualitative research can raise ethical issues in relation to the consequences for individuals who choose to participate (Gibbs, 2011). Careful consideration was taken, during the construction of interview questions and during each interview, to limit the likelihood that participants would experience significant distress or harm; the process of reflection can negatively affect individuals by leaving them with knowledge about themselves that they were possibly not fully aware of prior to the interview (Patton, 2003).

To further limit the possibility of distress or harm, a semi-structured interview technique was selected as the most ethically appropriate technique for collecting data. Although the interview questions are constructed prior to data collection, the researcher can modify the order of the pre-determined questions during the interview, omit questions that are perceived as inappropriate, and include additional questions if they are perceived as relevant (Robson, 2011). This flexibility ensured that if any respondent showed signs of distress during their interview, the researcher could refrain from asking potentially negative questions and direct the participants' focus towards more positive thoughts. Both interview schedules were also

structured to encourage self-esteem and self-confidence towards the end of the interview, including asking participants to reflect on their main sources of support and the experiences that they felt proud of. Such questioning has been found to direct participants away from any negative feelings towards a more positive appraisal of their own teaching style and craft knowledge (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006). Furthermore, in the event of any participants displaying implicit signs of wanting to withdraw such as off-task or inappropriate behaviour, it was planned that participants would be reminded of their right to withdraw. During phase 1 of data collection, one participant began to cry after describing their experience of a professional challenge with a colleague. The participant then stated "I don't know why I am crying". At this point I chose to encourage the participant to reflect on why the situation was distressing. This not only helped to illuminate the participant's personal experience of teacher resilience, but also reduced the negative emotional consequences of her participation in the project.

As previously mentioned, participants were sent a copy of their interview. Whilst this was deemed an effective means by which to ensure that informed consent and confidentiality were maintained, it was only implemented after careful consideration of whether or not this process would cause unnecessary harm or distress upon the participants. Researchers must be aware that providing participants with the opportunity to see their own words in print can sometimes lead participants to experience great anxiety. This can be caused by concerns that the transfer of words from speech to text reduces the likelihood of their identity remaining confidential and anonymous (Poland, 2003). Poland (2003) speculates that "we associate print material with

dissemination and communication. Stories of leaked confidential memos pepper the popular press, and these do little to reassure respondents when they see their own testimony in print" (Poland, 2003, p.282). In addition, Kvale (2007) suggests that the anxiety caused through member checking could be due to marked differences in how individuals express their thoughts when they speak compared to when they write. Spoken language is far less articulate, which is problematic when interview transcripts are exact representations of what is said during interviews. The reader may view the disjointed and inarticulate written text as a demonstration of their own incompetent communication skills.

The decision of whether or not to send verbatim transcripts to participants for member checking appears to be one that divides experts in the field. Kvale and Brinkman (2009), for example, suggest that researchers should consider making the transcripts more fluent and readable before sending them to back to participants for member checking. In contrast, Poland (2003) recommends retaining original verbatim transcripts until all data analysis has been completed, and only making revisions to verbatim quotes for the final report. It appears that whilst there is no singular approach to member checking, there is general consensus that transcripts may be altered for the final research report in the interests of readability (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Poland, 2003). By allowing the participants to view their own transcripts in verbatim, they could retain control over how their responses were presented and interpreted for the research report. In addition, many researchers maintain that member checking is an important means of adding value to research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The covering letter stated that if participants experienced significant

emotional difficulties, as a result of either engaging in the interview process or reading their transcript, that they could contact me via the included email address; I had planned to identify the range of NHS support services available to each participant, including counselling services, however no participants indicated feelings of distress or anxiety. In order to avoid the possibility of unethical stigmatisation of specific participants by readers of the final research report, incoherent and repetitive verbatim was removed from any quotes that were included in the final report.

Chapter Four: Results

A variety of approaches exist for reporting the findings of qualitative research. The current approach was developed by reflecting on writing styles that support different ways of presenting researcher voice and a range of structures for organising qualitative data (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is to present the voices of the participants in a way that reveals the idiosyncratic and nuanced nature of their experiences. Within the presentation of results, my own voice is active when the subject of the sentence is a participant and a quote is being used, and passive when the specifics of participants' responses are not identified. Furthermore, the results are presented in a natural and thematic style. This means that the discovery of overarching themes and subthemes in the data are presented in a way that mirrors the process of data collection and analysis, with key elements from phase one and phase two presented in sequence (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013). This strategy was felt to be the most appropriate method for capturing the sheer volume of data within the word limit restrictions of my course requirements.

The chapter is divided into two main phases, and reports phase one and phase two data respectively. Phase one describes the responses from participants in phase one of data collection. The responses included multiple aspects of teacher resilience, and were grouped into the following overarching themes: professional context, thought processes, feelings, effective pedagogy, stable versus unstable construct, and an iterative process. Information on sub themes is included within the presentation of each

overarching theme. All responses included a combination of the overarching themes and sub themes, and were therefore coded into more than one category. However, for clarity within the report the multiple elements of teacher resilience are presented separately. Phase two describes the responses from phase two of data collection. Although the first interview was a pilot interview, the responses have been included in data analysis. Thematic analysis of phase two interview data led to identification of the following overarching themes: professional context, unstable construct, teacher stress, faith and supportive school culture. Throughout this chapter, vignettes of teacher's responses have been included to help illuminate the research findings and provide the reader with a sense of the richness of the data.

4.1   Phase 1 Overarching Theme One: Professional Context

When participants were asked to define the term "teacher resilience" and discuss professional challenges where they felt they had to be resilient, responses included descriptions of the professional context where teacher resilience can be experienced. Participants responses were grouped into the following three sub themes: 1) challenging situations, 2) challenging relationships, and 3) administration responsibilities. Table 3 presents a visual thematic representation of this thematic analysis, including the main nuances that were discovered within each sub theme.

Table 3. A Visual Representation Of The Overarching Theme 'The Context of Teacher Resilience' And Subthemes Within Each Grouping.
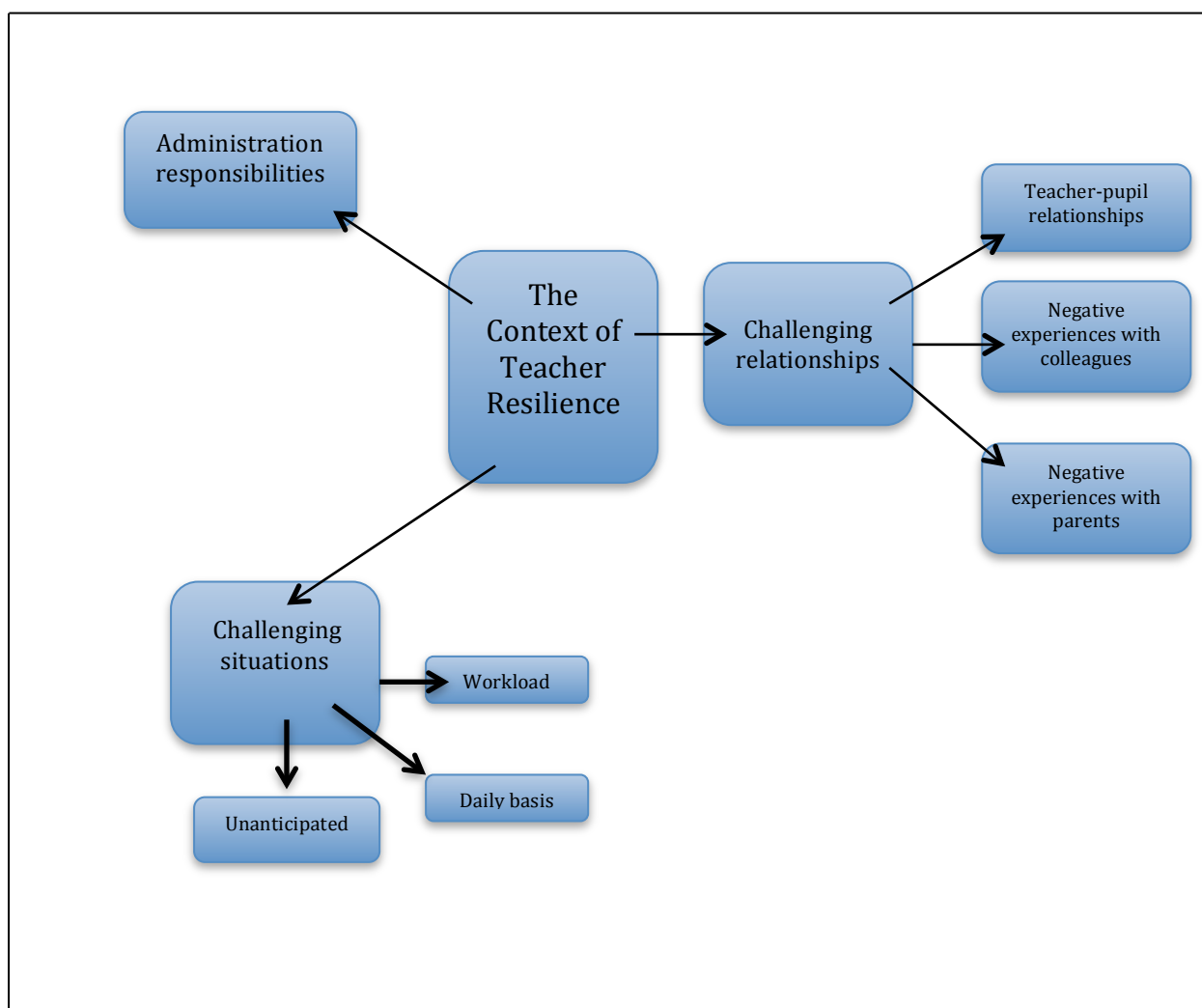
4.1.1 Challenging Situations

Participants' responses suggest that experience of teacher resilience can involve encounters with a wide range of professionally challenging situations (20 responses). Participants also defined teacher resilience as '*bouncing back'* from challenging situations or having a '*bounce back factor'* (5 responses), and the ability to '*continue*' (13 responses) or '*cope*' (6 responses) in the job in spite of professionally challenging situations. Some responses combined these factors by stating that teacher resilience involves "*being able to cope with those things that occur every day"* (9 responses):

> **Ruth:** *OFSTED - big thing at here at the moment, due any time, appraisal, targets, levels, discipline, parents. There is a never ending string of things…It's pretty well daily. Obviously OFSTED comes up on a sort of cyclical thing. But all the other things are there all the time and it never lets up.*

Both Lucy and Mark illuminate this issue further by describing a combination of daily factors that require teacher resilience:

> **Lucy:** *"We have an awful lot of things thrown at us…in the daily workings of the job two days are never the same, but on top of that there's always new initiatives, and new schemes of work, and new curriculum, and you name it."*
>
> **Mark:** *The pressure from the Government and the targets is ridiculous. For example, we're below floor target, and when we look at the pupils in our cohorts they should never be reaching the floor target, but if we don't hit those targets with those pupils, the school will close. That's the first one. Increasing issues with pupils coming through not ready to learn, and again primary school teachers will probably say something different, but I face quite a lot of pupils who can't read properly. Very low parental support with kids that you do have problems with, and you ring home nothing gets done. I think all these things, they're all contributing factors to that high stress, but I would say for the most part it's the stress and the pressure that causes teachers to leave and I think all those things are sort of factors within it."*

In addition, other responses suggest that the experience can occur during unanticipated situations where teachers are required to react and respond quickly (9 responses). Charlotte discusses this aspect in her response:

> **Charlotte:** *Someone who's…ready to adapt and change their plans and change their plans immediately at the drop of a hat, about a situation that maybe arose or ideas that the Head teacher had.*

4.1.2 Challenging Relationships

Participants responses indicated that teacher resilience can be experienced during situations involving the following three types of challenging relationships: 1) teacher-pupil relationships (14 responses), 2) negative experiences with colleagues (12 responses), 3) negative experiences with

parents (6 responses). Whilst reflecting on their personal experiences of teacher resilience 11 participants discussed a situation involving a teacher-pupil relationship, 11 participants discussed situations involving a negative experience with a colleague, 5 participants discussed situations involving a negative experience with a parent. Furthermore, 10 participants discussed more than one type of challenging situation, and their responses were therefore coded into more than one sub category. Insights into the participants' personal accounts are discussed in the following three sub sections.

Teacher-Pupil Relationships

The responses from the 14 participants that discussed situations involving teacher-pupil relationships suggest that teacher resilience can be experienced when pupils do not understand what they have been taught, and when pupils experience difficulties regulating their emotions. Mark summarises the distinction between these two aspects when reflecting on his own experiences of teacher resilience:

Mark: *As an educator, when I'm sort of teaching the pupils, if they get something wrong or don't understand it and then they can have misconceptions, am I sort of comfortable enough in what I do to still think okay, what's the problem? Lets have a look at it, let's unpick and then we can go from there. So there's resilience at that level. But as a professional working with children you sort of, you know, teenagers push away and they're very sort of aggressive when they can't cope with certain emotions and things like that…I might not necessarily get an apology from that pupil, I won't necessarily get to sit down and discuss this like I would with issues with a work colleague…we've had a Roma cohort move into the area recently, and they've sort of taken a lot of resources and they bring a massive challenge with them… no schooling, very little English…The school values are completely different, they're very much just sort of "well if I don't like this I'm just not going to do it, and nobody can…" y'know, there's no sort of respect for authority.*

Negative Experiences with Colleagues

In total, 12 participants stated experiencing teacher resilience in response to managing difficult experiences with colleagues. All of the experiences within this category involved situations where the participant felt colleagues had undervalued their skills or ideas. Mary, for example, discussed a personal example of this challenge:

> **Mary:** *You've got to be resilient to comments that are said to you from other staff. And you have to be quite tough about it because emotionally it could upset you if you let it upset you…An example recently would be I've trained really hard to do forest school leadership…You have a lot of work and essays to do. And I didn't take one day off to do it. I did it all in my own time. And once I'd completed it…I found it very difficult to get the staff engaged…And I feel quite hurt by it. The staff don't value it. And therefore I feel don't value me. And I find it very hurtful. And yes I do. And talking about it does make me very sad.*

Negative Experiences with Parents

Participants also identified negative experiences with parents as a professional challenge where teacher resilience was experienced (6 responses). This included disagreeing with parents over the level of input that parents should have in their child's education. Susie discussed this challenge in her response:

> **Susie:** *…the expectations of parents that education must be completely taken care of by the school rather than them having to have an input I find difficult sometimes. And I feel quite strongly that education is something that happens partly at school and of course at home and every aspect of your life and so I find it difficult when parents have the whole 'well I'm at work all day so actually you need to deal with this, I'm sorry I'm not prepared to do any additional work at home on it, you need to sort it out at school'. I don't like that idea…I feel like there's a general undercurrent of that. Being resilient when faced with that has been probably my greatest challenge."*

Other examples included situations where parents had either voiced concerns or expressed anger about a teacher's methods of professional conduct.

4.1.3 Administrative Responsibilities

Participants also reported experiencing teacher resilience during situations where they had a high volume of administrative responsibilities (13 responses). This included the daily and weekly responsibilities of marking, lesson preparation, and the monitoring of pupil progress. It also included duties that occur on a less regular but cyclical basis, such as half termly reviews of pupil progress, being inspected by Ofsted, and adapting teaching practice or lesson content in response to new Government recommendations. The participants who discussed this aspect of the professional context usually listed their administration responsibilities.

4.2 Overarching Theme Two: Cognitive Flexibility

Whilst comparing participants' definitions of teacher resilience and reflections on their own personal experiences of teacher resilience, five key thought processes were identified as facilitating teacher resilience. These thought processes suggest that teacher resilience can be an intellectually demanding experience that requires teachers to be flexible in their cognitions (thoughts). Responses indicated that this cognitive flexibility involved four different types of thought process, and these are discussed subsequently.

4.2.1 Realistic Role Expectations

Participants stated that an important aspect of teacher resilience involves having realistic role expectations (19 responses). The responses indicate that this can involve a number of different elements. Some participants spoke about having realistic role expectations, and this included being very positive about the small ways in which they can have a positive impact on pupils lives.

> **Karen:**   *In a very small way from the outside but a huge way from the inside, with individual children are making really important changes, you're helping them with important changes. And that's the crux of teaching, it's the tiny little bits day-to-day.*

Karen's response illuminates how, for some participants, this also meant being able to recognise your own limitations as a teacher (14 responses). James also describes this whilst reflecting on his initial motivations for pursuing a career in teaching:

> **James:**   *They imagine it's going to be like one of those films where you go and end up like rapping in front of a group of black kids, and it's not really like that. I kind of see it, I never went in thinking I could make those big changes but you know I, I know that on a day-to-day basis I can do small things for them which might make a difference.*

In addition, Jessica explains her own thoughts about the professional challenges she encounters:

> **Jessica:**   *You can't be a perfectionist in the classroom. Because there are just too many variables…You can't ever be totally control of every child and prep… Everything is just impossible. You would just have to be superhuman to do it.*

For other participants, having realistic role expectations included expecting challenges to be an inherent part of the job (12 responses):

> **Harriet:** *I have had lots of professional challenges…But I would say that just goes hand in hand with the job. I think if you are in the teaching profession you to expect to have challenging professional decisions.*

and believing that most teachers encounter the same professional challenges (8 responses):

> **Laura:** E*ven those people who maybe you think is easy for them, it's not easy for them either.*

> **Julia:** *Don't sit and worry on your own because everybody is in the same situation at some point. We have all been there.*

4.2.2 Depersonalising Stressful Situations

Another aspect of teacher resilience was identified as the ability to depersonalise stressful situations. This response was stated by some participants whilst they reflected on challenging relationships where they had felt teacher resilience, and was defined as an ability to "not take things personally" (9 responses). The explanations suggest that participants' rationalisations of the difficult situations enabled the participants to sustain their feelings of competency. For most teachers, this involved explaining the unpleasant event in a way that sought to understand the function or reasons for the pupil, parent or colleagues' difficult behaviour. Lucy referred to this ability, giving a detailed insight into her own engagement in this thought process:

> **Lucy:** *I would've taken things more personally when I was less experienced than I do now, now that I think I'm quite good at not taking things personally… if a child is shouting and swearing and is really angry… they might be effing and blinding at you and being very personal about you but don't take it personally because they're just at that point in their anger they just want to hurt somebody, and you just*

> *happen to be the person that's there. So I think over the years, my experience has taught me not to take those things personally. Um and then when the child has calmed you start over again, almost like wipe the slate clean.*

For a small proportion of participants, depersonalising the situation had involved taking personal responsibility for the occurrence of challenging relationships with a pupil (3 responses). These responses suggested that perceiving the professional challenge to be something that they had personally caused was a helpful factor in facilitating their own teacher resilience. Luke, for example, commented on this aspect of his own teacher resilience:

Luke: *When you've had a class that has misbehaved you don't blame the kids…I would generally say now that if the class has misbehaved, I'd almost always be sure it was my fault, because I know that I can teach classes where kids don't misbehave.*

Luke's example suggests that although he does take personal responsibility for the situation, he does not rationalise the pupil behaviour as an indication that he is an incompetent teacher. Luke's ability to view the situation as an isolated incident sustains his feelings of competence as a teacher.

For some participants, engaging in a process by which they tried to understand or explain the difficult relationship led to them reframing the event, and adopting a more realistic perspective on the severity of their own difficulties. Participants referred to this as holding a wide perspective and thinking about the severity of the problem in relation to the wider context of life and the world (10 responses):

Jessica: *I think I try and remind myself of context. I think I learnt that a few years ago when I was struggling a bit with various things and a little girl in my class, her Dad had just died in a car accident…And you just*

think actually what does it matter if I am not being paid to do the maths coordinator or deputy head role you know for six months when someone has just lost their father. So I think that is just a little example. But I am actually quite a believer in context and actually just reminding yourself things could actually be a lot worse.

4.2.3 Focusing on the Positives

Another aspect of cognitive flexibility was an ability to focus on the positives (19 responses) during professionally challenging situations. Some participants chose to expand on this. For example, 3 participants stated that this involved reflecting on their initial motivations for choosing a career in teaching and noting instances in the daily aspects of their work that supported their initial motivations (3 responses). For others, it involved not dwelling or ruminating over work issues (10 responses):

Helen: *I mean if it had been a particularly tough day I think also just coming home and just trying not to bring it all home with me…and maybe have an evening where I think right, that's it, I'm not going to sit and stress over work.*

4.2.4 Reflective Practice

Participants responses also indicated that engaging in "*reflection*", being able to "*reflect*", and having the ability to "*be reflective*" facilitated their teacher resilience during professionally challenging situations (8 responses).

Lucy: *I think you've got to be reflective, I think you know, when you've dealt with something that's been a real challenge, could I have done that any better? Um if I was ever placed in that situation again, how would I um would I deal with it in the same way or could I improve things or make things better? And I think that you need to be reflective like that the whole time, but any challenging situation does impact on your practice.*

The reflective activities that were mentioned included thinking about pre-existing skills that had been useful in similar situations (4 responses) and evaluating your own teaching practice (3 responses).

4.3   Overarching Theme Three: Feelings

Participant's responses indicated that teachers who successfully engage in teacher resilience could experience a combination of the following 9 feelings in response to the challenging incident. The majority of responses that were given tended to be very brief and are best summarised in a succinct way. Participants used similar words to describe the feelings that are involved in the experience of teacher resilience. For this reason, feelings were coded using the words that participants used:

- Feeling a continued love for teaching (11 responses);
- not feeling isolated from your colleagues (10 responses);
- not feeling stressed (9 responses);
- feeling confident (7 responses);
- feeling appreciated by others (8 responses);
- feeling positivity (6 responses);
- feeling enjoyment from being around children (6 responses);
- feeling strong (4 responses);
- feeling the need to improve teaching practice (3 responses).

Responses that mentioned teacher stress provided an inconsistent pattern on whether or not teacher resilience involves the experience of stress. Many participants described experiencing resilience during high stress situations, however other participants stated that the experience does not involve stress:

> **Luke:**   *I rarely get stressed…I might have just taught a fantastic lesson with year sevens, and then I my go and get a phone call saying that one of our students has put in an allegation of rape against her stepfather, which has*

happened, you know, and I don't go in and go "oh my God, I'm stressed now" I will pick it up because it is part of my job.

Furthermore, some participants also alluded to the notion that the experience of teacher resilience has involved the development of a type of buffering system that prevents the experience of stress (8 responses):

Helen: *I just don't let it get to me like I used to, I don't let, you know, some of the things that would have stressed me out a few years ago don't any more, I think oh yeah, here we go again, it's another, you know, we had another Ofsted inspection about a month ago, and it was interesting, you know, I didn't, I just didn't get stress about it like I used to.*

4.4 Overarching Theme Four: Effective Pedagogy

Effective pedagogy was also identified as an important element in promoting teacher resilience. The notion of effective pedagogy was interpreted in a variety of different ways, and responses were coded into two main categories, namely, 'personal actions' and 'supportive school culture'. The nuances that existed within these two categories are discussed subsequently.

4.4.1 Personal Actions

Seeking Support From Within The School Team

In total, 23 participants stated that seeking help from members of the school team as a factor that had facilitated their teacher resilience. Participants stated they had approached a colleague for support when they had experienced teacher resilience (21 responses), and the most common aim of this action was to discuss practical strategies or best practice (17 responses):

> **Laura:** *I have had times where I have sat down with particular colleagues and a particular class I know I'm not getting the best out of them, and we have sat down together and looked at strategies that each one of us have used and pulled the best of the strategies together, working together, so we're sharing good practice. It was very recently within the last academic year.*

In addition, support from colleagues had been sought in order to offload difficult feelings associated with a professional challenge (13 responses). Helen, for example, discusses this action when responding to a situation involving a negative experience with a parent:

> **Helen***: You just smile sweetly and when they've gone and you sort of have a moan to your colleagues, and you know everybody's in the same position. I think, you know, that comes back to working in a close-knit team who are, all know what you're going through and all feeling the same, and I think, you know, as I said before we are a strong team and everybody's very vocal about how they feel, which is good because you're going to the staff room and you know if somebody's had a bad day because you'll probably hear about it…there's not many people that wouldn't, you know, let it out. It's sort of how we've learnt to deal with it. If things have gone wrong that day, you go and have a coffee in the staff room and you have a moan about it…it just makes you all feel a lot better.*

In addition, some participants also mentioned that going to observe other teachers teaching had promoted their teacher resilience (4 responses).

The findings also indicated that experiences of teacher resilience also occurred when participants approached a member of their Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for support (12 responses). The most commonly cited aim of this strategy was to communicate their inability to complete or carry out a work responsibility (8 responses). Laura, for example, approached her Deputy Head teacher when she was experiencing difficulties managing her teaching responsibilities when her team partner was experiencing personal difficulties:

Laura: *I was having to carry her quite a lot because she was crying in front of children, and there were all sorts of things happening, and at that point I said this has got to stop…it took a bit of stamping my feet to bring it to a head…having quite a frank discussion because, you know, you grin and bear it but it was just getting worse and worse and worse, and I knew I was starting to suffer so I think it all came to a head one day so I caught the head, the deputy head, outside her office and said look, enough is enough. I think she'd asked me to do something and I said well you know I can't do any more, and we had quite a frank discussion, but she was very supportive and very quickly after that things changed.*

Participants also stated that they had approached a member of their SLT to discuss challenging issues with parents (4 responses), learn practical strategies to improve teacher-pupil relationships (3 responses), and gain insights into their perspective on child protection issues (1 response).

Some participants discussed the utility of a supportive school team for facilitating teacher resilience, and these participants stated that an important and linked element was having the ability to ask for help when you need it, rather than pretending that everything is o.k. (10 responses):

Isabelle: *It has taken me a while to go and say, even though I would say about little things like 'I'm finding this hard' or 'I'm finding that hard' -that's fine, but if it's kind of a big thing I think it's taken me a lot of years to realise it's not me. You can only go so far, and sometimes it's best just to admit defeat and think 'alright!' -because then once you've done that you can move on and think right I've done that. With someone else's help all of a sudden you feel that you can do it.*

All of these participants indicated that they currently work in a team where this is possible, and Julia's response typifies participants' comments on this:

Julia: *Go to anybody if you need any help because anybody will help you. You know don't worry. Don't sit and worry on your own…go and look for help, go and ask for help, because there are plenty of people that will.*

Creating Positive Relationships With Pupils

Participants' responses indicated that the development of a positive teacher-pupil relationship is an important element that can increase the likelihood of them experiencing teacher resilience (7 responses).

Laura: *(having)…good relationships between the staff and the children, and clear expectations of children... Of what we expect children to be like within the school makes for a happy environment, and therefore makes for happy staff.*

Responses suggested that this includes communicating clear boundaries, being humorous in lessons, and showing a sincere interest in pupils.

Seeking Support From Family

In total, 9 participants stated that the experience of teacher resilience had occurred during times when they had received support from their family during difficult times at work. For 8 of these participants, the support from their family did not take away the challenge, rather, having the opportunity to "*talk things through*", "*get a different perspective*" on the issue, and "*feel understood*" were helpful because it enabled them to reframe how they thought and felt about the challenge:

Lucy: *I personally have a strong home life, so I always feel like I'm supported by my husband and who will listen to me whinge and moan and help me to get things into perspective, you know, tell me that it doesn't matter um, and I've got a large family, I have got 4 children with spouses and grandchildren, so I've always got that, I've always got children to talk to, because 3 of them are quite grown up, so to talk about stuff. Obviously you don't use children's names or anything, but I can say you know, we've had a really challenging week with this particular child, and he's done this, this and this, and its, I feel that they support me, um, so I feel like I've got a good support network around me that, and that feeds into your resilience,*

because if you've got people that you feel understand you and are supporting you, um that makes you stronger.

In addition, three participants also spoke about how having someone who will take on the responsibility of family and housework duties can promote teacher resilience:

Harriet: *My husband - hugely supportive… my husband is extremely supportive…more than I know any father to have involvement with their children. So the homework, cooking… looking after their needs, meeting with teachers, friends coming over to play. He has absolute equal involvement with that and I know that a lot of teachers, a lot of people who don't teach, have husbands who have their own work and even with their career they are still doing the lion share of all that with their families. So without that I don't think I could do this job effectively.*

Keeping a Good Work/Home Life Balance

Participants also stated that having a good work life/home life balance can encourage them to experience teacher resilience (13 responses). This included spending time with family, and engaging in leisure activities such as sport or music (11 responses). These actions were described as preventative strategies that could reduce the likelihood of a work challenge being perceived as stressful:

Laura: *…it probably depends on how things have gone at home when I've left the house. Have I, have my children gone off to school really happily, and have we all managed to sit down and have breakfast together before we've gone to work, and have we... See those kind of things are really important. For me it's about spiritually as well, have I got up early and have I done things like read the Bible, and spent some time in prayer, and all those little things that are kind of like nice starts to the day, often affect my mood, and therefore I think they affect my teaching day.*

and also as reactive strategies in response to professional challenges:

Helen: *I mean if it had been a particularly tough day I think also just coming home and just trying not to bring it all home with me…I'll try and do something completely different to forget about it…so I'll just put on a film or something and probably pour a glass of wine, which is not*

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Sense of Humour

Having the ability to laugh and have a sense of humour about professional

challenges was also stated as a factor that had contributed to their experience

of teacher resilience (6 responses). Participants stated examples where this

had been achieved by engaging in discussions with both peer colleagues and

with family members.

Being Adaptable

In addition, many responses interpreted pedagogy as the ability to be

adaptable in your teaching practice (10 responses). This included changing

your daily plan at the last minute at the request of the senior leadership,

adapting teaching practice to suit different classes of pupils, and trying new

teaching methods. Conversely, some participants indicated that a degree of

stubbornness or rigidity towards being asked to change their practice

supported them to be resilient. Furthermore, four participants described

overcoming issues around effective teaching practice by engaging in the

teaching style that is in accordance with their core beliefs about teaching and

learning, irrespective of whether or not this is in line with the whole school

approach:

Rupert: *I don't pay much attention to my bosses if I don't agree with what*
they are saying…I do more and more of what I think is appropriate.
Because my managers are telling me to do things that the
government ministers think are correct and the government ministers
know diddly squit about education….I have to comply with the law,

Other Personal Actions

Participants also responded by listing personal actions that can increase the likelihood of them experiencing teacher resilience in response to a professional challenge. These included being organised (15 responses), prioritising effectively (10 responses), having good lesson preparation (7 responses) and engaging in reflective activities (8 responses). These actions were performed both at home and school.

4.4.2 Supportive School Culture

This subsection reports on the aspects of school culture that were mentioned during participants' reflections on their experiences of teacher resilience. Participants' responses indicate that strong connections with colleagues can facilitate teacher resilience across all types of professionally challenging situations. For some participants, this involved working in a school team where teachers receive confirmation that they are valued and appreciated by the senior leadership team (SLT) (8 responses), and by peer colleagues (13 responses). Participants discussed a range of strategies that their SLT had engaged in which had promoted teacher resilience in their school, both at a group level:

> **Mark:** *We used to have a thing called Barry's, we had this big box in the staff room, it was called The Barry's, Barry the Box, just like the Oscars sort of thing, so you put nomination slips in saying well done to this person for doing that, and anyone could nominate, and then they'd read those out in staff meetings. And now, on a Wednesday, one of the deputy heads collects nominations in via e-mail, and three*

> *or four members of staff get a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates every week. They are quite good at that.*

and at an individual level:

> **Georgia:** *The head of the junior school…she would come in sometimes and look at the work that they were doing and would say 'this is lovely and I love the way you have done that'. And she'd say to me afterwards 'that was a really well prepared lesson' and…she would come in and look at a display on the wall and say 'Ooh that looks great'…She was very encouraging and I think that's important…it is actually very nice to hear, for one of the Management Team to actually come in and say 'This is good work. What you are doing is great…This child is behaving much better now. You've done well. You've helped control him. The class are nice. Your displays are nice'. That actually gives you such a boost.*

In addition, participants mentioned that other support for teachers at the individual level includes having a Head teacher who communicates their confidence in their teachers' practice to difficult parents (3 responses):

> **Christine:** *I remember one parent who was a bit, sort of, difficult with the behaviour system I had. He actually went and talked to her and said, you know, this behaviour system is brilliant and, you know, you're oversensitive, so that was very supportive, and I think in that role, for me then as a young, new teacher that was really helpful to have someone senior supporting you.*

Participants also discussed experiences where they had engaged in personal efforts to help peer colleagues within their team to feel valued (12 responses). This included praise via verbal communication about their colleague's abilities:

> **Gareth:** *You started to see that they felt a bit left out of things in a way, and I worked a lot with them, and, you know, sat with them and talked to them, sort of thing, whereas they sometimes felt they were undervalued. Other people also made an effort to bolster up their self image, and that's important.*

and giving out small tokens of appreciation:

> **Mark:** *It sounds ridiculous but when we've had bad week I'll take a load of doughnuts and cakes in on a Friday just say thank you to the team and well done, and that sort of thing helps. I think it's very important*

to make people around you feel appreciated, and I find that when I do that it means that I can then, it's really quite cynical, but I can sneak in little requests that maybe I wouldn't have done if I'd not buttered the people up first a little bit. I find generally sort of, there's a growing trend of people being quite aggressive in teaching, and almost sort of 'I'm gonna stab people in the back in order to get up to where I want to be', and I just think that's not the way to do things, I think personally you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar sort of thing you know if you want people to do things well and do them properly they've got to respect you and they've got to want to do it, and that for me is the challenge with certain members of staff. But generally I think I managed to do that quite well.

Another important aspect of school cultures that promoted teacher resilience was that an atmosphere was created whereby colleagues openly discussed and reflected on their professional challenges with each other (20 responses). Responses stated that this included a school culture that involves a *"family feel" (*2 responses*),* where teachers *"do not feel isolated"* from their colleagues (4 responses), and where there is an expectation that part of a teacher's job involves facing professional challenges (3 responses):

Jane: *Without feeling that you're failing, d'you know what I mean? -You need someone to go to and say "Look, I'm struggling with this", but that doesn't mean you're failing in your role, it just means you need a bit of support.*

This aspect of teacher resilience also included experienced colleagues imparting their knowledge to members of staff with less experience of the professional challenge (9 responses), sharing resources (2 responses), collaboration between peer colleagues on ideas and strategies (4 responses), and the opportunity to confide difficult feelings to colleagues (7 responses):

Nicola: *It's good if there's other members on the staff who you can just say "urgh" to, and they know why. I think, we're only a small school and a small staff but we do support each other. Some teachers are very good in that way, at saying, y'know, letting off steam having a good sort of talk about it.*

Whilst reflecting on personal challenges where they felt they had experienced teacher resilience, some participants identified that speaking about a challenge to a colleague who responds by either sharing the challenge or taking it away (7 responses):

Nicola: *I suppose the toughest days really at work are when you get OFSTED'd. Those are the days when everything, everything about your normal day is turned upside down really…it's incredibly stressful. But then again you've just got to support each other …it's really seeing if there's anything you can do for anybody else, you know if the inspectors are in with them, you might go off and do their break time duty so they can have those extra sort of 5 min to get ready or organised, or giving each other as much time as you can really.*

This included temporarily removing challenging pupils from the teacher's class (3 responses):

Mark: *…removing some of the pupils that were causing repeated problems so I could build up a bit of rapport with some of the others in the classroom to, so when they came back things were at a different level, and that was yeah massive, massively helpful.*

In addition, responses indicated that attending social events can also lead to the experience of teacher resilience (4 responses):

Gareth: *We went out, we met quite a lot, we went out for a meal, this sort of thing. So there was a social aspect as well, you know, which, we just got on.*

4.5   Overarching Theme Five: An Iterative Process

Up until this point, the professional context, thoughts, feelings, personal actions and factors within school culture have been presented as separate factors in the experience of teacher resilience. However, all of the participants' experiences included a variety of these different elements. Thematic analysis

of the complex interactions between these factors suggests that teacher resilience occurs as an iterative process (Edwards, 2007). Furthermore, teacher resilience was experienced when participants showed a strong sense of personal agency, and were in a supportive school environment. This environment included colleagues who listened when the participant discussed their difficulty, and responded by making that type of challenging situation more manageable, not only for the participant, but for other teachers in the school.

In the following two vignettes, both Mark and Lucy's identify the involvement of key thought processes, feelings, personal actions and factors within their school culture, and both accounts provide rich insights into the complexity of the interaction between factors. In Mark's example, he recounts a professionally challenging situation involving administrative responsibilities:

Mark: *Last January we had to do a ridiculous amount of quality assurance activities…and I was just like 'Oh god I can't do this, I've not done that in time, I've not done that', and I spoke to the Head of English and the Head of Technology and I was like 'Look, what's going on? Are you having to do the same? Have you got to do all these things?' and it just made me feel a bit better knowing what was out there, and we sort of said: right, let's take this to management and say you're putting too much on us,'*

Interviewer: *How did the management team respond?*

Mark: *They took some things away and said: 'Yeah, you're right, let's do this later'. They were quite responsive which was good, and lucky because at one point I was thinking they would say 'No, you've got to do this, this is your job'*

Another rich insight into the experience of teacher resilience came from interviewing Helen, who recalled the events that unfolded during one parents' evening, when a challenging and unanticipated situation involving an angry parent led to her experience of teacher resilience. In Helen's account, she

describes the effect of the professional challenge on her school system, and reflects on how she feels she has changed as a teacher since the event. Although Helen's experience is not representative of all the teachers in the study, similar interactions between the individual teacher and their school context were evident in the majority of interviews:

Helen: *I felt quite vulnerable because I was in the classroom on my own, so I had to use a bit of initiative at the time and the other year group teacher was in the classroom next to mine, and happened to be there doing the same thing, doing parents evening, so I sort of pretended that I had to go to and just ask her a quick question and I quickly ran through the door and did a bit of beckoning signal to her and got her to come through, and she realised the situation because she knew the parent anyway, and knew that he could be quite volatile, and.... as we were getting him out the door, somebody down the corridor heard what was going on and quickly went and got the Head (teacher), and the Head came in and... managed to get him to a point where he wasn't in the classroom and I wasn't on my own with him anymore. And as a result of that we actually ended up doing parents evenings in partners.*

This description of events suggests that the school system positively adapted in response to this negative experience, with the SLT implementing positive changes to the way that parents' evenings were run in the future. In addition, Helen also reflected on how she had been personally shaped by the experience:

Helen: *It certainly made me change, certainly, the next term's parents evenings, I approached them in a very different way, so it did leave its mark, it definitely left its mark.... now, if I know I've got something tricky to say to a parent, I would think very carefully about how I was going to say it and have that evidence there or if there was a particularly tricky situation actually have another colleague with me, or somebody to refer to, or somebody else that's been involved that could back up the things that I'm saying."*

This vignette also introduces the next overarching theme identified during thematic analysis, that is, for some participants their teacher resilience has changed throughout their career.

4.6   Overarching Theme Six: Unstable Construct

During each interview, participants were asked to rate their own resilience on a scale where 1 equals 'Not very resilient' and 10 equals 'Very resilient'. From Table 4 it can be seen that 21 participants provided a number, and that their responses were across the scale.

Table 4: Teacher's Ratings Of Their Own Teacher Resilience.

Rating for Teacher Resilience	Number of teachers
Between 2 and 3	1
5	2
Between 5 and 6	1
7	3
Between 7 and 8	3
8	3
Between 8 and 9	4
9	1
Between 9 and 10	2
10	1
No number given	4

The participants who were unable to give a fixed number explained that this was because their teacher resilience had changed throughout their career (4 responses):

Rhian: *I think it's changed. I think different times in my career, perhaps when I've been working with different people will have affected how resilient I am, because obviously you can work alongside people who can give you energy and make you feel more positive about yourself and sometimes maybe that's not the case. Some people are drainers and other people, you know, help to boost you along and you feel more energised.*

Interestingly, many of the additional comments made by participants who had rated their teacher resilience revealed that their resilience had also changed throughout their career (19 responses). Within these responses, were comments that indicated teacher resilience changed daily (4 responses),

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weekly (1 response), termly (2 responses) and yearly (1 response). Other

comments indicated that for some participants, their teacher resilience had

generally increased throughout their career (9 responses), or reduced

throughout their career (6 responses), and one teacher felt it had

simultaneously increased and decreased:

Laura: *I would say that when I was younger and before I had children I was less emotionally involved with my pupils. And so therefore I think that when I was younger, and before I had children of my own, I could walk away from work and not be so distressed by maybe the other things that were going on in the children's lives. I would always be very very mindful of their education, but maybe not so much of them holistically as a whole person, and I think that as I have had children myself I am more affected by the other things that go on in their lives and I think that I'm more emotionally aware.*

Interviewer: *So does that make you more resilient or less resilient?*

Laura: *It depends. I think it affects me more as a person than they did, so in some ways I would be less resilient but I would also, I think that I care more in some ways now and so will fight to be resilient so that I keep on going.*

These findings give some indication of the unstable nature of teacher

resilience, and suggest that the intensity of teacher resilience varied between

participants. The results suggest no consistent relation between years of

experience and level of teacher resilience, and this implies that other factors

are more instrumental in mediating the level of teacher resilience that

participants felt. Phase two of data collection explored this overarching theme

further, and examined how professional context can mediate the experience

of teacher resilience for individual teachers.

4.7   Phase One Conclusion and Rationale for Phase 2 Interviews

In phase one, participants identified a range of factors that were involved in

their experiences of teacher resilience, and these were categorised as

thoughts, feelings, personal actions and school processes. All factors that phase one participants identified as being involved in their experiences of teacher resilience have been discussed, and the nature of the interaction between these aspects of teacher resilience has been conceptualised as an iterative process. These interpretations are explained in further detail in the discussion chapter of this report.

Phase one data analysis led to a series of questions on the topic of teacher resilience that I felt were important to explore further in order to deepen my understanding of this phenomenon. This included investigating possible explanations for the unstable nature of the construct for many of the phase one participants, and whether common factors facilitate the experience of teacher resilience for individual teachers across different professional challenges. Phase two also explored the relationship between teacher stress and teacher resilience, and the role of school culture in the iterative process of teacher resilience. This involved exploring how school factors mediated the level of teacher stress and teacher resilience that teachers experienced during similar professional challenges that were encountered in the same school setting.

4.8   Phase 2 Findings

In phase two of data collection, all participants worked in the same school, and were asked to describe and reflect upon personal experiences of teacher resilience during their time in their current school. Phase two of this chapter reports on the similarities and differences in factors that were mentioned by

participants during different professional challenges, and between participants when discussing the same type of professional challenges.

4.8.1 <u>Overarching Theme 1: Professional Context</u>

Participants were asked to describe the three types of situation where they felt teachers need teacher resilience, and then reflect on their own experiences of teacher resilience during those professional challenges. Participants' responses indicate that teacher resilience can occur during challenging relationships (10 examples) including negative experiences with pupils (4 examples), negative experiences with parents (2 examples), negative experiences with colleagues (4 examples). In addition, the experience of teacher resilience was also described during administration responsibilities (4 examples). Since participants were only asked to identify three examples, the responses should not be viewed as being representative of all situations where participants have experienced teacher resilience. The specific situations that each participant identified are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. A Summary of Phase 2 Participants Responses When Asked To Identify Professional Challenges Where Teacher Resilience Is Experienced.

Participant name	Teacher-pupil relationship	Negative experience with colleague	Negative experience with parent	Administration responsibility
Erica*		x		x
Michelle	x		x	x
Shelley	x	x		x
Rosie	x	x		x
Alice	x	x	x	
Total	4	4	2	4

- Erica's responses only include two types of professional challenge as she was administered the pilot interview schedule and not asked to identify a set number of types of professional challenge.

All five participants were able to recall situations where they had experienced

teacher resilience during the professional challenges that they had identified

as requiring teacher resilience. The responses support the findings from

phase one data indicating that the experience can involve a complex

interaction of thoughts, feelings, behaviours, personal actions and school

processes. In phase two, the following sub themes were identified in these

aspects of teacher resilience: reframing, realistic role expectations, feeling

confident, effective pedagogy, and supportive school culture. The responses

in phase two do not provide any further insights into the nuances that exist

within these sub themes, and for this reason are not reported in significant

detail in phase two of this chapter. Instead, Table 6 presents a summary of

these themes, and the number of participants that mentioned each factor

whilst reflecting on different contexts where they had experienced teacher

resilience.

Table 6. A Summary Of The Prevalence Of Themes Identified Involved In Participant's Experiences of Teacher Resilience Across Different Professional Challenges.

Overarching theme	Teacher-pupil relationship	Negative experience with colleague	Negative experience with parent	Administration responsibility
Reframing	2	2	1	2
Realistic role expectations	0	0	0	3
Feeling confident	1	1	2	0
Effective pedagogy	4	1	1	3
Supportive school culture	2	3	1	4
Not taking it personally	1	0	1	0

As Table 6 indicates, not all factors were involved in all experiences of

teacher resilience. Instead, the responses indicated that the prevalence of

each factor across the different professional challenges differed within

participants according to the type of professional challenge they were discussing, and also between participants.

4.8.2 <u>Overarching Theme Two: Unstable Construct</u>

When asked to reflect on their level of teacher resilience in response to professional challenges, all five participants felt they currently experience high levels of resilience. However, when asked to consider whether or not their level of teacher resilience had changed throughout their career, the responses offered no consistent pattern. Erica stated that her ability to be a resilient teacher across all three situations that require teacher resilience has been high and remained constant throughout her career. Michelle and Alice stated that they feel higher levels of teacher resilience now when compared with other times in their career. Rosie and Shelley stated that their level of teacher resilience depends on the context. Rosie, for example, commented that whilst her level of teacher resilience in response to administration responsibilities has remained constantly high throughout her career, her ability to be resilient in response to negative experiences with colleagues has changed throughout her career. By contrast, Shelley stated that level of teacher resilience during negative experiences with colleagues and administration responsibilities has remained fairly constant throughout her career, but felt her level of teacher resilience during professional challenges involving her relationship with pupils is currently higher than at other times in her career.

4.8.3 Overarching Theme Three: Teacher Stress

The nature of the relationship between teacher resilience and teacher stress was one issue arising from phase 1 data analysis that was explored further in phase 2. In phase 2, participants' responses indicated no consistent pattern regarding the level of teacher resilience and teacher stress that participants experience during professional challenges. Furthermore, each participant's level of teacher stress and teacher resilience varied within participants depending on the type of professional challenge, and between participants. When asked about their experiences of situations involving teacher resilience, responses indicate that all five participants have experienced teacher stress in those situations at some point in their career. For two participants high levels of teacher stress were consistently felt during experiences involving high levels of teacher resilience (Michelle and Shelley). Both participants attributed their current high level of teacher stress to the pressure and expectations that they have for themselves and what they should achieve. Shelley's response captures this pressure:

> **Shelley:** *I think I am more stressed by it and I think that partly comes down to a perceived expectation. I don't think it is an expectation. But I think it is a perceived expectation that on my part the more experienced you are the better you are supposed to be at it. So you put more pressure on yourself so when it goes wrong you feel really stressed about it and when children misbehave you feel as if it is a personal reflection on you. Even though actually it isn't. It has got nothing to do with you because they will misbehave whoever is in the classroom…I think for me it is a perceived expectation. It is not ever said but you know supposedly 'oh you are so more many years more experienced than me therefore you should be better at this than me'…Which isn't always the case... You know you can be a very experienced teacher but your classroom management can be dreadful and your behaviour management can be terrible. Um so I think it is not ever a said thing but that perceived expectation and I am somebody who puts a lot of pressure on myself anyway. Um I wouldn't say I am a perfectionist but I do put a lot of pressure on myself that I want things done properly. I want the children to behave. I want the children to learn properly and I think I have put more and more pressure on myself as the years have gone on.*

By contrast, Alice reported that her levels of teacher resilience are the highest they have ever been, and that her levels of teacher stress have reduced across all situations. Furthermore Erica and Rosie stated that their levels of teacher stress were situation specific, and for both teachers, low levels of resilience were reported during times when low levels of stress were experienced in response to professional challenges.

When asked to compare their own level of teacher stress with their colleagues during professional challenges involving a teacher-pupil relationship, two participants felt unable to comment, one participant felt they experienced less stress, and one participant felt they experienced the same level of stress. During professional challenges involving negative experiences with colleagues, two participants felt unable to comment, and two felt they experienced the same level of stress as their colleagues. During professional challenges involving negative experiences with parents, one participant stated feeling more stress and one participant stated feeling less stress than their colleagues. During responses that stated administration responsibilities, two participants stated feeling the same level of stress as their colleagues and two were unable to comment. For participants who felt unable to comment, all their responses stated that this was because colleagues within their teams had varying stress levels and that their comparative stress levels would therefore differ between colleagues.

4.8.4 Over Arching Theme Four: Faith

For Erica and Shelley, their Christian faith was an important facilitator of their teacher resilience, and motivated them to stay committed to their profession despite the professional challenges.

Erica: *I am a Christian and so I just felt that I was in the place where God wanted me to be. So for me that was the important thing. And I guess that really underpins how I deal with things really…. I just feel I've kind of… I know it sounds funny… but I think I was just born to teach really, if that makes sense. Yeah, yeah I do…. As a Christian I felt I am in the right place and I haven't been called out as it were. A few times… I always sort of review things in my life you know at certain times I think right 'is this', 'should I move on?' But no it hasn't really happened that way.*

Shelley: *Personally it boils down to my faith. I am a Christian. I believe that I have been given a gift of teaching and that's what keeps me going and for me personally as long as I don't feel a calling to do something else this is where I believe I am meant to be and that is one of the main things that keeps me going. It is my faith system, it is my belief.*

These responses suggest that the participants felt it was right for them to be in this career, and that this feeling had come from God. Both responses reveal how their faith was naturally integrated into their working lives.

4.8.5 Overarching Theme Five: Supportive School Culture

This subsection reports on the relations between school culture and teacher resilience. This includes the similarities and differences in how school culture impacted on the participant's teacher resilience during a range of professionally challenging situations. All participants reported that work colleagues can have a positive impact on a teacher's level of teacher resilience. Erica felt that this was across all types of professional challenges:

Erica: *It will depend on, rather than the stage in your career, who you're working with at that time and the demands they put on you.*

Although all participants reported feeling lower levels of teacher resilience when they did not feel supported by their SLT, the extent to which their relations with the SLT impacted on their level of teacher resilience varied between participants according to the type of professional challenge. Shelley's response indicated that this difference exists across the whole team:

> **Shelley:** *I know if you sort of start a conversation with a colleague about behaviour… 'Oh it's so much worse that when we started teaching' and other will say 'oh do you think so, I don't think it is'. So I think it is very personal.*

Alice stated that changes in the communication style of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had led to her experiencing higher levels of teacher resilience across all professional challenges. Shelley also made this attribution, and commented on the friendly atmosphere within her team:

> **Shelley:** *I think one of the things is that there is a large staff here 60 odd staff but there are no cliques. So everyone is friends with everyone. Yes you might socialise with certain members of staff more than others. But we do things together. You know you can go to any member of staff over anything, there is no hierarchy and there is no sort of I can't go and talk to them because I am not part of their clique sort of thing. And that is one thing that I have really liked about this place.*

The responses from all five participants suggest that sharing concerns with colleagues is an important way in which teachers can increase their levels of teacher resilience:

> **Alice:** *If you talk to people you will found out that (a) you might be doing exactly what we would do. Or that it might be slightly different if you tried it this way; this has worked before. So it is just… they can share it and discover that what they are doing is either right or wrong. So it's… rather than bottling it all in yourself and taking it home and worrying!*

However, differences existed between participants regarding the extent to which they discussed their own concerns with peer colleagues and with the senior leadership team, and this depended on the type of professional challenges. Shelley's response suggests that this variation exists across the whole team of teachers:

> **Shelley:** *I think we are quite social creatures teachers. But we are also quite insular creatures. … we don't always share how we are feeling. And it is only through someone actually going 'I am really fed up of this' and others will go 'yeah me too!'. You know we don't always necessarily share but with the new initiative sometimes it's you know I've got colleagues here who will just do it…And I have got others who will never say anything outwardly but inwardly would be churning it over but and then I'll… if I don't agree with something or I am not happy with it or I can't see the point then I will say something. I will try and do it in a constructive kind of way but you know I am not one for change for change's sake.*

The following three vignettes report on differences in how participants utilised school colleagues to support their teacher resilience across different challenges. Alice attributed her high levels of resilience to an entire change of staff for the SLT. She identified that the new SLT encourage her and other staff to openly share their views among the team during meetings:

> **Alice:** *You felt that in a staff meeting you felt you could talk and not be either ignored or sort of well you know 'We'll move on from that'. Just the whole general atmosphere changed as well. So it was a pleasant place to work in again. People weren't. I can't… I wasn't going to say cowering… We weren't cowering… But people weren't sort of off in groups sort of whispering and talking it was more an open atmosphere again. Just welcoming again.*

Shelley describes a situation indicating that, like Alice, she has also voice in the school team meetings:

> **Shelley:** *I think that I am more vocal now than I ever used to be…there have been occasions where I have made suggestions where something*

has been introduced and said "Well how about if you look at it from this angle… if we go into it that way" and everyone is like "oh yeah actually that is a really good idea".

Support from colleagues was felt to be helpful because it could lead to practical strategies, and also that it supported them to reframe the situation as something that is challenging for all teachers rather than an indication of personal weakness in their own ability. Alice, for example, stated that her feelings of teacher resilience had increased, in part, due to the support she had received from a previous Deputy Head:

Alice: *We had a very good Deputy here. Well quite a while ago now. But he used to sit down and talk to you about how to manage it and how to… and you'd watch him talk to parents…Almost as like a training for us. I mean it wasn't everybody obviously. But yeah 'I'll talk to this parent have a look and watch and see'.*

Furthermore, both Shelley and Rosie discussed how sharing feelings about a difficult professional challenge had stopped them from feeling isolated:

Shelley: *I think the analogy is I felt I was spinning plates and as quickly as I was spinning them they needed spinning again to keep everything going and I just turned to a colleague and I just said 'I am really struggling to keep on top of everything' & she said 'so am I' and then a third colleague came in and went 'me too'… And the relief to know that others were feeling the same way has actually helped because I am actually coping much better now.*

In the following vignette, Rosie speaks about how her teacher resilience was promoted through speaking to colleagues:

Rosie: *It was to do with performance management and I looked at it and I thought I don't know how to do any of these things and I was sort of thinking because it was all this jargon you know… and I just happened to mention it to a friend of mine and she said 'well I have had trouble filling it in as well' and then of course it came up with someone else. And they had problems. Well if we hadn't… if I hadn't mentioned it to somebody or we hadn't had the conversation I'd have thought I was the only person that was having the problem with this. Whereas that's why it is good to talk things through really.*

In addition, Shelley also stated that sharing concerns among colleagues can promote teacher resilience because it can reduce the level of negative emotions that are experienced in response to a professional challenge. Shelley discussed how this strategy impacted on her own thoughts, feelings and behaviour in a way that promoted her teacher resilience:

Shelley: *I needed someone to talk to so I went and I spoke to this particular colleague and I just offloaded everything to her and burst into tears as you do because I had managed to hold myself together until that point, and she was just able to put my mind at rest and just say no you didn't do anything wrong because I didn't do anything wrong…I told her exactly what happened and I was in a bit of a state understandably. And she was like "you know what he is like" and she was able to be and she is quite abrupt at times as well. She doesn't soft soap you she is quite abrupt but I like that. She was like, you know, sort yourself out pull yourself together you have done nothing wrong. And that is just one example of many times I just go and say "I have had a bad day" or "what am I going to do with this child" because she has got years of experience of special needs as well. So this child really frustrated me and she would almost be my first port of call because she is a friend, because I trust her, because she has also got so many years behind her in different aspects of primary teaching.*

Nevertheless, the responses indicate that having a supportive school culture is not always necessary for teachers to experience high levels of teacher resilience. Michelle, for example, didn't feel her views on an effective whole school behaviour management policy were supported by her SLT. Nevertheless, she stated feeling high levels of teacher resilience in that situation, and attributed this to her belief that she is born to teach, and that teaching is her calling. In addition, Rosie didn't mention SLT support and instead attributed her high resilience to learning effective pedagogy:

Rosie: *I have learnt through the years because I have had difficult children and sometimes I feel I haven't always handled them, handled the situation or the child as best I could have done. You know. And so you know you pick up different ideas and from other people and techniques and obviously the experts come in and you learn things from them as well.*

In addition, Rosie also reported feelings of high teacher resilience when she joined the school and her colleagues were not very welcoming. Rosie attributed her high teacher resilience in response to this situation to her personal actions; working very hard to create positive relationships with colleagues:

> **Rosie:** *I don't think they particularly wanted me because they wanted someone else but they had to have me. So it was um… So I have sort of had to be quite resilient … you have to be proactive about things because um I think they wanted somebody else for the job but they weren't allowed to. They had to have me….I made a point of going and speaking to them and introducing myself and I became great friends… I am still friends with some of them now, …I got very friendly with one of the other teachers and gradually I felt, you know, accepted in that time really. So I think you just have to work at things sometimes you know. And you can't just expect everything to come to you really.*

Responses indicate that participants didn't always go to their colleagues for support with professional challenges. Shelley, for example, stated that she does not talk to her colleagues about professionally challenging situations involving administration responsibilities because she feels it can create a negative atmosphere among the staff team:

> **Shelley:** *I just say that we are the greatest actors and actresses in bravado. Because you put that front up… You make it look as if you are in control…we look like graceful swans on the surface…but we are paddling like merry-o underneath; exactly the same as you. I said all that we have learnt is how not to show it. It's the fact that we put across this I am completely in control. You might be completely falling to pieces in side and flailing around spinning those plates and paddling like nobody's business but you don't show that to the general… because there is such a lovely ethos in this school that you don't want to destroy it by showing that you are not pulling with the team or you are struggling so you tend to keep those stuff sort of private within close friendships when you are finding things really tough.*

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter aims to answer the research questions by critically discussing key findings of the research. In order to present a rich insight into teachers' conceptualisations of teacher resilience, my analysis and interpretation of the main research findings are presented; this includes comparing and contrasting the overarching themes from phase one and phase two data with pre existing literature. Suggestions for directions for future research on teacher resilience are discussed and limitations of the research are reflected upon and evaluated. The chapter ends with a summary of the implications of the research for EP practice.

5.1 Professional Context

When participants were asked to define teacher resilience their responses included a description of the professional context, or working environment, where teacher resilience occurs. When asked to reflect on their experiences of teacher resilience their responses suggested that the experience requires an encounter with a professional challenge. Similar features characterise the nature of professional challenges where teacher resilience occurs, and are discussed within this sub section.

A consistent feature of the context where teacher resilience was experienced was that the situation involved the effectiveness of the participant's pedagogy being questioned. For example, responding to pupils who express discontent or a lack of understanding in response to their method of teaching, or teaching

pupils with a diverse range of academic, social, emotional and behaviour needs who were not reaching nationally expected standards with their attainment. It also included responding to situations where a colleague or parent had undervalued or disapproved of their skills and ideas about effective teaching and learning.

The challenge of completing administration responsibilities was also discussed, including managing challenging daily and weekly responsibilities such as marking and lesson preparation, along with duties that occur on a less regular and more cyclical basis such as being inspected by Ofsted. Across both phases of data collection, participant's responses indicated that they felt a great deal of unhappiness at the prescriptive nature of teaching and the significant pressure that was placed upon them by their Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to respond to new government initiatives.

These findings support pre-existing literature on the tensions and challenges experienced by teachers working in English schools (Galton & MacBeath, 2008), and provides a useful contribution to the literature on sustaining teacher motivation and commitment. The identification that the majority of teachers who chose to leave do so within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2002, 2003) has meant that research on improving teacher retention has been heavily focused upon the working lives of novice teachers (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009; Klassen & Chui, 2011; Sinclair, 2008). The current research indicates that the situations identified in the literature as being challenging for novice teachers (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009; Klassen & Chui, 2011; Sinclair, 2008), remain an ongoing challenge for teachers across

all stages of their professional career. Moreover, some participants reported that with increasing years' experience, certain types of professional challenges become more difficult to respond to. Shelley, for example, explained that she is more easily affected by challenging pupil behaviour than when she first started teaching. She attributed this to having higher expectations about what she should be capable of achieving as an experienced teacher.

Responses indicated that the experience of teacher resilience can occur during times of unanticipated extreme adversity, for example, being violently attacked by a pupil or threatened by an angry parent. These findings provide support for suggestions in developmental psychology and psychiatry literature on the context where resilience occurs, and the notion that resilience involves a confrontation with a significant challenge or threatening situations (Rutter, 1985; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). Teacher resilience was also described as an experience which can occur on a daily basis, during anticipated and unanticipated professional challenges that require an immediate response. In addition, the current research indicates that participants experienced a range of different professional challenges on a daily basis. In both phases of the research participants also reported experiencing varying levels of teacher resilience across different professional contexts and at different times in their career. These findings suggest that the participants could experience varying levels of teacher resilience during each day. By asking teachers to share their experiences of teacher resilience, this research supports previous research identifying that teacher resilience is an unstable construct that can vary across and within school settings (Gu & Day, 2007; Edwards, 2010). In addition the

current research provides empirical support for proposals that 'daily resilience' should be acknowledged as an aspect of teacher resilience that is additional to, and separate from, positive adaptation in response to extreme adversity (Day et al., 2009; Gu & Day, 2011; Gu & Day, 2007; Day & Gu, 2007). Since all previous publications on this issue have drawn upon findings from the same UK based study to substantiate their claims, (Day et al., 2006), the current research strengthens the trustworthiness of previous literature on this aspect of teacher resilience. As this definition contrasts with other definitions of resilience outside of teaching and teacher education, research on daily teacher resilience is an area that continues to benefit from further exploration.

For some participants, teacher resilience was experienced *during* professional challenges. These responses indicated that these participants understood teacher resilience to be a process of coping, continuing or enduring adversity. For other participants, teacher resilience was experienced *after* the professional challenge, and the phenomenon was understood to occur as a result of bouncing back from adversity. Since descriptions support pre-existing conceptualisations of teacher resilience (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011), future research could seek to compare the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of teachers experiencing teacher resilience during professional challenges with teachers who experience teacher resilience after professional challenges. To support this aim the thoughts, feelings, behaviours and aspects of school culture that have been identified in the current research could be usefully drawn upon to establish a series of codes that inform an deductive, theory-driven approach to data coding and analysis of teachers experiences of teacher resilience.

Phase two investigated the influence of professional context on teacher resilience and whether or not similar factors can facilitate teacher resilience across different types of professional challenge. The findings suggested that experiences of teacher resilience occurred as a result of a range of interconnecting thoughts, feelings, behaviours and aspects of school culture, and that individual differences existed in relation to the combination of these factors for each participant. Furthermore, the combination of factors for each participant also depended upon the type of professional challenge, namely whether the context involved an administrative responsibility or a challenging relationship with a pupil, colleague or parent. This suggests that, in order to promote teacher resilience across their teaching staff, schools must consider each teacher's individual circumstances rather than implementing catch-all support packages.

In phase 2, the five participants reflected upon one situation for each type of professional challenge. Further research could provide additional insights into the nature of the interactions between interconnecting factors by asking a larger sample of teachers to compare and contrast a range of personal experiences of teacher resilience within the four types of professional challenge identified in the current research. This could help to establish whether or not a teacher's unique combination of factors that enables them to experience teacher resilience is consistently dependent upon the type of professional challenge that they encounter.

Previous research on teacher resilience suggests that teacher resilience is an ability that can be learned (Edwards, 2007; Gu and Day, 2007). Although the current research does not refute this claim, the current findings indicate that the participants experienced varying levels of teacher resilience in situations involving the same type of professional challenge across different phases of their teaching career. The suggestion by other researchers, that teacher resilience is an ability that can be learned, is perhaps simplistic since it carries the implication that, once learnt, teachers will continue to experience teacher resilience in the face of that type of adverse situation throughout their career. The current research findings suggest that teachers who experience teacher resilience for many years in response to a range of challenges can, as a result of slight changes in their thoughts, feelings, behaviours and school culture, no longer experience teacher resilience. Across both phases of data collection the majority of participants reported experiences where teacher resilience had occurred during a range of professional challenges, and that their levels of teacher resilience could vary depending on the type of professional challenge. This suggests that although these participants had learned how to respond in a way that promotes their resilience in some situations, this knowledge was not always easily transferable to other professional challenges. This carries the implication that teachers require ongoing support to experience teacher resilience and need regular opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate whether they are thriving, or simply surviving, the range of challenging situations they are required to respond to at work.

5.2   Thoughts

All participants articulated their understanding of their thought process during personal experiences of teacher resilience, and these insights suggest that the experience is mediated by an internal appraisal mechanism that involves analysis and interpretation of the event. Across both phases of data collection the findings suggest that four main thought processes can facilitate the experience of teacher resilience in response to professionally challenging situations, namely, realistic role expectations, depersonalising stressful situations, focusing on the positives and reflective practice.

The participants who discussed realistic role expectations articulated their understanding of the different ways that teachers can make a positive difference to pupil's lives, and the extent to which teachers can positively influence a pupil to make progress with their learning and/or behaviour. Participants stated that although their influence often only leads to small improvements in a pupil's learning or behavior, these positive changes can be reflective of huge successes for the pupil. Karen, for example, enthusiastically described small improvements in pupil learning and development that she had personally facilitated. In addition, James revealed that he recognised the limitations of his role before he entered the profession, and that this supported him to maintain realistic expectations about the positive differences he could make to pupil's lives.

Participants also articulated realistic role expectations in relation to their own capacity to complete all of the requirements that are expected of them as a

teacher. A common theme in participant's responses was an acceptance that they were frequently unable to complete all of their responsibilities, and a belief that they were not personally responsible for this because many of the expectations regarding the role requirements of teachers are unrealistic. Jessica, for example, explained that a teacher would have to be super-human in order to achieve all that was expected of them.

Many of the participants stated that they had successfully overcome challenging situations by thinking about the positive aspects of their job. This supports previous literature indicating that positive affect can provide psychological respite for chronic stress and can replenish emotional resources that are reduced by stress (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). For some participants, thinking about positive aspects often verified their initial motivations for choosing a career in teaching. This finding supports pre-existing suggestions in the literature that teacher retention could be improved by checking entry motivations for a career in teaching more thoroughly during the recruitment process for initial teacher training courses (Sinclair, 2008). In addition, the findings also support previous research indicating that teacher training courses should take teachers' entry motivations into account during teaching and learning activities (Williams & Richardson, 2012). It may be useful for initial teacher training courses to place more emphasis on the development of realistic role expectations over the duration of the course, including shifting the perspectives of students who hold unrealistic expectations about the work of a teacher and the type of impact they are likely to have on pupils' lives. Since not all of the participants in the current study discussed realistic role expectations,, and previous research in this area has

focused predominantly on the perspectives of student teachers (Sinclair, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2008; LeCornu, 2009), future research could investigate the association between entry motivations and teacher resilience for teachers across different phases of their professional career.

In phase two of data collection, faith was identified as an important facilitator of some participant's teacher resilience. Both Erica and Shelley stated that they thought it was right for them to be in their chosen career, and that this belief had come from God. There is a dearth of research examining the influence of religious faith on teacher resilience, and the current findings therefore provide a useful insight that extends knowledge and understanding of this aspect of teacher resilience. Since the current findings were only identified in a small sample of teachers, further exploration is needed into how this aspect of a teacher's identity can mediate the experience of teacher resilience before firm conclusions can be made regarding the relationship between faith and teacher resilience.

5.3   Feelings

Whilst recalling their personal experiences of teacher resilience some participants articulated what it feels like, and what it doesn't feel like, when the experience occurs. This included feeling: a continued love for teaching; confident; appreciated by others; positivity; enjoyment from being around other children; strong; needing to improve teaching practice, not feeling isolated from colleagues; not feeling stress in response to the professional challenge.

Although the majority of the responses that included descriptions of feelings were limited in richness, the phase one participants who indicated that the experience of teacher resilience involved 'not feeling stressed' in response to a professional challenge did provide more detail on what this aspect of teacher resilience meant for them. Luke, for example, stated that he rarely experienced stress, and Helen described a personal buffer system that had developed within her in response to Ofsted inspections, thus preventing her from feeling stressed during a recent inspection.

Since not all participants reported feeling an absence of stress in response to professional challenges, and research indicates that many of the aspects of the professional context that teachers discussed can be sources of teacher stress (Austin, Shah & Muncer, 2005; Kyriacou, 2011), phase two interviews involved gaining a richer insight into teachers' perceptions of the relationship between teacher stress and teacher resilience. Phase two participants' responses indicated that individual differences existed in the level of teacher stress that was felt during their experiences of teacher resilience. Across all types of professional challenge, there was no consistency regarding the types of professional challenge that are more or less likely to facilitate the simultaneous feelings of teacher stress and teacher resilience. For example, Erica reported that she currently experiences high levels of teacher resilience and teacher stress during situations involving challenging relationships with pupils and parents, whereas Alice reported that she currently feels high levels of teacher resilience and low levels of teacher stress in response to these types of professional challenges. Although the findings present a rich insight

into the complexity of the relation between these two constructs for phase two teachers, the limited sample size means that these findings should not be viewed as being representative of all mainstream teachers. For this reason, further research with a larger sample size could investigate whether or not this inconsistent pattern is representative of the interaction between teacher stress and teacher resilience during professional challenges.

Unlike other studies, some participants in the current research reported experiencing teacher resilience and low teacher stress simultaneously. One possible explanation for the disparity in teacher stress levels during situations where teacher resilience occurred could be linked to participants' understandings of whether teacher resilience is a phenomenon that occurs *during* a challenging situation, or *after* it as a *response* to the challenge. Future research could examine this distinction in order to further illuminate the complex relationship between these two constructs. Another possible explanation for why some participants could simultaneously feel low teacher stress and high teacher resilience in response to professional challenges comes from the literature on socio-ecological resilience, namely, the notion that teachers who do not experience teacher stress in response to situations that involve teacher resilience have 'adaptive capacity' (Walker, 2012; Walker & Westley, 2011). Furthermore, the current findings suggest that although most teachers do experience teacher stress at some point in their career, in response to most well known professional challenges, some will adapt their cognitions and behaviours in a way that means they no longer experience teacher stress in response to that type of situation. Lucy, for example, alluded to this adaptive capacity when she mentioned how she no longer takes it

personally when pupils behave aggressively towards her; Helen's development of a buffering system that prevents her from feeling stressed in response to Ofsted inspections is also illustrative of this process. Current understandings of adaptive capacity are based upon ecological conceptualisations of resilience and to date this notion has had limited impact on conceptualisations of teacher resilience. For this reason, further qualitative research involving teachers across a range of different settings could extend current knowledge and understanding of this process. Since the results indicate that some teachers can feel high stress and high resilience simultaneously, it should not be assumed that strategies for promoting teacher resilience will have the automatic consequence of reducing teacher stress levels. The implication of this is that support strategies for teacher resilience may not improve teacher well being in a way that necessarily enables teachers to 'thrive' (Day et al., 2009), but can still promote motivation and commitment to teaching.

Research on the relations between teacher stress and teacher resilience is limited but further insights into this aspect of teacher resilience could provide useful directions forward for supporting teachers to identify when they need additional support. Although not all participants mentioned the feelings that they experienced, it is possible that similar feelings may occur for all teachers during the experience of teacher resilience. Further research on this aspect of teacher resilience with a larger sample of teachers could inform the development of guidelines or checklists for teachers to use to evaluate whether or not they are experiencing resilience across a range of professionally challenging situations. Since previous research indicating that

many teachers are reluctant to engage in help-seeking behaviours (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009), a checklist may be a useful way of helping teachers to recognise when they could be coping more effectively with the challenges of their role and encourage them to ask for support.

5.4 Behaviours

All participants shared their understanding of how they had behaved in response to professional challenges when they had experienced teacher resilience. The participants' strong work ethic was evident in the wide range of personal actions that were described as responses to professionally challenging situations. This included being able to ask for and/or accept help from work colleagues, family members and friends when they needed it; discussing personal professional challenges with colleagues and/or family members; being organised; prioritising effectively; having good lesson preparation and engaging in reflective practice. A consistent feature of participants' responses was the active role that they played in facilitating their own experiences of teacher resilience. The findings suggest that a strong personal agency may be a key factor that can facilitate teacher resilience.

When participants reflected on why this was helpful their responses revealed that this offered them opportunities to develop new strategies, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various teaching techniques, and learn from the experiences of others. In addition, other participants stated that it had been helpful to have the opportunity to share their difficulties with their Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This strategy was most frequently used when

participants felt they were unable to complete or carry out a work responsibility. Laura, for example, approached her Deputy Head teacher when she experienced difficulties managing an increase in her teaching responsibilities as a result of her team partner experiencing personal difficulties. In addition, Mark explained how he had approached his SLT with other colleagues when he felt unable to meet all of the administration responsibilities that had been given to him. In theory-based literature on teacher stress, these strategies are referred to as direct-action strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The identification of these help-seeking strategies corroborates with other research on teacher resilience strategies and adds to a literature base that has focused heavily upon the experiences of novice teachers (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2009; Klassen & Chui, 2011). Interestingly, engaging in help-seeking behaviours did not appear to affect the participants' strong sense of competence. Rather, the participants perceived them to be necessary and important actions that supported them in their role.

The current findings indicate that witnessing other colleagues discussing their professional challenges enhanced participants' confidence to follow suit. This is interesting in light of previous research highlighting that teachers can feel insecure about asking for help and think that it can convey incompetence (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2009). A consistent theme in participants' responses was the perspective that all teachers experience difficulties and that finding the job challenging does not mean you are a bad teacher. Participants acknowledged that discussing challenging situations, and any negative

feelings associated with challenge, did not always take away the problem. However, the responses indicated that having the opportunity to share difficult feelings was highly valued; it stopped them from feeling isolated, and this in turn facilitated their teacher resilience. These behaviours, in addition to being synonymous with effective pedagogy, are also catergorised in the literature on teacher stress as examples of direct action coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

One theme in these descriptions was for participants to name behaviours that have been identified in education literature as examples of effective pedagogy (Rowe, Wilkin, & Wilson, 2012), It is possible that when asked to discuss experiences of teacher resilience, the responses were limited to descriptions of situations where participants believed they had engaged in effective pedagogy. For example, participants discussed being organised, prioritising effectively, having good lesson preparation, having a sense of humour and engaging in reflective practice, and in other research these actions have been categorised as professional skills that teachers believe characterise a good teacher. (Harris, 2010; Devine, Fahie, & McGillicuddy, 2013). The participants also indicated that developing good relationships with pupils supported them to experience teacher resilience. This finding supports previous research on the protective factors for teacher resilience (Hirschkorn, 2009), and also links with research identifying that teachers perceive having good interpersonal skills with pupils to be an essential characteristic for excellent teachers (Grieve, 2010). By providing rich insights into the range of strategies that they used to support their resilience in these situations, the current findings therefore add to the literature on factors that teachers believe characterise

high quality teachers. This theme in the data may help to explain why some teachers do not experience teacher resilience in response to professional challenges. When notions of what it means to be an effective teacher conflict with the actions that are needed to experience teacher resilience, it is possible that teachers are less likely to cope successfully with professionally challenging situations and therefore lose motivation and commitment to teaching. This implies that teacher training courses and schools seeking to increase teacher motivation and commitment to the profession should include instruction and activities that encourage teachers to view help-seeking strategies as an essential characteristic of a high quality teacher; this may include activities to develop teachers' reflective capabilities so they are able to identify when they need help, and instruction on effective help seeking strategies.

Many participants revealed that, rather than working to the point of exhaustion, they frequently make the conscious decision to refrain from striving to complete all of the daily teaching responsibilities that are expected of them. In order to counteract any negative feelings that this decision may facilitate, the participants engaged in a range of behaviours that supported them to retain feelings of competence.

Some participants described engaging in a range of behaviours that enabled them to have what they perceived to be a healthy work/home life balance, this included behaviours to promote their physical and mental health. Laura, for example, described a series of activities that she likes to do before arriving at school, including having breakfast with her family and reading the Bible. Her

response illuminates how, for some participants, having a good work/home life balance is a preventative strategy that can reduce the likelihood of feeling negative in response to professional challenges at work.

Another theme in participants' responses was to describe engagement in behaviour that allowed them to 'switch off' from thinking about work issues. Helen, for example, explained that doing something completely different like watching a film or having a glass of wine after a particularly challenging day helps her to stop ruminating over her work issues and therefore increased her resilience. Helen's response illustrates the reactive nature of many of the activities that participants engaged in at home in response to professional challenges at work and how, for many participants, effective reactive strategies involve activities that stop rumination over work issues. Reports from the participants that these strategies facilitated their personal, physical, and emotional well-being outside of the school context, links with previous literature on the importance of rejuvenating strategies for supporting teachers to overcome professional challenges and provides support for the notion that these strategies are under-pinned by a philosophy of self-preservation (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2009). In both psychological and psychiatric literature it is suggested that these behaviours are evidence of dissociation (DSM-IV-TR; Wolfradt, Hempel, & Miles, 2003). This occurs when mental events that are usually processed together, for example thoughts, feelings, memories and attitudes are compartmentalised (Collins & French, 1998); engagement in this emotion focused coping strategy (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) means that theses mental events can be isolated from each other.

Although an ability to detach from work issues whilst at home was identified as a strong theme in participants' responses, the findings indicate that professional challenges were regularly discussed with family members. Lucy, for example, commented that her family is a huge source of support and that she discusses her work challenges with her husband, her children, her children's spouses and her grandchildren. The findings therefore present a mixed picture on the utility of leaving work issues at work and suggest that both strategies can facilitate teacher resilience.

Previous research on teacher resilience has heavily championed a move away from research on coping strategies for teacher stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Gu & Day, 2007; Day et al., 2009), however the current research findings illuminate similarities in the direct action and emotion focused coping strategies for teacher stress and the factors that can facilitate resilience, thus suggesting that a complex relationship exists between teacher stress and teacher resilience. In light of these findings, it is possible that new insights on promoting teacher motivation, commitment and satisfaction may require a return to research focused on the relationship between teacher stress and teacher resilience. This could involve comparing the strategies that teachers use to reduce teacher stress with the strategies they use to facilitate their resilience. Rich insights could also be gained from studies that controlled for the effects of gender, and teaching in different types of education provision, on the behaviours that reduce teacher stress and/or facilitate teacher resilience.

5.5   <u>School Culture</u>

The research findings revealed that a variety of school factors can influence whether or not teacher resilience occurs for teachers when they encounter a professional challenge. These school factors included beliefs, traditions, policies and norms within the schools where participants worked. Collectively, these aspects have been categorised into the theme of school culture, and are discussed subsequently.

Across both phases of data collection 'supportive colleagues' was a recurring theme in participants' responses, and exploration of participants understanding of this factor revealed subtle nuances in how this was understood. Some participants emphasised the importance of working in a team where they felt valued and appreciated, and these responses suggested that having opportunities to receive effective praise from their school Senior Leadership Team is an important facilitator of teacher resilience . For some participants this occurred at a group level, for example Shelley described how teachers in her school were encouraged to share their ideas during team meetings, and stated that this provided the opportunity to praise each other's creative thinking. In addition, Mark described team meetings where the SLT had created 'The Barry's' -a school version of "The Oscars" that enabled staff to praise each other at a group level by putting nominations into Barry the Box. Other participants stated that receiving praise at an individual level had facilitated their teacher resilience. Georgia, for example, explained how the Head of the Junior School was very encouraging and would often pop into her

class to praise her lesson preparation, behaviour management strategies and the ethos she had created for pupils in her class.

Despite working in the same school context, phase two participants reported experiencing varying levels of teacher resilience in response to similar types of professional challenge. The phase two participants' responses suggested that school culture did not impact on these participants teacher resilience in the same way. For example, Erica stated that her ability to be a resilient teacher in relation to all professional challenges had been high and remained constant throughout her career, whereas Shelley reported experiencing lower levels of teacher resilience in response to professional challenges with pupils compared to earlier in her teaching career.

Across both phases of data collection the findings indicate that a complex relationship exists between personal agency and school culture. These findings strengthen the validity of theory-based literature stating the importance of personal agency as a facilitator for teacher resilience and emphasising that teachers' must act on their environment in order to experience teacher resilience (Edwards, 2007). However, if teachers do not feel encouraged to use the support structures provided, then it is unlikely that these structures will facilitate teacher resilience. The findings suggest that for many participants this meant working in a school culture that was flexible where colleagues listen and the whole system adapts in order to reduce the likelihood of the teachers experience similar situations as challenging in the future. Participants described situations where their behaviour had impacted on all teachers in the school by facilitating systemic changes to the school's

culture. Helen, for example, described a challenging situation with a parent, and how her experience led to the SLT implementing a whole school change to how future parents evenings were run. Helen's response revealed that the school adapted and she adapted, and together they are now more resilient. Furthermore, these findings support previous conceptions that resilience occurs through a process of positive adaptation (Walker, 2012). Rather than developing a fixed teacher identity, the participants and their school environment continued to learn and grow as they interacted with each other. These findings provide empirical support for socio-cultural theories on teacher resilience; teacher resilience was experienced as the result of an iterative process that involved the school and the teacher responding and adapting to each other simultaneously (Edwards, 2007, 2010)

5.6   Implications for Educational Psychologists in Practice

The current research findings provide rich insights into how resilience can support teachers to successfully manage the challenging context in which they work. The findings suggest that the process of teacher resilience involves a complex combination of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are shaped by, and also shape, the school culture in which a teacher works. The aim of this subsection is to consider the implications of this research for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to work at a systemic level with schools; supporting the emotional well being of school staff, providing training and embedding support for school staff to promote emotional well being practices in schools.

5.6.1 Promoting Emotional Well Being Practices in Schools

The current research findings will be particularly relevant for EPs who are keen to engage in discussions with school staff about the breadth of systemic work they can offer, and the reasons why involvement at a whole school level can be an important and valuable alternative to individual casework. By working creatively in schools, EPs can equip school staff further in supporting the emotional well being and learning of children and young people with Special Educational Needs, and who experience Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

It is well established within psychological literature that strong links exist between emotional well being and learning. Furthermore, a wealth of research has documented the negative effects of low emotional well being on pupil achievement, and informed EP practice. Consideration of teaching and learning environments is an important aspect of most EP assessments, and this means that EPs work in a context that is sensitive and highly emotional. EPs frequently find themselves working at the interface between Mental Health and Education, and for this reason are well placed to provide advice on supporting emotional well being and mental health issues in schools (Rothi et al., 2008).

5.6.2 Systemic Work in Schools

The current research findings provide a rich insight into the professional context where teacher resilience occurs. Teaching involves daily

management of challenging situations with pupils, parents, colleagues and administration responsibilities. With literature on teacher stress indicating that the management of challenging relationships can have a negative impact on teachers' emotional well being (Spilt, et al., 2011), and research suggesting that low teacher well being can be a significant barrier to the development of healthy behavioural, social and psychological outcomes for pupils (Lang et al., 2013), the development of mentally healthy teaching environments should be a high priority for schools seeking to create positive learning environments for their pupils.

School culture plays a significant role in a teacher's ability to think and feel that they are effective in managing their challenging work context, and consequently experience teacher resilience. For EPs hoping to work systemically in schools to promote teachers' emotional wellbeing, the current research findings could be presented to teachers through the delivery of staff training. This training could involve an explanation of the key research findings, followed by an activity whereby the teachers are divided into small groups and invited to reflect on the similarities and differences between the research findings and their own professional practice and school culture. During this activity the EP would act as a facilitator, supporting the teachers to distinguish their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and identify the process of positive adaptation that occurred between the teacher and their school culture.

5.6.3 <u>Consultation Groups</u>

This research identified that seeking support from colleagues can be an important facilitator for the experience of teacher resilience. However, the research also identified that one of the barriers to engagement in help seeking strategies is the common belief that it is not possible to simultaneously share challenging professional experiences and present as a competent teacher. Drawing upon their consultation skills EPs could facilitate staff consultation groups (Hanko 1999, Farouk, 2004) to provide a shared learning experience for staff to reflect on their emotional resources and shared experiences. This type of support could reduce feelings of isolation among the teaching staff and consequently promote teacher resilience. Research suggests that, rather than being 'advised' by external professionals, teachers prefer to learn from other teachers (Schein, 1990; Spratt et al., 2006). By sharing experiences of professional challenges, both in their presentation of the research findings and through the facilitation of the group activity, the EP would provide a platform for the creation of shared learning experience where the experience of professional challenges is normalised to support teachers in not feeling isolated and consequently are more likely to experience teacher resilience as part of their daily practice.

After sharing their own experiences of situations where they have thought, felt and behaved in ways that have facilitated experiences of teacher resilience, an additional activity could be run whereby teachers are asked to think in small groups about appropriate changes to their school culture that would create an environment that promoted positive adaptation in response to

challenging professional situations. The feedback could be collected by either asking the teachers to work in small groups, bullet point their ideas and feedback as a whole group, or by running a small focus group whereby teachers' views were recorded verbatim, transcribed, summarised and fed back to the school senior leadership team. This data could then be presented to the Senior Leadership Team as a measurable outcome of the staff training.

5.6.4 Evidence Based Practice

With their knowledge and training in the skills required for consultation and research, EPs would be well placed to contain, facilitate and evaluate this type of reflective training and research, and promote teacher resilience in schools. Having an EP facilitator would ensure that the teachers were supported to consider alternative ways of thinking about their school culture and that outcome measures would inform good practice. This is important in light of research emphasising the importance of having a facilitator who is external to the system (Spratt, et al., 2006) to ensure that group members do not become stuck within the same discourse and remain open and accepting of change.

5.6.5 Work Discussion Groups

The Work Discussion Group (WDG) model was used by Jackson (2002, 2005, 2008) as part of a preventative outreach project designed to target and engage young people at risk of emotional and academic breakdown. Jackson (op cit) aimed to use this model with school staff to extend their skills in

working with hard to reach pupils, including those experiencing significant difficulties arising from emotional problems, socio-economic disadvantage and dysfunctional family backgrounds. In his research on WDGs, Jackson (op.cit) suggests that WDG's achieve this aim because they support school staff to understand the emotional factors that impact on teaching and learning, and develop skills in understanding underlying meanings of behaviour.

The WDG model involves the creation of a reflective and containing space where teachers meet on either a weekly or fortnightly basis, for one hour, to replenish and restore the emotional resources that they use up in their daily role as teachers (Jackson, 2008). The teachers are asked to bring a written representation of a challenging issue or problem to discuss, and the EP's role as WDG facilitator is to develop the problem solving capacity of the group members. This means ensuring that the problem owner does not pass on their problem to the facilitator or other group members. To do this, the EP is required to facilitate a process of reflection, whereby the problem owner thinks about their emotional reactions and responses to the problem they have put forward for discussion. Research suggests that this way of working can be useful for supporting teachers to develop good relationships with their pupils and colleagues (Geddes, 2006; Bomber, 2007; Riley, 2011). Furthermore, it can empower group members to work through their issues and consider changes that are appropriate for them within their school system (Jackson, 2008; 2005). With recent government legislation reporting on the psychological impact of managing pupil mental health issues and emotional well being (DfE, 2011), and growing recognition that teachers require ongoing training to attend to their own needs that arise from this pastoral role (Kidger,

2010), engagement in WDGs could be presented by the EP as a useful way forward for schools seeking to promote positive, mentally healthy teaching and learning environments.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter presents the original contribution that the research makes to psychological literature. To achieve this aim, I have returned to the research questions and reflected on the extent to which they have been responded to as a result of this project. Included in my reflections is a review of the working definition of teacher resilience that was presented in chapter 2, and consideration of how this could be revised in light of the current findings.

During this research project, I examined recent literature on the topic of teacher resilience and identified that the definition of teacher resilience is still heavily debated. Since a definition is a collection of words that are used to describe a concept, it is important that knowledge about the concept, i.e. what it means, is illuminated and fully clarified. One possible reason for the lack of consensus regarding a definition for teacher resilience is that the *meaning* of teacher resilience has not been explored from a psychological perspective.

By providing a rich and detailed insight into what teacher resilience means from the perspective of people who have experienced it, it is hoped that the current research project is able to contribute towards efforts to reach a consensus on what the correct collection of words should be for a definition of teacher resilience. The current research focused on exploring the meaning of teacher resilience, including the participants' meaning-making process. This focus was presented at the end chapter one, as the main research question:

How do experienced mainstream school teachers conceptualise teacher resilience?

To help answer this main research question, the following three sub questions were also developed:

a) *How do experienced mainstream class teachers understand teacher resilience?*

b) *What factors do experienced mainstream teachers identify as helpful for promoting teacher resilience?*

c) *What school processes promote teacher resilience?*

In addition, the wide range of definitions for teacher resilience was reviewed, and the following working definition of teacher resilience was developed:

> *The experience of teacher resilience is dependent on teachers actively engaging in an iterative process of positive adaptation in response to their encounters with professional challenges.*

The remainder of this chapter discusses how this research project has answered the research questions, and considers the extent to which the current findings supported the original working definition of teacher resilience.

The current interpretation of teacher resilience has been influenced by the assumptions that underpin the cognitive-behavioural approach to psychology. A key principle of this approach is that human functioning is dependent upon three interacting and interlocking modalities: thoughts, feelings and behaviours. These three modalities are viewed to be inseparable, and as a consequence human functioning is frequently presented in the form of a triangle. The triangle is thought to be a useful way of conceptualising human functioning, as removal of any side would mean that the triangle would no longer exist. Table 7 provides a visual representation of this approach to understanding human functioning.

Table 7: Table to show A Cognitive Behavioural Model of the Inter-dependence of Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours
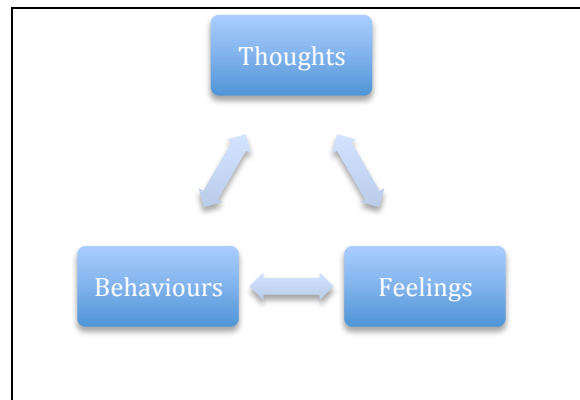
During the current research, teacher resilience was identified to occur as a result of a process of interaction, between four elements: thoughts, feelings, behaviours and school culture. The research identified a range of factors that characterise each of these four elements, and these have been presented. Analysing the participants' responses regarding these four elements illuminated the process that facilitated their experiences of teacher resilience. The findings suggest that these over arching themes are interdependent and interlocking, and that school processes should not be viewed in isolation. Furthermore, by explaining the impact of these factors on participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviours, the research findings have provided an explanation for *why* these factors can be facilitators for teacher resilience, and why they are helpful for promoting teacher resilience.

The current research findings have provided insights into what takes place during the iterative process of positive adaptation. As a result it is possible to

amend the original definition of teacher resilience. The new definition captures

what this process involves, and is presented below:

The experience of teacher resilience requires a complex combination of thoughts, feelings and behaviours to occur in response to a professional challenge. One or more aspects, from each of these three modalities, must be involved:

1. *Thoughts*
   - *Realistic Role Expectation*
   - *Depersonalising Stressful Events*
   - *Focusing On Positives*
   - *Reflective Practice*
2. *Feelings*
   - *Continued Love for Teaching*
   - *Not Isolated From Colleagues*
   - *Not Stressed*
   - *Confident*
   - *Positivity*
   - *Enjoyment From Working With Children*
   - *Strong*
   - *Need to Improve Teaching Practice*
3. *Behaviours*
   - *Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies*
   - *Direct Action Coping Strategies*

Engagement in any combination these aspects is most likely to occur in schools where teachers receive regular confirmation that they are valued and appreciated by their colleagues, and the Senior Leadership Team.

In light of the current research findings, it is suggested that teacher resilience

can be conceptualised by adapting the cognitive-behavioural model of human

functioning. This amended model is presented in Figure 1.

By moving away from a sociological perspective, this new definition provides

insights on the concept of teacher resilience. The majority of research on

teacher resilience seems to have been "done to" teachers without much

consideration of what this construct means to them. By adopting a

psychological perspective, the current research therefore strengthens the

small but already burgeoning research literature on teacher resilience by

allowing teacher voices to be heard.
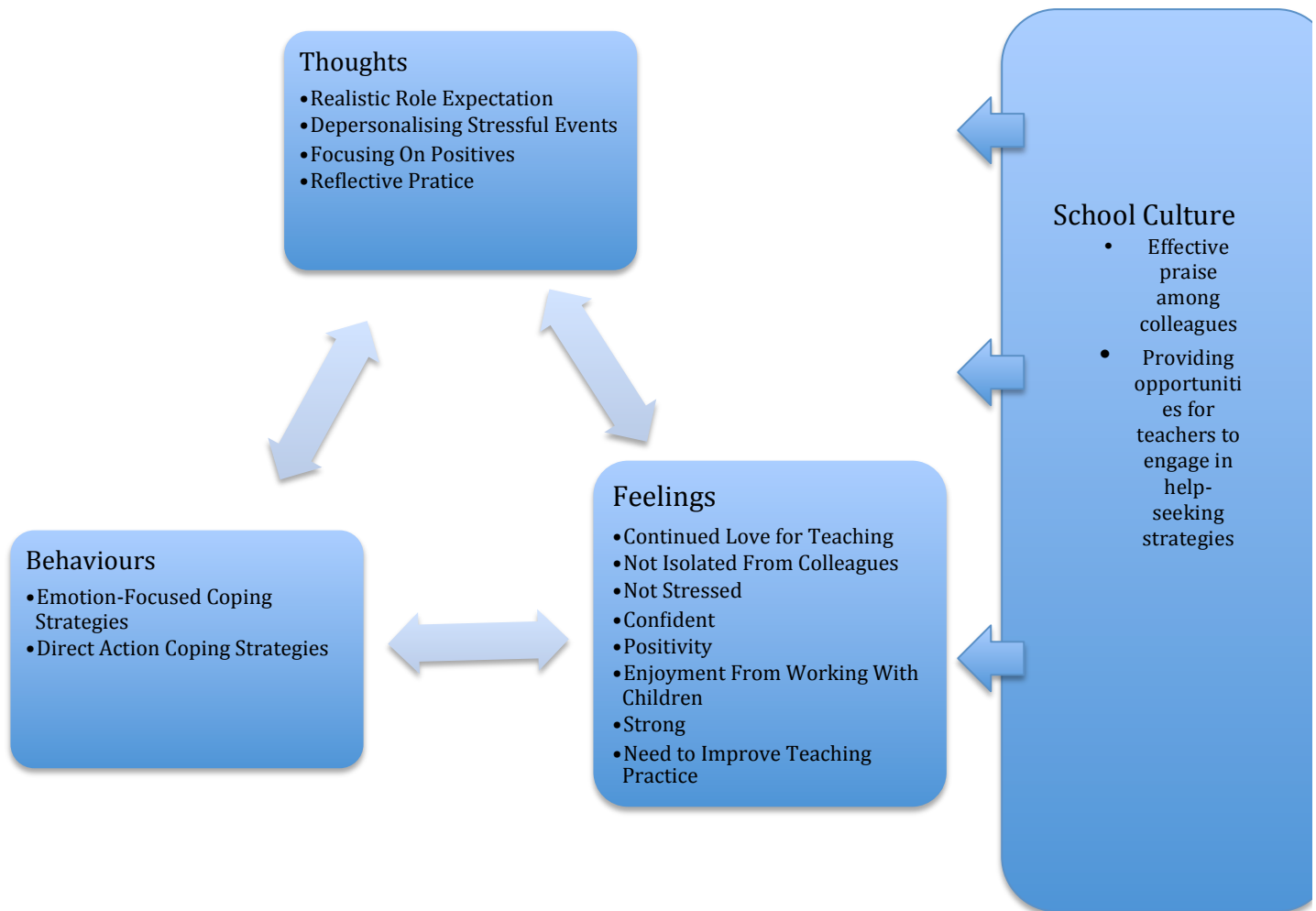
Figure 1. A Cognitive-Behavioural Model for Teacher Resilience

Thoughts
- Realistic Role Expectation
- Depersonalising Stressful Events
- Focusing On Positives
- Reflective Pratice

School Culture
- Effective praise among colleagues
- Providing opportunities for teachers to engage in help-seeking strategies

Behaviours
- Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies
- Direct Action Coping Strategies

Feelings
- Continued Love for Teaching
- Not Isolated From Colleagues
- Not Stressed
- Confident
- Positivity
- Enjoyment From Working With Children
- Strong
- Need to Improve Teaching Practice

Previous research indicates that teachers who experience teacher resilience are more likely to remain committed and motivated to the profession, and are more likely to promote pupil learning and development,(Gu and Day, 2007, Day and Gu, 2009; Edwards, 2010). For this reason, the current research makes a timely contribution to Educational Psychology literature on how to facilitate the creation of positive teaching and learning environments. In addition, it can inform new policy initiatives for teacher education and assist in the design of initial

teacher training and continuing professional development courses that can

encourage teachers to make teaching a long-term professional career choice.

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Appendices

Appendix I (a)   Phase 1 Interview Schedule: Draft One

Question Number	Question
1	How long have you been a qualified teacher?
2	How long have you been teaching at this school?
3	Why do you stay at this school?
4	On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), how would you describe your personal resilience?
5	Have you ever felt "burn out"? If so, what did you do to recover?
6	Tell me your personal beliefs about teaching in a school that faces what some would call tough conditions.
7	What strategies do you, personally, use to stay positive during difficult times?
8	Give me an example when you had to face a tough professional challenge and had to be resilient. What did you do?
9	What makes it a good day? Can you give me an example/s?
9a	How do you feel about your role in the interactions?
10	On a good day, what do you do when the children/young people go home?
11	On a scale of 1-10, how stressed do you feel on a good day?
12	On a scale of 1-10, how anxious do you feel on a good day?
13	What do you do when you get home on a good day?
14	What makes it a bad day? Can you give me an example/s?
14a	How do you feel about your role in the interactions that happened?
15	On a bad day, what do you do when the children go home?
16	On a scale of 1-10, how stressed will you feel on a bad day? What stops it from being a X (X = below the number they say)?
17	On a scale of 1-10, how anxious do you feel on a bad day? What stops it from being a X (X = below what they say)?
18	What do you do when you get home on a bad day?
19	What do you think makes teachers thrive in the profession?

20	Since you have been teaching here, is there anything you feel particularly proud of?
21	What advice would you give a teacher who was about to start working at this school?

Comments/Actions arising from supervision:
- An additional question was included that specifically asked participants to define teacher resilience and this became question 4 in the second draft.
- Question 4 became question 5 in the second draft. In addition the phrase "personal resilience" was changed to "teacher resilience" and a definition was included in order to encourage all participants to think about the same definition when describing their own teacher resilience.
- In order to support participants to think about their own experiences of burn out, an additional question was included where participants were asked to define "teacher burn out". This became question 6 in the second draft.
- The psychological wording of question 9a was changed from "*How do you feel about your role in the interactions?*" to "*Was there anything you feel you do differently on the day you are describing?*" in order to make this question more accessible to teachers. This question became question 12 in the second draft.
- The question*: "On a good day what do you do when you have finished teaching?"* was added and became question 13 in the second draft.
- Question 13 was removed as this question now formed part of the revised question 10.

Appendix I (b)   Phase 1 Interview Schedule: Draft Two

Question Number	Question
1	How long have you been a qualified teacher?
2	How long have you been teaching at this school?
3	Why do you stay at this school?
4.	My research is investigating teacher resilience. I'd be interested to know how you would define teacher resilience.
5.	I think teacher resilience is a combination of being able to bounce back from adversity AND thrive as a teacher, not just survive. On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), how would you describe your teacher resilience?
6	How would you define teacher burn out?
7	Have you ever felt "burn out"? If so, what did you do to recover?
8	Can you tell me your personal beliefs about teaching in a school that faces what some would call tough conditions?
9.	What strategies do you, personally, use to stay positive during difficult times?
10.	Can you give me an example when you had to face a tough professional challenge and had to be resilient. What did you do?
11	What makes it a good day? Can you give me an example/s?
12	Was there anything you feel you do differently on the day you are describing?
13	On a good day, what do you do when you have finished teaching?
14	On a scale of 1-10, how stressed do you feel on a good day?
15.	On a scale of 1-10, how anxious do you feel on a good day?
16	What makes it a bad day? Can you give me examples?
17	Do you feel there was anything you could have done to prevent what you have just described?
18	On a bad day, what do you do when you have finished teaching?
19	On a scale of 1 (low) – 10 (high), how stressed will you feel on a bad day? What stops is from being a X? (X = 1 below what they have said)?
20	On a scale of 1 (low) -10 (high), how anxious will you feel on bad day? What stops it from being a X? (X = 1 below what they have said)
21	A large proportion of teachers leave the profession after 3-5 years of qualifying, have you got any thoughts on why this might be?
22	What do you think makes teachers thrive in your school?

23	Is there anything that your school could be doing to help you thrive more often?
24	Since you have been teaching here, is there anything you feel particularly proud of?
25	What advice would you give a teacher who was about to start at your school in terms of being resilient?

Comments/Actions arising from feedback from expert panel:

- In all questions where teachers were asked to think about a "good day" or bad day" the questions were amended to "good teaching day" and "bad teaching day" respectively.
- A discussion was had over whether or not participants should be provided with a definition of teacher resilience. Question 5 has been amended to remove the definition of teacher resilience. It was felt that this would ensure that participants would not be influenced by preconceived theories or definitions of resilience.
- Additional questions were included to allow greater exploration of the theoretical assumption proposed in chapter one regarding the nature of teacher resilience as an iterative process (Edwards, 2007). These questions became questions 11 and 12 in the final phase 1 interview schedule.
- Questions 11, 12, 13, 14 , 15, 16, 17 18 and 19 were cut as these were not felt to be specifically relevant to the exploration of teacher resilience.

Appendix I (c)   Phase 1 Interview Schedule: Final Version

Question Number	Question
1	How long have you been a qualified teacher?
2	How long have you been teaching at this school?
3	Why do you stay at this school?
4	My research is investigating teacher resilience. I'd be interested to know, how you would define teacher resilience?
5	On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), how would you describe your teacher resilience?
6	How would you define teacher burn out?
7	Have you ever felt "burn out"? If so, what did you do to recover?
8	Can you tell me your personal beliefs about teaching in a school that faces what some would call tough conditions?
9	What strategies do you use to stay positive during difficult times?
10	Can you give me an example of when you had to face a tough professional challenge and had to be resilient. Probe: What did you do?
11	Can you give me an example of when someone has supported you through a professional challenge? Probes: What did they do? How was this helpful?
12	Does anyone else support you through professional challenges?
13	A large proportion of teachers leave the profession after 3-5 years of qualifying, have you got any thoughts on why this might be?
14	What do you think makes teachers thrive in your school?
15	Is there anything that your school could be doing to help you thrive more often?
16	Since you have been teaching here, is there anything you feel particularly proud of?
17	What advice would you give a teacher who was about to start at your school in terms of being resilient?

Appendix II (a)   Phase 2 interview schedule: Draft One

Question Number	Question
1	How long have you been at your current school?
2	What makes you stay?
3	How would you define teacher resilience?
4	How would you define a resilient teacher?
5	On a scale where 1 is low and 10 is high, how would you rate your teacher resilience?
6	Has this changed throughout your teaching career?
7	Can you give me an example of when you had to face a tough professional challenge with a pupil or class, and felt that you had to be resilient. *Probes:* • *What happened?* • *On a scale where 1 is low and 10 is very high, how adverse was the event?* • *How did you feel?* • *What did you do to overcome the challenge?* • *How did this strategy help you to be resilient?* • *Did the school do anything to support you?* • *Did this experience shape your professional practice?* • *If yes, then how.* • *Had you ever encountered that type of event prior to the time you described?* • *Have you ever encountered that type of event since the time you described?* • *If not, why not?* • *If yes, would you rate the experience as the same /10 for adversity? If yes, why? If not, why not? What changed?*

8	Can you give me an example of when you had to face a tough professional challenge with a colleague/team of colleagues and felt that you had to be resilient. (+*probes from question 7*)
9	Can you give me an example of when you had to face a tough professional challenge with a parent and felt that you had to be resilient. *(+probes from question 7)*
10	What do you think makes teachers thrive at this school?
11	Does your school celebrate or notice when teachers are doing well? Probe if answered yes: • What do they do?
12	Is there anything you think your school could be doing to help you thrive more often?
13	What advice would you give a teacher who was about to start at your school in terms of being resilient?
Comments/Actions arising from discussion during supervision 1: • A discussion was had over the rationale for each question. ME to rethink each rationale, amend questions where appropriate and resend to both supervisors with rationales.	

Appendix II (b)   Phase 2 Interview Schedule: Draft Two

Question Number	Question
1	**How long have you been teaching?** Rationale: This question clarifies that the teacher meets the sampling criteria.
2	**How long have you been teaching at this school?**
3	**Why do you stay at this school?** Rationale: In phase 1, teachers provided a variety of reasons for why they chose to stay in their current setting. The findings from phase 1 indicate that school size and the academic ability of the pupils are important factors that influence teachers' decisions on this issue. Since all teachers in phase 1 came from different settings, I'm interested to see if five teachers from the same setting report the same factors as reasons for staying. It may be that, even within the same school setting, teachers perspectives on this issue can differ. My hope is that the answer to this question will orient the teachers towards thinking about their school setting and prime them for reflecting on the school processes they believe can promote teacher resilience
4	**How would you define a resilient teacher in this school?** Rationale: This question attempts to address research sub question a). I have asked this question because, although some teachers answered this question in phase 1 in their response to the question "how would you define teacher resilience" -the phase 1 question did not specifically address this issue, and there is limited research asks teachers for their views on this question. This question is to orient the teachers towards thinking about their own unique context.
5	**Some teachers say that teacher resilience happens in teachers who experience lower stress levels in response to professional challenges when compared with their colleagues. What do you think about this?** *Probes:* • *Do you think you are like this?* • *Have there been any events in your teaching career where you have felt like this?* • *Is this something that has developed over your career or remained fairly constant?*

		• *Can you think of a time when you were/weren't like this?*
		Rationale for questions 5 and 6: This is because two issues arose in phase 1 that I would like to explore further. First, teachers described TR (Teacher Resilience) as not feeling stress. Since resilience includes having a stress response to an experience, I wonder if the participants who gave this definition are in fact describing TR, or another construct, for example, emotion focused coping strategies. Another conclusion is that teachers *no longer* feel stress in response to professional challenges, in which case TR involves teachers positively adapting to professional challenges. By asking the teachers in phase 2 to reflect on these two possible definitions in relation to their own professional lives, it may be that examples of factors that supported them to be resilient are identified through their responses.
6		**What advice would you give a fully qualified teacher who was about to start at this school in terms of being resilient? What are the reasons for this?**
7		**How effective do you think you are at personally following this advice?** *Probe:* • *Has this changed throughout you career?* • *Why do you think this is?* In phase 1 the participants gave a range of advice. However, I wonder how realistic it is for teachers to implement the advice. For example, a strong theme in phase 1 was that teachers should ask for help and advice from their colleagues, and recognise that they are not expected to know everything. I question how realistic it would be for a teacher starting at a new school to behave in this way, given the potential negative consequences of admitting to their team that they are stressed. For this reason, I wonder what led the teachers to form their advice, and whether or not they think they could personally carry out the advice. By exploring this issue further in phase 2, it may be that participants cite particular set of experiences that are supportive in helping teachers to behave in this way. It may be that teachers cite professional experiences that have influenced this decision, in which case this addresses the main research question and sub question b). NB: The probes will not be used with every participant, and their use will depend on each participants individual responses.

Comments/actions arising from supervision 2:

- Question 4: a discussion was had around whether or not there will be a difference in definition between a resilient teacher and a

resilient teacher in X school. ME to reflect the problems that may arise from this question and consider amending as appropriate.

- Question 5: A discussion was had over whether resilience happens 'in' teachers. ME to revisit phase 1 data, consider the language/concepts that are raised around this issue, and rephrase as appropriate. ME to offer an option for participants to disagree and offer an alternative as they might just say 'No'. ME to make the option 'No' and include a probe that captures their thoughts around this. In relation to probe 1: A discussion was had about the language used and its implications, namely that 'are like this' seems to make an assumption of someone being like this as a personality/ with an aspect of identity that doesn't change over time. ME to offer an option of the possibility that responses/experiences of resilience change over time.
- Question 6: A discussion was had over whether participants should be asked to think about 'being' resilient or 'becoming' resilient. ME to amend as appropriate; ME to consider asking participants for their rationale for their advice; A discussion was had over whether or not it is necessary for this question to state 'fully qualified' –ME to amend or think her about her rationale, as appropriate.
- Question 7: ME to consider providing more structure in her probes for this question to enable rich data to emerge. This may be through asking participants what supports implementing, and what creates barriers to implementing, their advice.

Appendix II (c)   Phase 2 Interview Schedule: Draft 3

Question Number	Question
1	**How long have you been teaching?** Rationale: This question clarifies that the teacher meets the sampling criteria.
2	**How long have you been teaching at this school?**
3	**Why do you stay at this school?** Rationale: In phase 1, teachers provided a variety of reasons for why they chose to stay in their current setting. The findings from phase 1 indicate that school size and the academic ability of the pupils are important factors that influence teachers' decisions on this issue. Since all teachers in phase 1 came from different settings, I'm interested to see if five teachers from the same setting report the same factors as reasons for staying. It may be that, even within the same school setting, teachers perspectives on this issue can differ. My hope is that the answer to this question will orient the teachers towards thinking about their school setting and prime them for reflecting on the school processes they believe can promote teacher resilience
4	**How would you define a resilient teacher?** Rationale: I have asked this question because, although some teachers answered this question in phase 1 in their response to the question "how would you define teacher resilience" -the phase 1 question did not specifically address this issue, and there is limited research asks teachers for their views on this question. This question is to orient the teachers towards thinking about their own unique context.
5	**Some teachers say that teacher resilience is when teachers experience lower stress levels in response to professional challenges when compared with their colleagues. What do you think about this?** *This can be expanded on to include the following questions:* • *Do you agree with this?* • *Why/Why not?* • *Have there been any events in your teaching career where you have felt like this?* • *Is this something that has developed over your career or remained fairly constant?*

	• *Can you think of a time when you were/weren't like this?* Rationale: Questions 5 and 6 have been included because two issues arose in phase 1 that I would like to explore further. First, teachers described TR (Teacher Resilience) as not feeling stress. Since resilience includes having a stress response to an experience, I wonder if the participants who gave this definition are in fact describing TR, or another construct, for example, emotion focused coping strategies. Another conclusion is that teachers *no longer* feel stress in response to professional challenges, in which case TR involves teachers positively adapting to professional challenges. By asking the teachers in phase 2 to reflect on these two possible definitions in relation to their own professional lives, it may be that examples of factors that supported them to be resilient are identified through their responses.
6	**Some teachers say that teacher resilience happens when teachers experience stress in response to professional challenges, but stay positive and committed to teaching despite the stressful experience. What do you think about this?** *This can be expanded on to include the following questions:* • *Do you agree with this?* • *Why/Why not?* • *Have there been any events in your teaching career where you have felt like this?* • *Is this something that has developed over your career or remained fairly constant?* • *Can you think of a time when you were/weren't like this?*
7	**What advice would you give a fully qualified teacher who was about to start at this school in terms of becoming resilient?** I have included 'fully qualified' because in phase 1 a lot of the participants wanted to know if they were giving advice to a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) or fully qualified one. From their responses I felt that they would have found it easier to give advice to an NQT, but I felt that if asked specifically to think about NQTs they may give answers that relate to becoming a generally competent teacher rather than a resilient one. I have asked teachers to think about their own school context because the professional challenges in this context may be not be those that all teachers experience. In addition, it will be interesting to see if all 5 teachers respond in the same way to this question.
8	**What are your reasons for giving this advice?**

9	**How effective do you think you are at personally following this advice?**
	This can be expanded to include the following funnelling questions:
	▪ *Has this changed throughout you career?* ▪ *Why do you think this is?* ▪ *Have there been times in your teaching career when it has been easy to behave in this way?* ▪ *Have there been times in your teaching career when it has been difficult to behave in this way?* ▪ *Can you give me an example?* ▪ *Is there anything that you think your school could have done at the time to promote your teacher resilience?*
	Rationale: In phase 1 the participants gave a range of advice. However, I wonder how realistic it is for teachers to implement the advice. For example, a strong theme in phase 1 was that teachers should ask for help and advice from their colleagues, and recognise that they are not expected to know everything. I question how realistic it would be for a teacher starting at a new school to behave in this way, given the potential negative consequences of admitting to their team that they are stressed. For this reason, I wonder what led the teachers to form their advice, and whether or not they think they could personally carry out the advice. By exploring this issue further in phase 2, it may be that participants cite particular set of experiences that are supportive in helping teachers to behave in this way. It may be that teachers cite professional experiences that have influenced this decision, in which case this addresses the main research question and sub question b).
	NB: The funneling questions will not be used with every participant, and their use will depend on each participants individual responses.

Comments/actions arising from supervision 3:

- The purpose of this phase of the research was revisited. In relation to question 3, ME to be mindful that this phase is less to do with whether they 'repeat' i.e.'report the same factors' and more to do with the research gaining richness and in-depth understanding. ME to keep this as clear as possible in the wording of her questions.
- Question 4 to be removed as this has been addressed in

phase 1.

- PJ repeated his comment about process vs identity. It was suggested that ME think about whether she is asking the participants about 'process' in their professional lives' vs a 'fixed identity'. In relation to question 5 'Can you think of a time when you were/weren't like this? might be more helpfully presented as 'times' rather than 'time'; to give an opening for change and variety rather than fixed identity in relation to resilience.

Appendix II (d)   Phase 2 Interview Schedule: Pilot

Question Number	Question
1	How long have you been teaching?
2	Some teachers say that teacher resilience happens when teachers experience stress in response to professional challenges, but stay positive and committed to teaching despite the stressful experience. What do you think about this? *This can be expanded on to include the following questions:* • *Do you agree with this?* • *Why/Why not?* • *Have there been any events in your teaching career where you have felt like this?* • *Is this something that has developed over your career or remained fairly constant?* • *Can you think of a time when you were/weren't like this?*
3	Some teachers say that teacher resilience is when teachers experience lower stress levels in response to professional challenges when compared with their colleagues. What do you think about this? *This can be expanded on to include the following questions:* • *Do you agree with this?* • *Why/Why not?* • *Have there been any events in your teaching career where you have felt like this?* • *Is this something that has developed over your career or remained fairly constant?* • *Can you think of a time when you were/weren't like this?*
4	Teaching is rated as one of the most stressful occupations in the United Kingdom. Have there been times in your career when you have felt like leaving the profession? *Probes:* • *Why/Why not?* • *Can you give me an example?* • *At that time, what helped you stay committed to teaching?*
5	How long have you been teaching at this school?
6	Why do you stay at this school?

7	What advice would you give a fully qualified teacher who was about to start at your school in terms of being resilient?
8	What are your reasons for giving this advice?
9	How effective do you think you are at personally following this advice? *Probes:* • *Has this changed throughout your career?* • *Why do you think that is?* • *Have there been times in your teaching career where it has been easier/more difficult to behave in that way?* • *Can you give me an example?* • *Is there anything that you think your school could have done at the time to promote your teacher resilience?*

Comments/actions arising from pilot interview:

- Regarding teachers definitions of teacher resilience, ME to include question asking teachers for specific examples of experiences of teacher resilience in relation to three categories of professional challenges where the participants believe teacher resilience is required.
- Question 4 to be removed.

Appendix II (e)   Phase 2 Interview Schedule: Final Version

Question Number	Question
1	How long have you been teaching?
2	Teachers can face many professional challenges in their work. Can you give me 3 examples of professional challenges where you think you need teacher resilience?
3	If you had to compare yourself with your colleagues, do you think you feel more, less or the same level of stress in response to (name challenge 1,2,3)? *Probes:* • *Is this something that has changed over your career or remained fairly constant?* • *Can you think of times when you felt more/less stressed in response to that type of challenge?* • *Can you give me an example?* • *What supports/supported you to feel resilient?* • *Did the experience shape your practice?*
4	Teaching is rated as one of the most stressful occupations in the United Kingdom. Have there been times in your career when you have felt like leaving the profession? *Probes:* • *Why/Why not?* • *Can you give me an example?* • *At that time, what helped you stay committed to teaching?*
5	How long have you been teaching at this school?
6	Why do you stay at this school?
7	What advice would you give a fully qualified teacher who was about to start at your school in terms of being resilient?
8	What are your reasons for giving this advice?
9	How effective do you think you are at personally following this advice? *Probes:* • *Has this changed throughout your career?* • *Why do you think that is?*

	• *Have there been times in your teaching career where it has been easier/more difficult to behave in that way?*
	• *Can you give me an example?*
	• *Is there anything that you think your school could have done at the time to promote your teacher resilience?*

Appendix III Summary of Participants Demographic Information

The following table provides a summary of the characteristics of research participants.

Participant name	Professional title	Work location experience	Phase of research
Laura	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Jane	Primary school teacher	Rural & Urban	1
Mark	Secondary school teacher	Urban	1
James	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Nicola	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Luke	Secondary school teacher	Urban	1
Karen	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Gareth	Secondary school teacher	Rural	1
Helen	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Christine	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Rupert	Secondary school teacher	Rural	1
Hannah	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Ruth	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Harriet	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Wendy	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Jessica	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Susie	Secondary school teacher	Rural	1
Rhian	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Mary	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Georgia	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Isabelle	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Susan	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Charlotte	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Lucy	Primary school teacher	Urban	1
Julia	Primary school teacher	Rural	1
Michelle	Primary school teacher	Rural	2
Erica	Primary school teacher	Rural	2
Sandra	Primary school teacher	Rural	2
Eva	Primary school teacher	Rural	2
Alice	Primary school teacher	Rural	2

Appendix IV   Example of Summary of Research

<u>UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT BUILD TEACHER RESILIENCE</u>

Background to the Research:

Research indicating that teachers play a central role in promoting student achievement is well documented and can be traced back to the Coleman report, which concluded that teacher characteristics accounted for more variance in student achievement than any other school resource. More recently, evidence that emotional experiences impact on teachers' abilities to be rational and objective has led many professionals to argue that understanding the role of emotions is essential for the development of effective education programmes. Specifically, if teachers are to make valuable contributions to the lives of their learners they must understand the role that their own emotions have in shaping their attitudes and responses to challenging behaviour.

The proposed study will identify new ways that individual schools and education faculties can increase job satisfaction and the desire to make teaching a lifelong profession; this is useful in light of reports that unprecedented numbers of teachers are choosing to leave the profession.

Key aims of the research project:
1. To explore factors that can promote and protect teacher resilience.
2. To identify examples of factors that teachers use to promote their own resilience, and to articulate these in ways that are useful to teachers and supportive of their practice.

Details about the Research:

My focus is on teachers' understandings of their practice. I would like to collect my evidence through one-to-one interviews with teachers who have 10+ years teaching experience; the interviews will last 30 minutes.
I am happy to discuss these with you further; along with any suggestions you may have about how I might explore my key research aims.

<u>In respect of confidentiality, the identity of all participants and the schools that they work in will remain anonymous.</u>

If you would like any further information about this study, please email me at:
meldridge@ioe.ac.uk

Appendix V Example of Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR RETAINING TAPED MATERIALS

Project Title: Understanding the Factors that Build Teacher
                    Resilience.
Researcher: Madelaine Eldridge
Academic Supervisors: Mary Parker/Phil Jones

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and the nature and
the purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I
understand and agree to take part. I understand that I may not
directly benefit from taking part in the project. I understand that I
can withdraw from the study at any stage and that this will not
affect my status now or in the future.

I confirm that I am over 18 years of age. I understand that I will be
audiotaped during the study I understand that all electronic data
will be double password protected and hard data (including printed
transcripts) will be locked in a secure cabinet in the researcher's
office. I understand that, in accordance with the Data Protection
Act 1998, following the thesis examination process, all hard data
will be destroyed and electronic data permanently deleted.

Name of Participant……………………………

Signed……………………………………………

Date……………………………………………….

I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she
understands what is involved.

Researcher's Signature………………………

Date………………………………………………

Appendix VI   Example of Full Transcript From Phase 1 Data Analysis

ME: So can you start by telling me how long you have been a qualified teacher?
I: I qualified in 1994...
ME: Ok and how long have you been teaching at this school?
I: Ten years.
ME: Ok. So why do you stay at this school..?
I: Lots of reasons. I stay here because I live locally. It's convenient because I have two children, two small children, who go to another local primary school. So I can walk to school. I can leave on time on occasion to go and pick them up from school if I need to. So all of that is you know lifestyle if you say... if you like. That is my practical reasons for being here... But aside from that my educational reasons for being here are you know I just love it... I love this school.
ME: Ok. What kind of things do you love?
I: I feel very much part of the community. So that's the teaching community, that's the parental community. I have just observed a child in the nursery whose two older brothers I have seen through the school and they are now in secondary school so there is lots of history, lots of history with parents, lots of history with families. I feel well respected here and I know that what I do...
ME: By who?
I: By the staff, by the parents, by the children. So I you know you can't... it's... with education you can't really detach it from your life. I think your school is entrenched in your personal life and vice versa.
ME: Ok and when you say the community the parent community what do you mean by that?
I: Well mostly the community of parent's whose children have got Special Educational Needs. So we have got about seventy or eighty children on the register and I...I have had um a letter this morning from a parent who feels that we are doing very much.
ME: So the communication is there...?
I: Yeah generally the communication is there.
ME: With the staff team what... when you say it is a real community feel... what kind of things make it...
I: I think because we are a big school... There are lots of us... So it is easy to find like minded people.
ME: Ok.
I: It is more than a working relationship because we have known each other a long time. I massively appreciate the hard job that they are doing they appreciate what I do for them and we have social events. The social events at school are always well attended. People confide in each other. Yeah you know it's a big working family. We have to have shoulders to cry on. It's a stressful job. Yeah.
ME: Ok. So my research is investigating teacher resilience. I'd be interested to know how you would define teacher resilience.
I: Oh I think the first thing that springs to mind when you say teacher resilience is whether or not the teacher has the wherewithall to stay in the job. To...
ME: Has the...
I: The where-with-all... Or to get through the day sometimes...Yeah.
ME: So would you say it's a daily...Something...

I: I would say it's a daily… A daily. I wonder if teachers question their resilience daily… Yeah… absolutely.

ME: Ok. And is there anything else that you think about when you think about defining teacher resilience?

I: Um. Somebody who… you have to… well to be a teacher you have to be you know… you have to be able to do a lot of paperwork to do your planning to know your children inside out… to be able to cope with parents having a go at you first thing in the playground… or you might have to cope with a child coming in and vomiting in your classroom… Teaching… Having a member of your senior management team come in to observe your teaching when you have just dealt with that really difficult parent and cleared up the sick in your classroom and um you might have broken up with your boyfriend or had an argument with your husband on the way to work… And then you have to perform for thirty children all day long and cope with their needs and be a mother and a social worker and child protection officer all at the same time um. And then go home and look after your own children. So I would say that somebody who can do that… is pretty resilient!

ME: Ok. On a scale where 1(low) to 10 (high)…

I: And some teachers do. Some teachers absolutely thrive on that level of activity and responsibility and having to cope… Um… And some teachers approach it from a highly highly highly organised way and deal with all of those and by the end of the day you can see that they are not particularly unnerved by it… And other teachers who don't approach things in such an organised way everybody's completely different you know… are just completely fried by the end of the day. But I think the fact that everybody comes in the next morning proves that there is that bounce back factor…

ME: Yeah. Ok. And if you had to think about yourself, on a scale where 1 is low and 10 is high, how would you describe your own teacher resilience?

I: That might change on a daily basis. Today it feels like an 8 I would say…

ME: Ok.

I: For many of years. Uh. So in terms of resilience I…Um… I think I was probably at my highest point when I was younger. I wasn't married and I didn't have any family commitments… And I think that makes a huge difference to the profession. I think if you are working with children and so many people are in teaching who have families, I think the benefits of not having a family are huge. To have energy, space and time. Because it is all consuming. You can't just do this job and go home.

ME: Ok. Thank you. So my next question is how would you define teacher burn out?

I: Uh. I don't think I have ever met anybody has burnt out to the point that they have left the profession.

ME: So what do you think it means: teacher burn out?

I: I would say. I would say… Yeah… To me the expression burn out would be somebody has got to the point where they say I can't do this anymore. I know of teachers who have had time off for stress-related reasons and come back. I had a conversation with a teacher the other day because we have got a new appraisal system which has come in from the Government…

ME: Yeah.

I: So teachers are now completely sort of worried that a member of the senior management team can drop into their classroom at any time and that can be

their appraisal. Uh… You know in the past you might have had a few weeks which in a way is not always… you know everyone is going to pull a good lesson out of the bag with three weeks notice, now it's as OFSTED they can just drop in any time… Um. You know it's related to your pay… it's related to children's targets. It's a very… People have been very stressed about that at the moment. And speaking to a very experienced teacher the other day who is very good at her job, I would say extremely resilient literally just said 'I want to just leave the profession. I can't you know. If this appraisal thing… um… isn't fair if I'm not judged fairly. If people are just dropping into my classroom and making judgements on based on coming in and me having a bad afternoon then I shall just leave the profession'. And that is the first time that I have ever encountered that.

ME: Can you tell me about your personal beliefs about teaching in a school that faces what some would call tough conditions?

I: Um my personal beliefs about teaching in a school in tough conditions. I would say a huge factor is the leadership team… Um. And I don't think I realised that when I was young. I taught abroad initially but that was one of my first jobs. I don't think I realised until having had further experience what a difference the head teacher makes to a school. Um. Having support from your head teacher, having support from your governors. What was the question?

ME: Your personal beliefs about teaching in a school that faces what some people would call tough conditions.

I: Structure and boundaries and really good policies so that everybody knows exactly what they are doing. Because if that breaks down it is chaos! And you know it' s really tough in XXXX. Having a really good understanding of your community, having a good understanding of where children's behaviour is coming from and that needs to be communicated from your Head Teacher from um you know having really good records of teachers needs. Staff morale has to come from the leadership team. You have to have good staff morale and that has to come from the Head Teacher. I have been and visited this school recently and it has since been in 'Special Measures' which there were a group of us that used to teach there ten years ago find *so* hard to believe that it was once a really good happy thriving school even though it faced extremely adverse conditions from the community and you know the wider implications of teaching in an inner city school to find that three headships later it hadn't survived which is really really sad. So yeah it is about strong leadership I would say.

ME: Can you tell me what strategies you use to stay positive during difficult times?

I: I have learnt over the years not to engage in negative conversations in the staffroom.

ME: Ok.

I: Of which there are always going to be… there are always going to be conversations in the staff room.

ME: Why have you learnt not to engage?

I: Probably because… it does bring you down. It does you know it does… sort of er give you a negative feeling. Yeah. What was the original question?

ME: What strategies do you use to stay positive during difficult times?

I: Um…What else to do I do to stay positive. I think I am just naturally quite a positive person. Not all the time. I think as I said before it's about the relationships in the school as well. If you have got positive relationships with

staff members you know… Um it helps to be jovial and have a laugh with them, and things like silly little things that we have in the staff room like 'sugar fix Friday' and eating lots of cakes together. Um. And reminding yourself why you are in the job when there are positive outcomes.

ME: Yep.

I: When you know when children have really turned a corner.

ME: Yeah. Can you tell me a time when you had to face a tough professional challenge and you had to be resilient? What did you do?

I: A tough professional challenge… [Hesitation].

ME: So this could be spanning your teaching career. What did you do?

I: Ok. Um. I can tell you I can tell you something that has probably been most recently… Yeah. I have had lots of professional challenges with children. But I would say that just goes hand in hand with the job. I think if you are in the teaching profession you expect to have challenging professional decisions to make about with children.

ME: Ok

I: I err… last year… I had to confide in my Deputy Head Teacher and I did this along with two other members of staff. I had to confide in my Deputy Head Teacher that I questioned the professionalism of another member of staff. That's I think that's the hardest thing that I have ever done. Yeah… And I was surprised… I was actually really surprised at how much it affected me to the extent where I just uncontrollably cried; could not control my emotions that to the point where my Deputy Head Teacher said 'you need to leave now the school now and go with the other two members of staff who have been in on this and leave the site and go away and drink coffee and have time to just think about what you have done' because ultimately I could have been ending somebody else's career. So I would say that that is the most difficult professional judgment I have had to make.

ME: So the… it sounds like the Deputy Head was quite supportive? What did you do? How did you manage to get over that?

I: I think it was with the support of my Deputy, with the support of the other two teachers who shared my concerns. We decided that actually neither one of us should speak to our Deputy alone it should be something that we did collectively because we all shared the concerns and that way we were there to support each other.

ME: So then once you had done it and you felt really…

I: Awful.

ME: Awful about it. Then what did you then do?

I: I suppose that all three of us as well used the support of our families. So yeah. I know that all of us talked to partners or mothers or people who said actually you've done the right thing because ultimately it is about the welfare of children and that had to be our focus. We had to keep having people reminding us that that was why we had done it.

ME: Thank you for sharing that with me. Can you give me an example of a time when someone has supported you through a professional challenge?

I: Someone who has supported me through a professional challenge. Absolutely everybody here. But I don't… if you asked another member of staff in the school you would have a very different answer.

ME: No but it's about you. You know you stayed here a long time and so it's what is helpful to you. So…

I: Yes.

ME: You think everybody…

I: Currently I have got a very supportive Management Team. Um. Currently you know they are not seen as particularly supportive in other areas of the school. But um…

ME: But to you they are…

I: But it's working for me and that's why I am staying here at the moment.

ME: So what do they do that you find helpful?

I: They have faith in what I am doing so they know that whatever they ask me to do they know it is in safe hands. Um. They give me positive feedback. Um. Er. Yeah. Very. They give me very positive feedback… What was the question? I always go off tack so..!

ME: Can you give me an example of a time when someone has supported you through a professional challenge?

I: Um. My husband - hugely supportive. Does he teach? No

ME: Do you think that's helpful?

I: Yes.

ME: Why is that helpful?

I: I don't have a teacher's marriage! I think we would just constantly talk about the job. It would be your life. It would be horrendous. No my husband is extremely supportive. No. He works three days a week and has you know well sometimes more involvement with my children – I am biased because he is my husband – but more than I know any father to have involvement with their children. So the homework, cooking… looking after their needs, meeting with teachers, friends coming over to play. He has absolute equal involvement with that and I know that a lot of teachers, a lot of people who don't teach, have husbands who have their own work and even with their career they are still doing the lion share of all that with their families. So without that I don't think I could do this job effectively.

ME: Ok

I: Yeah.

ME: Um. Can you give me an example of when somebody has supported you through a professional challenge?

I: Yeah.

ME: So this could be spanning your career.

I: Um. It's very much linked with another question so um when I came back to work full time after err being part time after my second child… I had been part time for a couple of years I came back full time because my husband was made redundant at that time I was asked to teach in Year 6 at the top of the school ICT. To release that teacher to go and do something else and on top of everything else that was going on it felt, I completely felt at my lowest ebb and I wasn't used to work full time. And the idea of teaching ICT to Year 6; just… There was just no way that I thought that I could do that. Um. I just didn't feel I had the skills, I didn't feel that I had the particular management skills at that time for that group of children. Um and the ICT manager who is also a class teacher um found me in my office in floods of tears and completely just um asked another member of staff to go and take his class while he came and talked me through it, talked me through the plans and said you absolutely can do it. And um I dunno I am welling up thinking about it. And he said I will meet with you every week, come and observe me teaching. And this is the teacher that I had to then question his

professionalism with my deputy who had been *so* supportive to me. And said you know I will take time out every week to come and plan those lessons with you and I observed his teaching – absolutely fantastic teacher - I learnt so much from watching him teach ICT. That was why my professionalism...

ME: It sounds like it was very difficult.

I: It was very hard. I think you know and I think you know all of that comes with maturity. I am in my forties now. And I wouldn't. I think resilience... Are you more resilient the older that you get? Possibly not. I think of resilience in terms of energy for the job. I would have said I would have had more of that in my early twenties when I was class teaching in XXX. In terms of resilience in your professional decision making and knowing how to cope with situations I think that increases as... with maturity and age and experience. So I think for me resilience; two different types. Energy and the sheer just kind of gusto to get on with it every day definitely I don't have as much of that as I used to. But more in terms of professional judgments and what I am capable of doing I wouldn't have had... been able to do that in my earlier career. I wouldn't have had the guts I suppose to go and do that... to talk about another member of staff's professionalism. I just wouldn't have considered it.

ME: A large proportion of teachers leave the profession after 3-5 years of qualifying, have you got any thoughts on why this might be?

I: I've worked with newly qualified teachers, I've trained newly qualified teachers, and teachers that are in year 2 and year three... I think a big thing in that is paperwork I think the volume of paperwork, and all the boxes you have to tick, as well as actually doing your actual teaching...I think it's got to be, how much support you get from the people who do the induction at the school. If you've got a good induction programme at the school, I mean I was at the school that had got an excellent induction programme. And you've got a structure over the year, the induction year, so that you have regular meetings with the Head of Department, and you have a professional development tutor who you see regularly so you if any problems start to rise you've got some backup and support. You know, sharing good practice, watching other teachers teach and then hopefully y'know you get through that first year which is obviously the key thing and then I think maybe what happens in the second and third year is that support is not the same it's not there, and I think people think oh yeah, they've done that first year so they don't need the support but in actual fact it's still hard because you're still only in your second year of teaching, you still need the support network and I don't think the priority is made in the same way...Without feeling that you're failing. Do you know what I mean? You need someone to go to and say 'look, I'm struggling with this' but that doesn't mean you're failing in your role, it just means you need a bit of support, and I'm sure if they got the right support than they would think twice about you know leaving.

ME: Is there anything your school could be doing to help you thrive more often?

I: Yeah. Well I'm saying yes but if I was to try and pin it down...there's a lot of things I mean I think I'm trying to think of what things they could actually do. I think a bit more regular, we do sort of performance management reviews but it's very much sort of 'right have you got these grades? have you got this? Have you got the other?' but I think a little bit more sitting down and talking about my classes sort of 'how do you feel about this?' a little bit more coaching going on I think would help a lot more, and coaching model has been in education for quite a while, but I think I've never seen it done effectively, but I can imagine that if

you know you've got someone to sit and talk through any issues that you've got someone, or someone who's saying "how are things going?", and it's not your line manager, is not the person that teaches in the room next to you, you know, it's somebody else that's got an interest in you as a professional and as a person, I think that might possibly help.

ME: Ok. Alright. Is there anything else that your school could be doing to help you thrive more often?

I: It is wrapped up really with end of term, end of year results. It is very based on pupil progress.

ME: Right.

I: And so we might have… And so the 'raise on line' data is the Government data on how well we are doing or how well we are not doing and so that was shared at a staff meeting 'look how well we are doing'. But you know that is a bit of an annual event and that's dependent on pupil progress. And even if children haven't made that progress staff here haven't worked any less hard or they haven't put any less into it. I mean our demographic in this school has changed considerably in the last ten years it's not the same school that it was and getting those results is getting harder and harder. Um. So levels of appreciation. Yeah.

ME: Ok. If it could be different what would you change? Or would you change anything?

I: That's a hard one. I don't think I would change anything? Um. Provide more praise! Yeah and um as a profession we… we need continual training; it's about training. I think some people would perhaps say um that some of the bigger decisions are shared at those staff meetings for people to discuss.

ME: Ok.

I: Ok. So rather than just… A training. Everybody sit down. We have got to do maths training, or literacy training or child protection training. It's pretty… You know it does bombard you at the end of a teaching day. Um. There should be more staff meetings about how do you feel about this? If we were to do this more as a whole as a school. More of a collective sharing of people's feelings and ideas…

ME: Ok. I am just playing devil's advocate here. Some people think that in a big school you are never gonna all agree.

I: And we have said we have said that to management and staff have said that we know that we are never all going to agree but actually just getting our opinions…

ME: Sort of getting your voice heard?

I: When I think about it… I think there has been a fair… a fair amount of people sharing ideas but um there is still a little bit of unhappiness about decisions that are just made. But I think that as a Management Team sometimes they just have to make decisions because that is what they are there for isn't it…?!

ME: Ok. Since you have been teaching here is there anything you feel particularly proud of?

I: Um. Yes. Er. This week just because it is right in the forefront of my mind, I unexpectedly had to do an assembly a whole school assembly… and a staff meeting was brought forward and so I didn't particularly have much time to deal with it. And they were both on the same day and the assembly went really well and I had so many positive comments from um staff and the children and a parent who has a child in the school who is also a member of staff said Thomas went home and said 'Oh Mrs XXX's assembly was so good. She is so good at doing

assemblies' and was so inspired by it. And um the number of people who came up and said what a good staff meeting it was. What was the question?

ME: An example of something you feel particularly proud of…

I: While I am blowing my own trumpet… And so yeah I felt really proud of that this week. Just that I had made a difference to people.

ME: So it sounds like there are times when the staff do notice when other people are doing well.

I: Absolutely. I think that what staff are after is that it comes more from the top…

ME: From the top more…

I: From management more yeah. I think we are all good telling each other how good we are as a staff but in terms of appreciation from the management.

ME: Ok yeah. Can you tell me what advice would you give a teacher who was about to start at your school in terms of being resilient?

I: Oh. I thought you were about to say a teacher who is about to start in the profession. I would say 'don't do it!' I used to in my old school. I used to work I used to work… Is this research for the Institute? Yeah I used to work with the Institute of Education because XXX is near Russell Square and so I mentored the students from the Institute and we used to have a couple of students every um term. And I couldn't hand on heart do that now. I think that the teaching profession has changed *so much* I don't think that I could absolutely say hand on heart you are entering such a good profession 'go for it'. But starting at this school I would say. What advice would I give to someone starting at this school? Um… Gosh.

ME: Is there anything that it would be useful know?

I: How hard they have got to work. It is just outrageously hard. That if… Be prepared to hit the ground at a hundred miles an hour.

ME: And what advice would you give in terms of doing that effectively?

I: How would you do that effectively? You just have to be *uber* organised. Really prioritise and er put the children first and put the planning first. I think it is the hardest thing is when you are a class teacher you just want to class teach and you just want to be in your classroom and do the best for the children. But there are so many other things that you have to do particularly if you are a subject coordinator or leading an area of the school… But yeah. The responsibilities that come with that are huge. And so you. Yeah don't lose sight of the children. And if you have difficulty meeting deadlines for anything else just speak to the Management and say actually 'I am not going to have that in by next week because I was planning all week!' Just being able to prioritise.

ME: Do you think they are quite open to that sort of thing?

I: They have recently on their emails said 'if you think you are going to have difficulty with this deadline come and see us'. And that's quite a new development which is good. Which is very good.

ME: Ok. Well that is all my questions. Thank you so much for letting me interview you.

Appendix VII   **Example of Letter Requesting Member Checking.**

Dear XXXX,

Re: Research Interview: Understanding the Factors that Build Teacher Resilience.

Thank you so much for participating in my research, I am so glad you were able to share your insights with me. I have listened to the audio recording of your interview and typed up our conversation to form a transcript. I would like to be able to include quotations from your interview in my report, and these will come from your transcript. I would be very grateful if you could read through the attached transcription of your interview, delete or amend any comments that you would not like to be included in the final report, and send it back to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the interview with me, then please feel free to contact me by email and we can arrange a time to speak. If you do not feel there are any amendments or deletions that should be made, then don't worry about sending the transcript back.

Once again thank you so much for assisting me with my research, and I wish you the best of luck with your teaching.

Best wishes,

Madelaine Eldridge

meldridge@ioe.ac.uk

Appendix VIII   **Example of Data Extracts for the Theme
                           'Positive Aspects of the Work Place'**

Positive aspects of the workplace

<Internals\\transcript 1> - § 8 references coded [12.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.67% Coverage

The staff is probably my main reason. Really supportive and friendly staff who talk to each other.

Reference 2 - 0.44% Coverage

proximity to my home as well because it's in the town I live in.

References 3-4 - 3.39% Coverage

staff talk to each other and share experiences and share. There's no one-upmanship of "oh well they're fine with me" or "that person's perfect with me". It's very honest and open, um, and there's lots of kind of discussion, not in meetings in a sense but there's lots of discussion in order for us to get the best from the children, and for us to work together, and share good practice. Which has never happened in, well it hasn't happened to that extent in other schools that I've taught in.

Reference 5 - 2.52% Coverage

I have had times where I have sat down with particular colleagues and a particular class I know I'm not getting the best out of them and we have sat down together and looked at strategies that each one of us have used and pulled the best of the strategies together, working together, so we're sharing good practice. It was very recently within the last academic year.

Reference 6 - 1.95% Coverage

I really value the good communication, the fact that the SLT's, the senior leadership team, want to, they're interested, and they're obviously interested, and I think is, that's really important in a small school with only about 25 teaching staff, not including teaching assistants.

Reference 7 - 1.49% Coverage

When you say interested, interested in what?

Interested in who you are as a person, and how you are doing as a person, not just as a kind of like worker bee. That they want to know. I think that makes a difference.

**Appendix IX   Example of Annotated Data Extracts for the
                     Theme: 'Definitions of Resilience'**

Handwritten annotations at top:

Qs • T1 - ref 5: how has becoming more emotionally aware mediated her TR?

• T8 - ref 3: relationship with pupils ~~to be~~ definition of Teacher resilience?
    ref 4: having a sense of humour ⟶ strategy for ↑ TR?

Definition of Resilience

<u>\<Internals\\transcript 1\></u> - § 5 references coded [10.50% Coverage]

References 1-2 - 0.23% Coverage

   Keeping on going when it's tricky,

References 3-4 - 0.69% Coverage

having a particularly good sense of humour. Particularly having a good sense of humour is important.

Reference 5 - 9.57% Coverage

   I would say that when I was younger and before I had children I was less emotionally involved with my pupils. and so therefore I think that when I was younger and before I had children of my own I could walk away from work and not be so distressed by maybe the other things that were going on in the children's lives. I would always be very very mindful of their education but maybe not so much of them holistically as a whole person and I think that as I have had children myself I am more affected by the other things that go on in their lives and I think that i'm more emotionally aware.

Handwritten: is this a definition or something that mediates.

   And does that make you more resilient or less resilient?

   It depends. I think it affects me more as a person than they did, so in some ways <u>I would be less resilient but i would also, i think that I care more in some ways now and so will fight to be resilient so that i keep on going.</u>

Handwritten: ← mixed answer on whether it ↑ or ↓ her TR.

   So you think it has changed throughout your career?

   Yes, but I think I've chosen now the school I work in because of the person that I have become. I think I was a lot tougher in my mid-20s before I had children and could sort of things didn't bother me. But I think as a person I'm different, coz having children i think im more emotionally in tune so therefore I think things affect me more emotionally now than they would have done before which is why <u>I have chosen not to work in a secondary school.</u>

Handwritten: Changed contexts to promote her resilience to teach.

Handwritten bottom left: Systems thinking.

/ <u>Define teacher resilience</u>   ①

- Managing the demands of a working day.
  getting through the day
- Being able to cope with a myriad of
  issues, e.g. paperwork, observations,
  angry parents, own personal problems.
- Not being upset by the teaching system.
- Realising that some things are outside of
  your control and not expecting everything
  to be perfect.
- Being able to 'bounce' back - the bounce
  Surviving as a teacher   back factor.
- Not bearing grudges.
- Starting each day afresh
- Being strong emotionally to handle
  the daily pressures of working with
  teenagers
- Being a $reflective practitioner - ok
  this has happened.... What am I
  going to do about it to move on?
- A build up of lots of things coming
  in together.
- The ability to 'deliver' in the face of adversity.
  i.e. quality control systems/being accountable.
  heavy workload.   P.T.O