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Piloting a Theoretical Framework for Understanding Teacher Resilience in Hard-to-Staff Schools

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PILOTING A THEORETCAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING TEACHER

RESILIENCE IN HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS

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T. Tamara Durant

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ABSTRACT

PILOTING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING TEACHER

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Dissertation supervised by Dr. Connie M. Moss

The study examined the nature of hard-to-staff schools in relation to teacher resilience. The study proposes a theoretical framework that blends theories of self and collective efficacy, critical race, and resilience theories with Bronfrenbrenner's ecological systems theory to examine personal and organizational factors that contribute to or weaken the resilience of teachers in challenging urban schools.

Two research questions guided the study: *What are the personal factors that strengthen resilience in teachers in hard-to-staff schools?* And, *What organizational factors impact teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools?*

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling methods. School administrators were asked to identify teachers who had a track record of success with students in schools with challenging working conditions and who persisted in spite of obstacles. Three participants

volunteered to respond to 16 open-ended prompts that explored personal and professional factors that might influence resilience.

Data from the participants were analyzed through the qualitative process of close reading to create a case study of each participant. Then, the data were analyzed to identify themes within and across participants' responses.

The findings revealed that resilient teachers were able to navigate challenges and identify solutions either on their own or with the help of a support system that included colleagues, family, and friends. The findings also showed that not only did positive relationships with students and colleagues impact teachers' resilience and but also that resilient teachers intentionally and systematically sought to build those relationships.

The study highlights the utility of a theoretical framework for understanding teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools by revealing the functionally bonded internal and external factors that contribute to identity formation in ways that foster and strengthen resiliency in teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

DEDICATION

To Dolores Durant, Brian Dassler, and Sharmaine White. Each of you set me on this journey, and I can't thank you enough. Sending love and gratitude from this side to the other.

And to my Bobcats Joseph (Dr. Jones/the first to do it), Leah, Andrew, Shannon, and Yusuf. You saw me through my darkest days, celebrated with me in my brightest moments, and strengthened my resilience.

This is for you.

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I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Connie M. Moss, for guiding me through this process. I will be forever grateful for the support she gave me not only through this process but through the challenges and transitions I experienced in my personal life.

I would also like to thank my mother for loving and encouraging me all these years and for walking Cassie when I was buried in my dissertation. I will never be able to repay her for the sacrifices she made, but the Mom Fund should help.

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A hard-to-staff school is a school with a higher rate of teacher attrition (Opfer, 2011).

These schools have a higher number of vacancies that are unable to be filled each year (Horng,

2009; Opfer, 2011). These schools can be urban or rural and usually serve high-poverty

communities (Milner, 2013; Opfer, 2011). In urban settings, hard-to-staff schools typically serve

high-minority populations (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013; Opfer, 2011). Since hard-to-staff schools

serve predominately poor, predominately minority populations, it is often assumed that teachers

leave these schools because of their student populations (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013; Opfer,

2011; Papay & Kraft, 2017). Teachers' reasons for leaving these schools vary, but often times it

is because of the working conditions of the school and not the students (Horng, 2009; Papay &

Kraft, 2017).

Teachers in any school face challenges and potential stressors (Bobek, 2002; Mansfield et

al., 2012; Travers, 2017). However, teachers in hard-to-staff schools experience greater

challenges than teachers in other settings (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013; Opfer, 2011; Papay &

Kraft, 2017). Additionally, the challenges these teachers face are unique to serving communities

of concentrated poverty (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013; Opfer, 2011; Papay & Kraft, 2017).

Teacher resilience is especially important in these schools. Resilience for teachers means using

various resources to navigate or adjust to negative experiences (Bobek, 2002; Day & Hong,

2016; Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012) and being able to bounce back after experiencing challenges

(Doney, 2013). Resilience is something that can be developed over time (Day & Hong, 2016),

and resilience cannot be developed without challenges (Doney, 2013). Some factors that support

teachers in building their capacity for resilience are seeking help (Castro et al., 2010; Doney,

2013), having strong personal and professional relationships (Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013), and being able to manage stressors (Day & Hong, 2016).

Local Contextual Perspectives on the Problem

This study took place in an urban district in western Pennsylvania. The school that was selected has been identified as a hard-to-staff school by the school district. The district where this school is located has a formula for identifying hard-to-staff school that include, but are not limited to, the following criteria: the school's three-year turnover average, teaching and learning conditions survey information, and student performance data.

The Candidate's Leadership Perspectives on the Problem

I decided to study this problem for several reasons. I was a teacher in a hard-to-staff charter high school. Over the course of six years, the school lost approximately 100 faculty and staff members. After relocating to western Pennsylvania, I was employed by an urban public school district. One of the functions of my role was to support new teachers across the district. In my experience, teachers at certain schools experienced additional struggles and challenges when compared to their colleagues at other schools in the district. These teachers needed additional support and sought help from colleagues, school leaders, and various district-level staff. It was quite common for those teachers to leave their position with the district after one or two years. Some of those who remained in the district were excited when they were transferred to a different school in the district. One teacher was congratulated when she was involuntarily placed from a school that was hard-to-staff to an "easier" school in the district. Although the transfer was involuntary, she was very excited to be leaving. Working with these teachers made me

reflect on my own experiences in similar schools. My colleagues and I experienced some of the challenges that these teachers faced, yet we continued to work at that school for anywhere from five to ten years. The same is true for the teachers in the hard-to-staff schools in this district. While there are teachers who want to leave, there are many others who stay. The argument could be made that there are teachers who stay because there might be lower accountability, or they might be close to retirement. However, there are teachers who thrive in hard-to-staff schools. This made me wonder what is it about these schools and these teachers that makes them stay.

The Specific Problem of Practice

This study focuses squarely on examining the resilience of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. The teachers in this study were identified by their assistant principal as resilient based on specific criteria that were supported by the literature. To examine the factors of the participants' capacity for resilience, the study specifically examined personal characteristics such as the participants' approaches to challenges. The study also examined organizational characteristics by asking participants about the challenges and rewards of working at this particular school. The findings in this study connect to social justice because hard-to-staff schools are typically under-resourced and serve communities of concentrated poverty and high-minority student populations (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013; Opfer, 2011). Students in these schools need teachers who are able to support them academically and emotionally (Milner, 2013). However, high turnover makes it more difficult for teachers to build relationships with their students and with one another (Milner, 2013; Papay & Kraft, 2017). The findings of this study are also connected to policy issues of how to hire and how to retain and sustain teachers in hard-to-staff schools. The findings

also inform any improvement efforts that are connected to leadership in hard-to-staff schools as well as any professional learning efforts.

Central Research Questions

In order to examine these factors in this context, the study was guided by the following research questions: *What are the personal factors that strengthen resilience in teachers in hard-to-staff schools?* And, *What organizational factors impact teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools?*

The review of actionable knowledge, designed to address the research questions, is divided into the following sections:

- Defining urban and hard-to-staff schools

- The concept of resilience

- Description of the theoretical framework

- Critical race theory

- A description of factors that maintain white supremacy

- Bandura's theories of self-efficacy and collective efficacy

- Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development

- Examination of teachers' working conditions through the lenses of critical race theory and the ecological model

Chapter Two
Review of Knowledge for Action

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand teacher resilience in urban settings. It is guided by two research questions: *What are the personal factors that strengthen resilience in teachers in hard-to-staff schools?* And, *What organizational factors impact teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools?*

Defining an urban school

In 2012, Richard Milner sought to provide a framework for how researchers, academics, and practitioners could define the term "urban". A synthesis of the literature, as well as his experiences in education, illustrated that the word was being used with various meanings across the field of education. In many cases, it was used to indicate high-minority populations, under-resourced communities, or other perceived shortcomings. Milner suggested a potential typology of urban education that did not include race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status as characteristics of urban. Instead, his definition was based on the size of a geographic region and the density of the population within it. His proposed definition included three categories. The first is "urban intensive". Milner defined this category as a school concentrated in a large, densely populated city such as New York, Atlanta, or Los Angeles. These are cities that have a population of over one million people. The second category is "urban emergent", which is a school in a large city that is smaller than an urban intensive location. Examples of urban emergent cities include Charlotte, North Carolina and Columbus, Ohio. Both urban intensive and urban emergent cities experience scarcity of resources and other infrastructure problems including lack of

transportation, inadequate housing, or higher levels of poverty. However, urban emergent cities experience these problems on a smaller scale. The third category, "urban characteristic", is used to describe schools outside of larger cities that experience some of the challenges faced by schools in urban intensive and urban emergent locations.

His suggested categories are similar to those established by the National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). The organization lists four major locale categories: city, suburb, town, and rural. The city category is divided into three subcategories:

Large: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more

Midsize: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000

Small: Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population less than 100,000 (NCES, 2006).

Understanding hard-to-staff schools

Hard-to-staff schools are schools in which there are a higher number of vacant teacher positions (Opfer, 2011). The specific criteria for a school's hard-to-staff designation are determined by the local school district. While the criteria for this designation vary, they typically include having a higher population of students who receive free or reduced lunch. They might also include underperformance on standardized assessments (Opfer, 2011). Criteria like these help to categorize similar schools across a district, but they do not fully illustrate the reasons why

teachers do not choose to work in those schools or why they only work in them for a short period of time.

In order to understand why certain schools are hard to staff, Eileen Lai Horng (2009) conducted a study to examine the specific characteristics that teachers favor when making decisions about where to work. Horng claimed that much of the literature regarding teacher recruitment and retention inaccurately cited student characteristics as reasons for teacher attrition. She sought to examine teachers' preferences in choosing a school in which to work.

Horng surveyed 531 teachers in a large California school district. This sample represented 49.3% of the teachers in the district. Although it was less than half of the population, the sample accurately reflected the overall teacher population in the district. For example, 83% of survey respondents were female and 83.6% of the total teachers in the district were female. The district served over 25,000 students, 83% of whom were students of color. The majority of the students (64.3%) were Latino or Hispanic. Participants were given hypothetical workplace characteristics and were asked to make decisions based on their preferences of those characteristics. Then, they were asked to report their preferences for the following school characteristics: "salary, class size, administrative support, input on school-wide decisions, commute time, resources for students, school facilities, student performance, student ethnicity, and student socioeconomic status" (pp. 694-5).

Horng used a conjoint analysis methodology review the data. First, she calculated utility values and importance scores for each characteristic. Utility values were defined as the "worth" or desirability of each of the characteristics. These values were interval data and could not be compared across characteristics. For example, the utility value, or worth, of earning an additional $5,000 could not be directly compared to having 15 students in a class. However, the data could

be compared within the same interval. For example, the utility value of earning an additional $5,000 could be compared to earning an additional $2,000. Importance scores were defined as how much influence a characteristic had on a teacher's decision when compared to the other characteristics. For example, if a teacher identified their salary as being more important than the size of their classes, salary would have a higher importance score than class size. The total of all importance scores equaled 100. After utility and importance scores were calculated, responses were averaged and compared across subgroups. Some of the subgroups were based on demographic information including ethnicity and gender. Other subgroups included professional information such as satisfaction with current teaching assignment and number of students taught.

Horng found that teachers identified working conditions and salaries as the most influential characteristics when choosing a school in which to work. Working conditions were defined as the quality of school facilities, support from administrators, and class sizes. These were the three most important characteristics teachers considered when choosing a school. The importance scores also indicated that students' socioeconomic statuses, students' academic performance, and students' ethnicity were the three least important characteristics for teachers when choosing a school. On average, participants preferred schools where at least half of the student population were Latino or Hispanic or Black over schools with a majority white student population. Additionally, the researcher found that teachers preferred schools with a higher population of students from families with lower incomes. There was little variation for these preferences across subgroups.

Non-white students and students from families with lower income are more likely to attend schools that are characterized by poorer working conditions for teachers. When examining why teachers leave certain types of schools, it is often inaccurately concluded that students are

the reason. However, Horng's findings give additional insight into teachers' decisions when choosing a school. She wrote, "[b]ecause school working conditions and student characteristics are so highly correlated, teachers may be choosing to not work with low-income students… and students of color because of the poor working conditions at the schools which these students attend… By avoiding unattractive working conditions, teachers may inadvertently – rather than purposely – be avoiding low-income students…and students of color" (p. 693).

John A. Papay and Matthew A. Kraft (2017) had findings similar to Horng's. Papay and Kraft synthesized previous studies on the impact of school and district climate on teachers' satisfaction and success. They also analyzed the results of various working conditions surveys administered by national organizations as well as those administered by states and local districts. The authors found that high rates of teacher turnover can be attributed to poor working conditions including poor relationships among staff, unresponsive and unsupportive administrators, and low academic and behavioral expectations for students. The authors also found that teachers working in high-minority and high-poverty schools were more likely to report experiencing poor working conditions.

Teachers are partially responsible for the conditions in which they exist. Bronfenbrenner theorized that there is a bidirectional relationship between an individual and their environment, and Papay and Kraft found this in their research. They wrote, "teachers both work in the context and co-construct it with school leaders through their collective actions". When teachers work in conditions they perceive as poor, it can negatively impact their attitudes and beliefs. This, in turn, impacts the environment. Additionally, there is higher turnover in schools in which teachers perceive the working conditions as poor. Turnover contributes to instability which could contribute to poor working conditions in the school and renders it hard-to-staff. While many

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teachers may choose to leave a particular school, it is important to understand why some choose to stay.

Resilience

Resilience is an extremely complex concept and there is a wide range of definitions across the literature (Mansfield, et al., 2012). Ji Hong (2012) defined resilience as "… the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging circumstances" (p. 419). In his study of middle school science teachers who had either never considered leaving the profession or had already left it, Hong sought to understand the similarity between "leavers" and "stayers" in how they negotiate and interpret external environments. Hong posed three questions to guide his study:

> (1) How do leavers and stayers differ in terms of their value, self-efficacy, emotions and beliefs?
>
> (2) How do the psychological constructs function in perceiving and interpreting the external environment?
>
> (3) How are the psychological factors related to teachers' decisions to leave the career? (p. 422)

To gather data to inform the research questions, Hong conducted semi-structured interviews with middle- and high-school science teachers (n=14) who either never considered leaving the teaching profession or who already left. Even though the teachers taught in rural, urban, or suburban schools, the study revealed similarities across the group. For example, both leavers and stayers had strong interests in science and enjoyed working as science teachers. Also, even though both groups described challenges in dealing with disruptive behaviors in the classroom,

the stayers were more confident in their ability to manage misbehavior. Stayers reported having a more supportive administration than leavers.

Although both groups experienced stress and fatigue, they handled it differently. Those who left the profession tended to personalize negative interactions or hold onto them; whereas stayers learned how to set emotional boundaries or allowed positive experiences to buoy them after a string of negative ones.

Hong found other differences between the groups. Teachers who left felt greater personal responsibility for student learning, and those teachers viewed their ability to teach as the most important factor of student success. These teachers blamed themselves for their students' academic underperformance. They attributed their students' lack of academic growth to their own inability to teach. On the other hand, teachers who stayed believed that students have some ownership of their learning. These teachers created opportunities for students to take an active role in their learning and saw that as a reason for their success. Additionally, the teachers who stayed did not blame themselves when their students did not succeed. Hong concluded that there were differences between the two groups in their resilient attitudes and their responses to challenging situations. He found that leavers' low self-efficacy was diminished, and those teachers blamed themselves and experienced burnout. Additionally, these teachers described their personality as not being right for the job and identified personality traits that they believed led to their lack of success. In contrast and across similar situations, stayers maintained high self-efficacy, viewed challenges as something that could be overcome, and established boundaries between the work and themselves.

Christopher Day and Hong (2016) built on Hong's original study to further understand teachers' capacity for emotional resilience. They defined resilience as "the successful adaption to

stressors or risk factors" (p.116) and differentiated resilience from coping. They explained that coping is merely surviving through a difficult circumstance while resilience is managing challenges in a way that leads to success. The authors identified two additional factors of resilience (1) being able to change given the influence of internal and external factors; and (2) reciprocal relationships and a supportive environment. The authors also describe resilience as "…the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers work" (p. 117). This equilibrium requires both intellect and emotion. The researchers used the following questions to frame their study:

1. What kinds of collective challenges do teachers who work in highly disadvantaged urban school settings experience?

2. Are there variations between teachers' capacities for emotional resilience?

3. What is the role of the headteacher [principal] in promoting the capacity for emotional resilience in teachers?

4. How important is the support of family and friends? (p. 117)

To answer the questions, the researchers identified a school in a housing project in the Midlands region of England. A review of the demographics of the school showed that the schools were similar to some of the urban, high-poverty schools in the United States making the findings particularly relevant to the focus of this study. For example, the school received twice the national average for free meals and had an above average special education population and below average attendance and below average reading scores.

Day and Hong interviewed eight teachers and two administrators at the school with a range of years of experience. The teachers had between two and 27 years of experience in the profession and between one and 27 years of experience at the school. With respect to time in the

profession, the principal had 20 years and the assistant principal had seven years of experience. Both were in their first two years as school leaders. While their levels of experience varied, the participants indicated similar challenges in working at that school including social-emotional challenges from students, high-stakes accountability, and maintaining a work-life balance. However, only some of the participants demonstrated strong capacities for resilience.

The findings from the study indicated that teachers' ability to manage stressors, coupled with having strong positive relationships, were greater indicators of resilience than demographic factors such as age or gender.

Patricia A. Doney (2013) presented a similar definition of resilience. She defined teacher resilience as "…the ability to adjust to a variety of situations and to increase one's competence in the face of adversity" (p. 648). Resilience promotes flexibility and the ability to "bounce back" after facing adversity. In her study of four novice science teachers, Doney sought to examine the resilience-building process in beginning teachers to understand why some teachers choose to stay in the profession while others choose to leave. She utilized a case study approach to examine the teachers' reactions to stressors. Two questions were used to frame the study: "How is resilience developed in novice secondary science teachers and how does resilience affect novice teacher retention?" (p. 646).

Doney found that each of the four participants experienced personal and professional stressors. While they handled stress differently, there were similarities in their responses. The first was their use of individual skills. The teachers had the ability to identify specific problems or sources of stress. Then, they used problem-solving skills to find practical solutions or strategies to remove, overcome, or prevent challenges. Also, the teachers were flexible and able to adapt to changes at work such as adjusting to the demands of different principals each year or

being able to take on additional roles or classes when assigned. Finally, the novice teachers maintained a sense of humor and found outlets for their stress that helped them to remain positive.

Although all of these internal personality characteristics were key in their ability to overcome challenges, Doney argued that resilience is not simply an innate personality trait. Similar to Day's and Hong's (2016) findings, interpersonal relationships were identified as a factor for strengthening teacher resilience. Doney asked participants to draw relational maps to illustrate their support networks. The participants described a variety of relationship types which they viewed as supportive either personally or professionally. Each participant had relationships with colleagues at work who supported them in some way. One participant listed front-office staff in her support network because they were able to assist her with maintenance issues in her classroom and could provide her with material resources. Another listed her co-teacher as a source of support. In addition to relationships at work, the participants also identified personal relationships such as those with family members, friends or significant others as being a part of their support networks. These relationships were essential for their ability to cope with or manage stressors.

Doney concluded that resilience is a process that is the result of positively adapting to challenging circumstances. It can be enhanced or inhibited by a variety of factors including the school environment, interpersonal relationships and personal beliefs.

Summary of the Factors that Contribute Teacher Resilience

While there are multiple definitions of resilience, most definitions include the following elements: a process, a way of interacting with events, an ability to overcome challenges, and a

trait (Mansfield et al., 2012). The following figure summarizes the factors and definitions

identified in the studies reviewed:

Table 2.1. Factors that Contribute Teacher Resilience and Its Definition

Researcher(s)	Contributing Factors	Definition (s)
Hong (2012)	- ability to establish boundaries, - maintaining a positive outlook including focusing on positive student interactions instead of negative ones, - high self-efficacy for teaching, especially for managing student behaviors	"… the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging circumstances" (p. 419)
Day and Hong (2016)	- ability to manage stressors, - coupled with having strong positive relationships	- the successful adaption to stressors or risk factors - the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers work
Doney (2013)	- having strong problem-solving skills, - a positive outlook even when experiencing challenges, - strong personal and professional relationships	- the ability to adjust to various situations - the capacity to move forward even after experiencing failure or setbacks

Demands and resources

If resilience is adapting to challenging situations, it is important to understand what potential challenges for teachers are. Cheryl Travers (2017) explained that a teacher can become stressed when they perceive an imbalance between the demands being placed on them and their perceived ability to meet those demands. There are various potential demands on teachers. One possible source of demands is education policies and accountability. According to Travers, teachers feel especially frustrated when policies change frequently. Additionally, teachers feel pressure for their students to perform on standardized assessments which are not always aligned to students' more immediate academic needs. Another potential demand on teachers is the school culture and environment, including teachers' relationships with their students, supervisors, and colleagues. All of these examples are potential demands because some teachers may view them as challenges while others may not.

Risk factors and protective factors

As teachers experience their unique demands, they also experience factors that can hinder or support their development of resilience. Risk factors are potential threats to the development of resilience. Risk factors could include having a heavy workload, difficulty managing student behaviors, or a lack of material resources (Mansfield et al., 2012). Protective factors are attributes and skills that an individual possesses that foster resilience. This includes altruism, a willingness to take risks, and strong interpersonal skills. Another protective factor is the use of coping mechanisms. Doney (2013) identified three types of coping mechanisms. The first is task-oriented and involves the individual attacking the problem. This is not commonly used since most people are unable to identify the source of stress. The second type of coping mechanism is

emotional-oriented. This is when the individual rethinks the problem and attempts to control the meaning of the stress. The last type of coping mechanism is avoidance-oriented. With this type, the individual manages the stress by controlling the stress after it has emerged (Doney, 2013).

Stress and adversity are how people learn protective factors, and it is how they learn resilience. Resilience cannot be learned without stress. (Doney, 2013; Bobek, 2002). In order to become resilient, people must use their resources to help them adjust to negative conditions (Bobek, 2002). Resilience can come from, or be impacted by, a number of sources both personal and organizational.

Strategies for fostering resilience

Antonio J. Castro, John Kelly, and Minyi Shih (2010) conducted a study to understand the strategies of resilience used by novice teachers in high-needs areas. The researchers sought to answer the following questions: "What strategies do new teachers employ in response to adverse situations, and what resources do beginning teachers rely on to overcome challenges and obstacles to teaching?" (p. 623). To answer these questions, the researchers conducted a qualitative, interpretive study of fifteen first-year teachers in high-needs areas. The teachers worked in three different contexts: a high-poverty rural secondary school with high turnover, a large urban school district, and elementary special education classrooms in a suburban district. The teachers were interviewed and were asked to describe two challenges they experienced during their first year of teaching as well as the internal or external resources they used to cope with the challenges. The participants were also asked what strategies they used to overcome the challenge.

The researchers transcribed and coded the interviews using a constant-comparative method. They found that the participants used a variety of strategies that were organized into four categories. The first strategy was seeking help. This included asking for assistance or advice when faced with challenges at work. It also included advocating for resources such as additional books or materials for students. The second type of resilience strategy employed by the teachers was problem-solving which was defined as the specific approach the participants used to address challenges they faced in the classroom. The researchers found that the teachers approached problem-solving in three different ways: "trial and error, consulting others, and researching alternatives" (p. 625) with trial and error being the most frequently used approach amongst the group. The third type of resilience strategy was managing potentially difficult relationships with adults. These relationships could include relationships with co-teachers, colleagues, administrators, or parents. The participants found different ways to manage these relationships successfully. Some found that finding "buffers" or "allies" helped them in facing challenging interactions with others. Buffers could serve as a mediator or simply as another adult present in a meeting to avoid potentially uncomfortable one-on-one interactions. Teachers became allies with coworkers or administrators, and they found this especially helpful in garnering additional resources or other support they needed. The fourth resilience strategy participants used was seeking rejuvenation and renewal. Strategies in this category included teachers finding balance between work and home. Although all of the participants cited some difficulty with maintaining this balance, all of them found ways to take care of themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. This included exercising or engaging in hobbies such as reading or watching a favorite television show. Interpersonal relationships such as those with friends, significant others,

or "teacher friends" were also a source of rejuvenation. Additionally, some of the participants found renewal in the positive relationships they had with their students.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses a theoretical framework that emerged from the literature review, depicted resilience, addressed the research questions, aided in the analyses of the data, and brought focus to the discussion of the findings. Figure 2.2 displays the framework. An explanation of the parts of the framework follows with each theory contributing to the framework described in turn.

Figure 2.1

The Durant Theoretical Framework for Understanding and Fostering Teacher Resilience
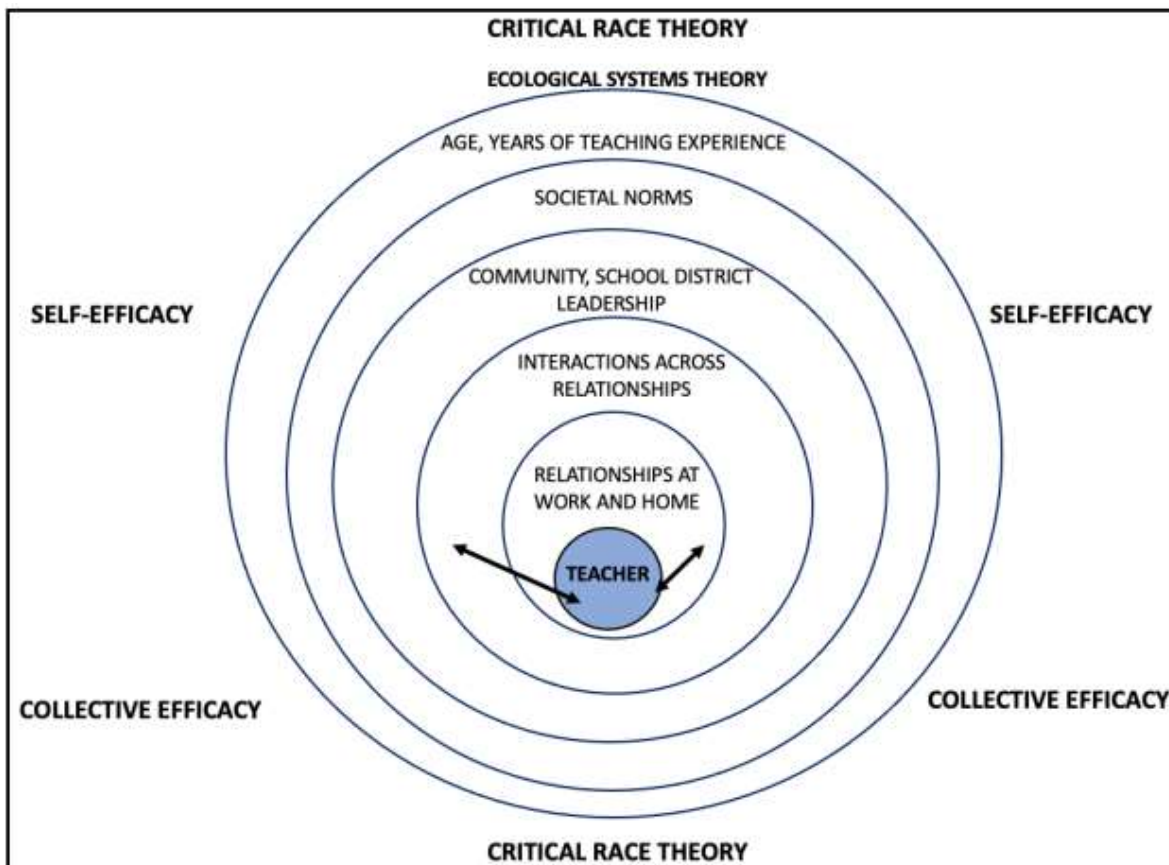
Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory examines the relationship between race, power and racism. It is rooted in critical legal theory and radical feminism. Richard Delgado, one of the pioneers of critical race theory, and Jean Stefancic (2001) outlined five key tenets or themes of the theory.

1. Racism in not an aberration or an accident; it is normal.

2. Oppression of non-white groups serves a greater purpose.

3. Race is a social construct, and its categories are invented, manipulated and retired when convenient.

4. Every person has an identity that is comprised of multiple overlapping, and possibly contradictory, identities.

5. People of color are able to speak about racism in ways that white people cannot.

Each of the five themes will be described in turn.

The first tenet is that racism is not an aberration or an accident; it is normal. The authors described it as, "…the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). They illustrated several areas in which racism continues to keep black people and other people of color oppressed. They wrote,

> …by every social indicator, racism continues to blight the lives of people of color… The prison population is largely black and brown; chief executive officers, surgeons, and university presidents are almost all white… [B]lack families have, on the average, about one-tenth of the assets of their white counterparts… A recent United Nations report showed that African Americans in the United States would make up the twenty-seventh

ranked nation in the world on a combined index of social well-being; Latinos would rank

thirty-third (pp. 10-11).

Critical race theory can be used to understand why such disparities exist.

Another tenet of critical race theory is that the oppression of non-white groups serves a greater purpose. Racism greatly benefits wealthy white people and even marginally benefits the white working class. As a result, neither group is motivated to change racist systems. According to this theme, decisions that seem to benefit black people or other people of color are only made with the interests of whites in mind. The benefits for black people are merely a byproduct of the decision. Critical race theorists often cite the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision as an example of this "interest convergence". As a result of *Brown*, de jure segregation of public schools was outlawed. The purpose of this ruling was not to advance opportunities for black children as many claim; instead, the ruling was the result of international, political, and economic pressure on the American government.

A third tenet of critical race theory is that race is socially constructed and that "…races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient" (p.7). The authors asserted that different groups are racialized differently throughout history. For example, during World War II, Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps while German Americans were not. The authors also extended this theme to the changing depiction of racial groups over time. They wrote, "[i]n one era, a group of color may be depicted as happy-go-lucky, simpleminded, and content to serve white folks." (p.8). This validated whites' support of the institution of slavery. However, "[a] little later, when conditions change, that very same group may appear in cartoons, movies, and other cultural scripts as menacing, brutish, and out of

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control, requiring close monitoring and repression" (p.8), which could be used to validate the perceived need for brutal policing and other oppressive practices.

A fourth tenet of the theory is that every person has an identity that is comprised of multiple overlapping, and possibly contradictory, identities. This concept of intersectionality includes elements of a person's race, ethnicity, gender, and class but also includes elements such as their political leanings and occupation. All of these elements of identity influence the ways in which individuals navigate the world. As such, critical race theorists assert that people of color are able to speak about race and oppression in ways that white people cannot. A final tenet of the theory is that it is important to hear stories about race, racism, and oppression from people of color especially since those stories counter mainstream white narratives.

A critical race theorist studying the field of education could choose to explore disparities in discipline, an overrepresentation of black and brown students in special education, or many other issues in education. Critical race theory could also be used as a lens to interrogate a school's or district's funding, allocation of resources, or other polices.

Milner (2013) used "…critical race theory as an analytic tool to unpack, shed light on, problematize, disrupt, and analyze how systems of oppression, marginalization, racism, inequity, hegemony, and discrimination are pervasively present and ingrained in the fabric of policies, practices, institutions, and systems in education that have important bearings on [all] students…" (p. 1). Milner pointed to data that illustrate a disproportionate number of black and brown children living in poverty in the United States. There is a connection between race and poverty that cannot be ignored.

Milner sought to explore the effects that living in poverty can have on students. He searched for peer-reviewed articles over a ten-year span and used various combinations of the

words "…poverty, education, teaching, learning, and/or social class" (p. 9). He then looked for themes across the articles. In studying out-of-school factors on students' academic performance, Milner found that the areas in which students live have an impact on their educational experience. For example, students in high-poverty communities are more likely to be exposed to toxic environmental conditions. These conditions create developmental, psychological, emotional, and physical problems that create barriers to learning. Additionally, living in an area of economic disadvantage increases the likelihood that a child will attend an under-resourced school. Since property taxes fund school districts, schools in poorer districts or even poorer communities have less resources than schools in other areas. In some school districts, funds are distributed equally regardless of actual need. Milner provided an example of schools receiving funding for English Language Learners. One school might have only a few English Language Learners, but that school could receive the same level of funding as a school with a much higher population of students learning English. There is also inequitable distribution of funds at the federal level. States that spend more per student receive more in Title I funds. However, states that are able to spend more are those that have fewer students living in poverty. Instead of creating more equitable conditions for schools across the country, Title I formulas further exacerbate the disparities that exist in schools.

Students living in poverty have greater levels of what Milner (2013) calls "school dependence" which means that they rely on schools to meet many of their developmental, physical, and emotional needs. This requires teachers in these schools to have an additional level of preparation for working in these contexts. However, teachers in these schools often have fewer years of experience and lower commitment to teaching in schools in under-resourced communities. According to Milner, there is a disproportionate number of teachers with fewer

than five years of experience in these schools. Additionally, there is a higher number of teachers teaching outside of their certification areas in high-poverty schools.

There are also practices within high-poverty schools that impact student academic performance. Milner found that teachers in these schools taught material that was not tailored to their students' individual needs including teaching from a scripted curriculum or teaching from a district-wide mandated curriculum. In many instances, the district-provided curriculum was not culturally relevant to students and lacked academic rigor. Students in these schools are not given a chance to develop or utilize critical thinking or higher order thinking skills. Milner wrote, "[m]uch of the learning centered on completing worksheets and direction following, whereas the more affluent schools allowed students to engage in deeply complex activities where they learned how to problem solve, build and convey their positions and arguments, and engage in critical thinking while building and showcasing their creativity" (p. 32). This perpetuates the status quo and prepares black students from poorer neighborhoods for jobs in which they only need to follow directions. Additionally, schools in areas of high poverty have fewer material resources including books and other supplies. Their libraries are less robust, and they lack up-to-date technology.

Students living in poverty have less access to high-quality teachers, challenging curriculum, and up-to-date technology. All of these factors can have an impact on student learning and academic performance. Additionally, these factors can create harder working conditions for teachers. According to Milner, teachers in these schools are absent more frequently than teachers in schools in other areas. They are also more likely to leave those schools when employment opportunities arise at other schools.

Critical Race Theory and the Socialization Methods that Maintain White Supremacy in America

Since it is argued that racism is not an aberration, it could also be argued then that all Americans are socialized in a racist system. As a result, white people hold power and privilege that other groups do not. Peggy McIntosh (1989) argued that if racism leaves people of color at a disadvantage, it gives white people an advantage. McIntosh listed 26 examples of privilege that she experienced in her daily life. For example,

> 7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
> 8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege (para. 14-15).

Another privilege that McIntosh realized was the ability to avoid learning about the cultures or customs of other groups. McIntosh wrote, "16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion" (para. 23). This ability to ignore other races and cultures maintains whiteness as the status quo. Robin DiAngelo (2020) explained that not only do white people hold the privilege to be ignorant of other races and cultures they are also able to actively avoid conversations about other groups, especially conversations about race. DiAngelo (2020) called this term "white fragility" and defined it as the following:

> Socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that either we are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race. We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism

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as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable—the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. I conceptualize this process as *white fragility* (emphasis in original). Though white fragility is triggered by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement (p. 2).

According to McIntosh (1989) and DiAngelo (2020), white people have the privilege to avoid having uncomfortable conversations about race. This avoidance allows oppressive systems to go uninterrogated and maintains white supremacy. While some avoid this discussion, others may feel a sense of guilt and feel that they need to save those who are marginalized. Since racism is everywhere and is a system into which individuals are socialized, there are particular ideologies that maintain this system.

According to DiAngelo (2020), one dominant ideology that reinforces the narrative of white superiority is that, "[w]hite people are the saviors of black people" (p. 97). This ideology can be seen in schools where teachers believe that their students will not be successful without their white teacher's instruction. DiAngelo identified a similar ideology. She wrote, "[i]ndividual black people can overcome their circumstances, but usually only with the help of white people" (p. 97).

Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy

On the sides of the framework in Figure 2.2 is Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1977; 1997). According to Bandura, self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs about their abilities to perform a task in a specific context. These beliefs lead an individual to determine whether an action should be pursued and for how long effort should be devoted to that action.

Bandura (1997) identified three dimensions of self-efficacy: level, generality, and strength. Level refers to the difficulty or complexity of the task. A teacher with high self-efficacy for teaching a scripted lesson might have lower efficacy beliefs about planning their own lessons or curriculum. The next dimension is generality, which is the degree to which the efficacy beliefs can be generalized and applied to other situations. A high sense of self-efficacy for planning lessons on computation may or may not translate into high self-efficacy for planning lessons for second grade math. The third dimension, strength, is the strength of the efficacy beliefs. The stronger the efficacy, the more likely a person is to persevere after experiencing setbacks or failure in that particular task or context. Someone with weaker efficacy beliefs can be easily overcome by doubt. A teacher with a strong sense of self-efficacy for engaging students in a lesson about editing a paragraph will continue to teach even when some parts of that lesson fall flat.

Bandura (1977) identified four factors that influence a person's efficacy beliefs: physiological states, verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, and personal mastery experiences. The first factor, physiological states, is how individuals identify the physical sensations they experience. For example, an increased heart rate could be identified as excitement which raises self-efficacy. That same sensation could also be identified as anxiety which lowers self-efficacy. While this can affect an individual's self-efficacy, its impact is the lowest of the four factors. The second factor is verbal persuasion which is when others verbally convey their expectations of the

individual. This could include words of encouragement or expressions of doubt. While verbal persuasion can influence one's efficacy beliefs, its effect varies. Words of encouragement or doubt are only influential when the individual believes the speaker has credibility. The third factor is vicarious experience. Seeing other people in similar positions successfully complete a similar task can have an impact on a person's efficacy beliefs. The final factor is personal mastery experiences. When confronted with a new challenge, people draw on their past experiences with similar tasks. Prior successes can contribute to a higher sense of self-efficacy in facing the new challenge, whereas past failures can cause lower self-efficacy as well as promote the belief that they will fail again. Personal mastery experiences have the greatest impact on an individual's feelings of self-efficacy for a given task in a specific context.

According to Bandura, there is a relationship between efficacy beliefs and behavior. A person's efficacy beliefs determine the activities they choose to undertake. People with low self-efficacy for a particular task avoid that task since they believe that they might fail. They see challenging tasks in that area for which they have low self-efficacy as threats. If they must complete a task for which they have low self-efficacy, they do so with a weak commitment to the perceived difficult task and are more likely to give up. People with high self-efficacy for a specific task, view challenges with that task as something to overcome. Because they believe they can succeed based on past performance, for example, they put forth higher levels of effort and have stronger commitment to the task even with increased levels of difficulty. Bandura describes this high level of commitment and persistence as an "affirmative orientation" (1997). People with an affirmative orientation also set challenging goals, approach potential challenges with confidence, and rather than give up, they increase their level of effort when faced with setbacks.

It follows then that self-efficacy influences not only the action that a person will take but also the level of effort they will exert while performing it. People are more likely to attempt an activity that they believe they can perform successfully. Bandura (1997) described the steps of "self-influence" that takes place when an individual encounters a potentially challenging situation. First, they analyze the situation and consider the ways to approach it. Then, they judge their ability to be successful and estimate the potential outcomes of their action or inaction. Then, they act. Action, however, is not the end of the process. The process includes the reflection that takes place when the person considers how their thoughts and perceptions either helped or hurt them in managing the situation. The self-influence process ends with the person's behavior or thinking changed in the future. The person experiences either an increase positive self-efficacy for the task or increased negative self-efficacy for the task. If the person engages in the task again, the cycle repeats.

Megan Tschannen-Moran and Anita Woolfolk Hoy (2006) conducted a study to understand the sources of teacher self-efficacy beliefs; they focused specifically on the influence of verbal persuasion and mastery experiences. For the study, the researchers operationalized verbal persuasion as support from any member of the school community including administrators or students' parents. Mastery experience was defined as "…a sense of satisfaction with one's past teaching successes" (p. 945). The researchers also sought to examine the relationship between school contexts and teachers' efficacy beliefs. Finally, the researchers sought to identify any differences in the self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers.

The researchers surveyed 255 teachers in Ohio and Virginia. The group's teaching experience ranged from one to 29 years with an average of 8.2 years. Eighty-seven percent of the participants were white, and 66% were female. The average age of the participants was 35. The

teachers provided other demographic information including the grade levels they taught as well as if they taught in a rural, suburban, or urban setting. Then, the participants completed surveys that were designed to assess their sense of efficacy for teaching. Efficacy was measured by the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), which is comprised of 24 items along a nine-point continuum. The tool measures efficacy across teaching tasks including instruction, classroom management, and student engagement. Then, participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with their overall professional performance for that school year. The survey also measured their perceptions of support and their satisfaction with their professional practice. In addition to completing the items on the TSES, participants were asked to rate the material resources at their school on a scale of one to nine with one being nonexistent and nine being excellent. They also rated the perceived quality of support they received from administrators, colleagues, parents, and communities. Support from administration included principals providing materials to teachers as well as providing a buffer between teachers and "disruptive factors" in the school. Principal support could also be interpreted as principals giving teachers autonomy over their classrooms. Support from colleagues included being able to solicit help or advice from other teachers in the school. Support from families and the community was those groups' involvement in classroom activities. All of these items gave the researchers information about the teachers' beliefs and the contexts in which they teach.

During their data analyses, the researchers divided participants into two groups: novice and experienced. The researchers defined novice as having three years or fewer of teaching experience, and they defined experienced as having four or more years of experience. Novice teachers' survey results indicated lower general teaching self-efficacy and lower efficacy beliefs on the subscales for instruction and classroom management. The researchers' T-test results

indicated that novice teachers also indicated having less resources (5.98 vs. 6.2), less support from administrators (5.97 vs. 6.54), and lower satisfaction with their performance (6.94 vs. 7.55). The strongest contextual variable for novice teachers was resources, although it had little impact on the efficacy beliefs of experienced teachers. Novice teachers believed that their access, or lack of access, to resources had the most impact on their ability to teach. Mastery experiences had a moderate impact on the efficacy beliefs of both groups, although the correlation among novice teachers was slightly higher. The correlation coefficient r was .46 versus. r = .36. This confirms Bandura's assertion that mastery experiences have a significant impact on efficacy beliefs. Verbal persuasion had no correlation to novice teachers' efficacy beliefs. This also confirms Bandura's findings that verbal persuasion has a weaker impact on self-efficacy. However, support from colleagues and the community positively influenced novice teachers' beliefs.

Bandura's Theory of Collective Efficacy

The sides of the framework (Figure 2.2) represent collective efficacy—an expansion of Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1993; 1997). Bandura defined collective efficacy as "…a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (p. 477). Collective efficacy is specific beliefs shared by the group about their ability to work together to perform a specific task. Similar to self-efficacy, a group's beliefs in their collective efficacy about a specific task in a specific context influence the goals they set, how they go about achieving those goals, and how much effort they will exert to achieve them. These beliefs also influence how long people will persist in the face of challenges or failure with those specific tasks in those specific contexts. The beliefs also influence how members of the group work together. People do not work in isolation, and this is especially true

for members of a school community. In order for collective goals to be achieved, people must believe and trust that they can work together to achieve those specific goals in their contexts. Bandura (1993) explained, "[t]he strength of families, communities, organizations, social institutions, and even nations lie partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort" (p. 477).

There is a reciprocal relationship between collective efficacy beliefs and school culture (Bandura, 1993). Although individual teachers are responsible for students' progress in specific areas, the collective actions of the teachers have an impact on student achievement. Bandura (1993) found that, "…the higher proportion of students from low socioeconomic levels and the higher the student turnover and absenteeism, the weaker the staff's beliefs in their efficacy to achieve academic progress and the poorer the schools fare academically" (p. 142). However, Bandura found that when teachers believe that they have the skills and resources necessary to be successful in teaching students from under-resourced communities, their students see significant gains and higher academic success. Having high efficacy beliefs leads teachers to set higher goals for students. Teachers' high efficacy beliefs also propel them forward in the face of setbacks or failure.

Megan Tschannen-Moran, Serena Salloum, and Roger Goddard (2014) synthesized several of their earlier studies as well as other research on collective efficacy in schools. They specifically explored literature about teachers' collective beliefs about their efficacy for fostering student learning. The researchers also examined literature on teachers' beliefs about the trustworthiness of students and their families. These two beliefs can be linked to cultural norms in schools including the level of "academic press" and the degree of teachers' professionalism.

Academic press is defined as "…a clear emphasis on academics in the school and that all students are held to high standards" (p. 6).

The researchers found that teachers' expectations and behaviors are influenced by their beliefs about their students and their ability to teach those students. When teachers trust their students, they believe their students are respectful, competent, and responsible. They believe they can teach those students. As a result, those teachers place an emphasis on setting rigorous goals and expectations, and they create classroom environments that are conducive to student success. In turn, students in these classes achieve at higher levels which confirms their teachers' beliefs about them and strengthens teachers' efficacy beliefs. The researchers cited several studies in which teachers' trust of students was a significant factor in high levels of student learning. Similarly, the researchers indicated that when teachers have positive beliefs about students' families, they engage in more authentic and robust interactions with them. When this happens across a school, a culture is created in which teachers have high beliefs about their students and about their own abilities to teach their students.

These beliefs also influence teachers' professionalism. The researchers defined professionalism in teaching as:

> …teacher perceptions that their colleagues take their work seriously, demonstrate a high level of commitment, and go beyond minimum to meet the needs of students. In schools with a high degree of teacher professionalism, teachers respect their colleagues' competence and expertise. They work cooperatively with one another, are clearly engaged in the teaching process, and [are] enthusiastic about their work (p. 7).

The researchers found that when a school has a culture of high expectations for students and staff, teachers must have professional trust in their colleagues across various contexts in order for

those expectations to be met. Additionally, the researchers found that if a teacher has low perceptions of their colleagues' professionalism, the teacher's collective efficacy beliefs will be low. However, if a teacher sees their colleagues working hard planning lessons and giving students feedback and their students making academic gains, they will have greater professional trust in them and their instructional strategies and have higher collective efficacy beliefs. If teachers discuss challenges as problems to be solved, there is greater professional trust and teachers' collective efficacy is raised. However, the researchers noted that in a culture where teachers blame the students for their failures, there is lower professional trust and lower collective efficacy. Teachers' beliefs create a school culture that is either positive or negative. Then, teachers and students behave in accordance with the norms of the culture that was created. As a result, teachers' beliefs are confirmed. Teachers' self-efficacy and collective efficacy beliefs for being successful in under-resourced urban schools have a direct relationship with teachers' feelings of resilience in that setting.

Centering the Framework: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development

The center of this framework utilizes Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological model of human development. Bronfrenbrenner's model explores the multi-directional and reciprocal relationships between individuals and their environments. Bronfenbrenner defined the ecological environment as "…a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (p. 514). Each structure, or system as he also named them, is comprised of relationships, interactions, or events. He initially identified four structures in the following arrangement: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. He later added the chronosystem to the model (1979).

In first two systems in the ecological model, the individual has a direct interaction with the environment. The first level of the ecological environment, the microsystem, is comprised of an individual's immediate environments and can include home and school. The next level is the mesosystem which Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined as "a system of microsystems" (p. 515). The mesosystem level is comprised of the interactions between the person and at least two of the microsystems in which the person exists. For example, an interaction within the mesosystem could be when an individual asks their spouse for advice about a situation at work. This is the interaction between the microsystems of work and home.

The next level in Bronfrenbrenner's ecological environment is the exosystem which is comprised of organizations and other social structures that impact the individual. The individual does not directly interact with this system. Instead, activities and events at this level have a trickle-down effect on the individual. An example of an exosystem would be a city council. While the individual does not interact with that particular group, the decisions made by the council have an impact on the individual. Beyond the exosystem is the macrosystem which Bronfenbrenner (1977) referred to as the "blueprints" for the other systems (p. 515). This level is comprised of the overarching beliefs, rules, and norms that dictate interactions within the other systems. While it is furthest from the individual, it still has an impact on the individual since it is the cultural context in which the individual exists. Gender roles and other societal norms are formed at the macrosystem level and influence the other systems in the ecological environment.

In his last iteration of his model, Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem (1979). This level is the dimension of time in which the individual is situated. This could be an era in chronological or historical time such as during the COVID-19 pandemic or after a natural disaster. The chronosystem could also be the events that occur during a biological time such as

infancy or puberty. Additionally, this system could include personal events in the life of an individual such as having a baby or starting a new job.

The ecological model can be applied to the lives of teachers since it reflects the complexity of the factors that influence teachers' resilience. Dionne I. Cross and Hong (2012) explored the relationship between teachers' emotions and their environments. They also sought to understand how teachers negotiate the emotions experienced in, and the tensions between, the ecological environments in which they exist. The researchers conducted a case study of two teachers in a high-poverty, high-minority urban elementary school. The teachers who participated had experience working in this particular setting. One of them had ten years of experience while the other had 20. Both teachers reported high levels of joy, optimism, and commitment to their practice. Additionally, both teachers were nominated for an award that recognizes successful teachers of black students, and one of the teachers won the award.

The researchers conducted interviews with the teachers and observed their classes in order to understand the interactions and events that had an emotional impact on them. Then, they organized their findings in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's model. In the first two levels of the teachers' ecological environments, the microsystem and mesosytem, the participants engaged in interactions that impacted their emotions both positively and negatively. Cross and Hong (2012) defined the microsystem as the school where the teachers worked and included interactions with students, parents and colleagues. They defined the mesosystem as the connection between multiple microsystems. In the microsystem, the teachers identified their warm, caring relationships with students as a source of joy. On the contrary, the teachers reported that interactions with parents could be a source of stress or frustration when parents violated teachers' personal or professional boundaries. Interactions with colleagues could also be a source of

frustration since the participants viewed their colleagues' attitudes toward their students as indifferent or apathetic. Though their relationships with peers were strained, the participants viewed their relationships with administrators positively because of their supportive nature. At the level of the mesosystem, there was interaction between the microsystems of colleagues and administrators. Administrators often served as a buffer between the participants and their colleagues whenever conflicts arose.

While the teachers did not have direct interaction with the other levels of the ecological environment, they were still impacted by them emotionally. The exosystem, which participants identified as the school's location in an under-resourced area, was also a source of stress. The researchers described the effects of poverty on members of a community. Cox and Darling-Hammond (as cited in Cross & Hong, 2012) identified several of the effects of living in areas of concentrated poverty. "Urban, low SES communities are usually associated with negative characteristics such as high levels of poverty and unemployment rates, high ratio of children to adults, elevated high school drop-out rates and high levels of illiteracy" (Cross & Hong, 2012, p. 963). These effects impacted students which, in turn, impacted the teachers. They experienced frustration and disappointment when caregivers were unable or seemingly unwilling to assist with academics at home. However, the teachers were empathetic and reminded themselves that parents were limited in the ways they could help their children.

Poverty was also a factor at the level of the macrosystem. Cross and Hong (2012) operationalized the macrosystem as "the major overarching institutions in the society" (p. 959). The elements in the macrosystem in the participants' ecological environments included a lack of jobs and a high unemployment rate in the city where the school was located. This especially affected the school's neighborhood making it an area of concentrated poverty. There were also

long-lasting generational, historical, and societal elements that had an impact on the teachers. They identified a cycle of poverty that they felt they were unable to break. Additionally, the impact of slavery and decades of systemic oppression were still visible in this community. Similar to their experiences and emotions at the exosytem level, the elements of the macrosystem caused the teachers to feel frustrated. However, the teachers were motivated and optimistic about the opportunities and experiences they could provide for their students. Their "psychological biographies" (p. 964) allowed them to navigate interactions and experiences across their ecological environments in a positive way.

Deborah Price and Faye McCallum (2015) also used Bronfenbrenner's model to analyze teachers' emotions and well-being. They sought to identify ecological factors that impacted pre-service teachers' well-being as well as investigate the teachers' perceptions of those factors. The researchers conducted an interpretive qualitative student study of 120 final year pre-service teachers in a Bachelor of Education program at the University of South Australia. There were 29 men and 91 women in the study, and the average age of the participants was 24. Participants responded to an open-ended survey based on two questions that probed: "…first, their (1) perceptions of the factors influencing their well-being as beginning teachers; and second, (2) the strategies they would employ to promote their teacher well-being and 'fitness'" (p. 199). The responses were coded, and themes were analyzed according to Bronfenbrenner's model.

While Cross and Hong (2012) focused on the systems within the teachers' professional lives, Price's and McCallum's (2015) survey allowed for participants to include elements from their professional and personal lives. The researchers operationalized the pre-service teachers' microsystem as their direct environment that included the school environment, their relationships at home, and their friendships. One source of negative emotions at this level were the high

expectations placed on them from administrators and other staff as well as from their students' families. To counteract these feelings, the pre-service teachers found it necessary to maintain confidence, self-esteem and a positive outlook. They also identified having positive relationships with students and engaging in collaborative relationships with peers as ways of coping with negative emotions.

Navigating the interactions within the mesosystem was also a source of unpleasant emotions for participants. The researchers noted that "…teachers need to juggle not only the multidirectional influences and relationships within the mesosystem, but also the complex emotional responses associated" (p. 203). The participants employed strategies within this level to manage stress and other challenges to their well-being. Many of the participants cited the importance of family and friends in supporting them through challenges at work, including providing advice and solutions to help pre-service teachers manage difficult situations. Additionally, pre-service teachers created boundaries for themselves to keep their work from consuming their personal lives.

Although further away in the ecological environment, the exosystem and macrosystem still had a considerable impact on teachers. Decisions made within the exosystem level greatly affected the participants' well-being. They cited changes in education policies and initiatives as causing them to feel disempowered and undervalued. Additionally, and similar to the teachers in Cross and Hong's (2012) study, events in the school's community had a negative impact on pre-service teachers' emotions. One participant gave the following example. A major employer was forced to close, which left many community residents unemployed. The closure negatively impacted students and their families by increasing stress in the home. This caused changes in student behavior and academic performance, which created additional challenges for the pre-

service teachers. The pre-service teachers felt greater emotional involvement in their students'

lives, and they experienced feelings of failure when they could not meet their students'

emotional needs. Elements of the macrosystem were also a source of negative emotions.

Society's unfavorable beliefs about teachers and teaching weakened the participants' feelings of

self-worth.

While there were sources of anxiety in the level of the chronosystem such as romantic

breakups and natural disasters, participants also found emotional comfort in this system as well.

Events that impacted teachers' emotions positively included major sporting events and royal

weddings. The pre-service teachers in this study identified sources of stress across all structures

within their ecological environments. However, they also found sources of positivity and coping

strategies across the systems as well. The participants recognized that they needed to maintain

their physical, mental, and emotional well-being in order to be positive and productive within

their microsystems.

What follows is an exploration of the relationships between teacher resilience and the

teachers' environments. The section focuses on the intersections of critical race theory, and

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model and how they work in concert to explain and analyze teacher

resilience, especially in hard-to-staff schools.

The Relationship Between Critical Race Theory and Teachers' Working Conditions

It is important to understand all of the factors that promote or hinder the development of

resilience. There is a "constellation of organizational features that shape teachers' and students'

daily experiences" (Papay & Kraft, 2017). Since these factors vary widely, I have decided to

organize them in a style similar to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model. This organization is in

keeping with Ungar's (2011) suggestion of using Bronfenbrenner's model in order to better understand the relationship between resilience, the individual, and the social and physical environments. Critical race theory is essential in understanding the ecologies of teachers, especially those working in high-poverty communities and under-resourced schools. Since racism permeates every element of our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), it must be present in schools. Additionally, since there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the connection could be made that race and racism impact the ways in which individuals interact with their environments. That said, race and racism also influence the reciprocal relationship between teachers and the schools in which they work. In this section, I will illustrate the connections between critical race theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as they relate to teachers in high-poverty schools.

At the center of Bronfenbrenner's model is the self or the individual. The self includes all personal characteristics including an individual's age and gender (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Critical race theorists would argue that a person's race is an aspect of the self since all individuals are racial beings. This influences the ways in which individuals perceive and interpret the world in which they exist. In schools, white teachers' experiences as being white in America influence the ways in which they view their black and brown students. These perceptions and beliefs are influenced by all of the other levels of the ecological model.

The first level of Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979) model is the microsystem. At this level, the individual interacts with the people and situations in their direct environment. Part of a teacher's microsystem is the school where they work (Price & McCallum, 2015; Cross & Hong, 2012). Schools with potentially challenging conditions are typically schools in areas of concentrated poverty which are areas that are highly populated with black and brown families

(Milner, 2012; Horng, 2009). Additionally, schools in poorer black neighborhoods have fewer material resources including access to books and technology (Milner, 2012). White teachers bring their own biases and beliefs about poor, black children, and those biases impact the way teachers interact with their students. Additionally, according to Bronfenbrenner, there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environments. For example, if teachers believe that their students are incapable of completing rigorous work, teachers might prepare lessons that do not challenge their students. In turn, these interactions influence the ways in which students engage with their teachers. Students who feel that their teachers have low expectations of them are less likely to perform at higher academic levels (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). These interactions also impact how white teachers view their and their colleagues' abilities to teach black children. If white teachers believe that their poor black students are incapable of meeting high academic or behavioral expectations, they will be reluctant to hold students to those expectations. On a larger scale, a collection of these beliefs and interactions creates a negative school culture (Bandura, 1993; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). The culture of a school is an element of the working conditions, and teachers are less likely to stay in a school with a negative culture (Papay & Kraft, 2017). High turnover also contributes to poorer working conditions, and the cycle is perpetuated (Papay & Kraft, 2017).

The mesosystem is the environment that influences the individual, but the individual does not exist within it (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, teachers are impacted by the areas in which their schools are located even if the teachers live somewhere else (Cross & Hong, 2012). Schools that are harder to staff are most often located in areas of concentrated poverty (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2012). Critical race theorists would argue that this is not by chance. Instead, these neighborhoods were carefully constructed through a series of

policies and practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Not only are the schools in these communities under-resourced, but the neighborhoods also lack resources such as public transportation, health care facilities, and grocery stores with fresh food (Milner, 2012). Students from these communities tend to be more dependent on their teachers to not only meet their academic needs but to meet their physical, social, and emotional needs as well (Milner, 2012). This could reinforce white teachers' biases and stereotypes about their black students. Also, if teachers are unequipped to meet these needs, they might feel overwhelmed and believe that they will not be successful in teaching this population of students. Teachers' specific beliefs about their abilities to meet the various needs of their black or brown students influence their interactions with students including the material they choose to teach or the strategies they use to handle challenging student behaviors (Bandura, 1993; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). Students respond to teachers' decisions which reinforces teachers' initial beliefs (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). Additionally, families experiencing poverty might not be able to participate in schools in a traditional way (Cross & Hong, 2012; Milner, 2012). For example, a parent who works two jobs might have difficulty attending a parent-teacher conference because of their work schedules. This could establish or reinforce white teachers' beliefs that black families do not care about education which, in turn, influences the relationships the teacher has with their students and their students' families (Milner, 2012; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014).

The next level in Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979) model is the exosystem, which is made up of social structures that impact the individual. In the ecology of a teacher, the school district is an element of the exosystem (Cross & Hong, 2012). Critical race theorists would argue that school district policies are tools of systemic racism. When districts hire teachers to work at hard-to-staff schools, then allow them to transfer to "better" schools a year later, schools remain hard-

to-staff. Additionally, when schools receive funds equally and not according to need, this perpetuates the disparity between schools (Milner, 2012). As a result, schools with predominately black students continue to be denied necessary resources at school.

The third system in a teacher's ecology is the macrosystem. The macrosystem is the rules and norms that create the "blueprint" for the rest of the system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is where the construct of race and racialized identities are created. If a society looks down upon black people especially those experiencing poverty, the individuals in the society will be socialized to internalize those beliefs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This impacts teachers' individual beliefs about the students, schools, and communities they serve.

The last system in Bronfenbrenner's model is the chronosystem. This is the time in which an individual exists (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An example of the chronosystem could be the summer of 2020 when people across the world began to acknowledge the systems of racial oppression in America. Another example could be during the COVID-19 shutdown when black students experiencing poverty did not have the technology required for them to access their education. The chronosystem could also be a person's age or the point in an individual's career journey (Price & McCallum, 2015). For example, a newer teacher might face additional challenges when compared to a more veteran teacher.

Taken together, the policies, procedures, and practices in each system create communities of poverty and under-resourced schools. They also foster teachers' beliefs about students, families, and communities. Those beliefs influence how teachers behave as well as how they perceive and interact with their environments. In this study, I would like to explore why despite these conditions, some teachers choose to stay in schools that many others consistently choose to leave.

Chapter Three
Methods

Introduction/Purpose

Schools in communities of higher levels of poverty often have more challenging working conditions (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013). Due to the working conditions, teachers leave these schools at higher rates than schools in more affluent communities. These schools are usually identified by districts as being hard-to-staff because of their inability to keep teachers. Instead of exploring why teachers leave these schools, I explored explanations for why teachers stay in them.

The school selected for this study is located in an area of concentrated poverty. The schools' student population is at least 90% black, 90% students of color, and 80% economically disadvantaged. Schools with these demographics are typically designated as hard-to-staff in urban districts (Milner, 2013). Hard-to-staff schools have a higher number of vacant positions when compared to other schools in a district (Opfer, 2011). Additionally, these vacancies persist for more than one year. While hard-to-staff schools share similar student and neighborhood characteristics, working conditions are often a reason why teachers consistently leave certain schools (Horng, 2009; Papay & Kraft, 2017).

Research Question(s)

The methods used were designed to address the following research question(s):

- o What are the personal factors that strengthen resilience in teachers in hard-to-staff schools?

- o What organizational factors impact teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools?

Recruitment of Participants

Six teachers were recruited to participate in the study, and three teachers submitted complete responses. These teachers met indicators of resilience in hard-to-staff schools. In order to recruit these participants, I emailed one assistant principal from an urban school in Western Pennsylvania that is hard-to-staff to identify four to six teachers for this study. The school leader was asked to identify classroom teachers who set high academic expectations for students and who demonstrate at least four of the following indicators of resilience that resulted from the literature review:

The ideal participant is a teacher who:
- Has been at the school for over three years
- Is able to bounce back after experiencing a setback
- Persists in the face of challenges
- Expresses that challenges are something that can be overcome
- Has boundaries between work and home
- Has positive relationships with students (and possibly with families)

(Bandura, 1977; Castro et al., 2010; Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012; Price & McCallum, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 2014)

Data Collection

Once the assistant principal identified the potential participants, she contacted the teachers directly with an email that I composed (See Appendix A). The email explained my study and its purpose and invited them to participate in the study. By asking the administrator to contact teachers, I was able to keep the list of potential participants anonymous for the study. I hoped to get responses from at least six of the teachers.

Participants received a link to a survey housed on the Qualtrics platform. The first screen of the survey displayed the consent form (See Appendix C). Participants were notified that by clicking "next" to begin and complete the survey, they were indicating their consent to participate. The survey existed online for 14 days from the date the link was sent. At the end of

seven days, the assistant principal sent a reminder email along with the link to all potential

participants, including those who had already begun the survey. Teachers were given the option

to take the survey at their leisure within a two-week window to increase participation.

Conducting the survey on line mitigated the scheduling challenges that might have arisen from

coordinating virtual interviews with each participant. Participants were not asked to provide

contact information, and all participants' names and any other identifying information were kept

anonymous. Because of the anonymous nature of the data, participants were free to withdraw

their data at any time up until they hit "submit"; and, were informed that once they submitted

their completed survey, they would be unable to withdraw their data. The full texts of each

participants' responses are included (See Appendices D, E, F).

Data Collection Instruments
Instrument One was a survey comprised of 16 questions.

The survey questions are as follows:

Career/School Questions
1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching at this school?
3. What do you enjoy about working at this school?
4. Why did you stay at this school after your first year there? Why do you continue to stay?
5. What is your relationship with your students? How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.
6. What are your expectations for your students' success?
7. Describe your relationships with your principal and assistant principals. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.
8. Describe your relationships with your coworkers. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.
9. What are the major challenges you face at this school? Why are these the major challenges and how do you navigate those challenges?
10. Describe a time when you faced a challenge at work. What was the challenge? How did you handle it? What was the result?
11. How is your approach to handling difficulties at school the same or different than your approach to difficulties in your life outside of school? Explain or give examples.
12. Do you feel you have the necessary resources to support you and your students?

Personal History
1. What experiences have you had with the cultures represented in your school's community?
2. How have those experiences informed your approach to your practice?
3. How have those experiences informed your relationships with your students?
4. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

Data Analyses Methods

I used the participants' responses to paint a portrait of each participant in the form of a case study to identify indicators of resilience or contributors to resilience by person that grew from the literature review. Then, I performed a second level of analysis to compare and contrast responses across cases.

For the first and second level of the analyses I compared and contrasted data from open-ended survey and interview items to analyze the responses through the general interpretive process of close reading. During the first level of the analysis, I produced a portrait of each participant in the form of a case study. The close reading process involves identifying patterns of thinking and acting in order to discover regularities and uncover anomalies (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana 2014). I especially focused on the parts of each case that aligned with indicators of resilience or contributors to resilience grew from the literature review and that include:

- Relationships with administrators, colleagues, and students

- Self-efficacy beliefs

- Collective efficacy beliefs

- Ability to manage stress

- Ability to establish boundaries between work and home

(Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1997; Castro et al., 2010; Cross & Hong, 2012; Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012; Price & McCallum, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 2014)

During the second level of analysis, I also employed close reading to compare and contrast the responses across the cases. Because of the nature of the text, this involved thematic coding categories that were analyzable by writing propositions about meaning. I took several passes through the data to test the trustworthiness of information. I identified the emerging themes (Gibbs, 2007) culling through constant comparative analysis to examine the similarities and differences contained in the responses and to produce a comprehensive account of the findings.

Chapter Four
Description of Findings

The presentation of the findings is organized at first by participant. Then those findings are compared and contrasted to highlight similarities, differences, and omissions.

Teacher A

Teacher A has been a teacher for seven years, four of which have been at this school. Teacher A mentioned their relationships with students throughout their responses to the questions on the survey. They indicated that their relationships with students is what they enjoy about working at this school and why they continue to stay there. Teacher A described their relationships with students as *"strong"* and *"close"*. They described their role in these relationships as that of a *"caregiver"* and a *"mama bear"*. Teacher A recognized that their caring nature is a strength that they leverage in their relationships with students. While they described loving relationships with students, they also described their high expectations for them. They wrote, *"My students are expected to work as hard as they can every day and to communicate the challenges or needs they have with me openly so that I can help them work in a flexible way"*. Teacher A also *"...expect[s] them to give everything they are able at any one moment and to trust me to love them and challenge them"*. Teacher A acknowledged that the boundaries between work and home are blurred. However, they are *"...constantly fighting to create personal time and to leave my school life at school"*.

Teacher A reported having positive relationships with their colleagues. They described having a *"...team of very supportive, respectful and close coworkers"*. Teacher A claimed that they *"...rely on [their] colleagues for support"*. However, there are some teachers at the school

that Teacher A described as being *"...extremely depressing and difficult to be around"* because these teachers *"...drain [their] energy and choose to do the least possible"*. Support from colleagues is important to Teacher A in helping them navigate a variety of challenges they identified at the school including *"[c]onstant criticism from the district, community, and administration about school achievement...very poor facilities,... and high levels of transience"*. Relationships with the principal and assistant principal as well as repeated turnover in these positions were also cited as being a challenge. Teacher A wrote that because of the constant changes in school leadership, it *"...becomes difficult to become close to one team to work well together"*.

Teacher A gave an example of a specific challenge they faced at work and how they overcame it. They wrote:

> *A course that was requested and is needed according to the course catalog was removed. My students struggled in the higher-level class, and I met with administration to request that the course be offered again to meet the needs. I spent a great deal of time working with administration to explain the need and to help build rosters. I was assured the class would be offered. It was not.*

Teacher A's focus on the needs of their students and their advocacy for their students during this challenge highlights their caring feelings. While Teacher A takes a proactive approach to solving problems, they indicated that they still need support from their colleagues and their spouse for problems at school and at home.

Teacher A identifies as white and has taught in schools with predominately black student populations for most of their career. Teacher A seeks opportunities to learn about their students and their students' cultures. They wrote, *"I spend time at after school activities, talking with*

students' families and with students. I seek out trainings and literature to expose myself and deepen my knowledge and understanding of their cultures". Teacher A described themselves as being*"...highly reflective and constantly monitoring and adjusting based on student responses and needs"*. Teacher A stated that their pedagogical practices are intertwined with their relationships with students.

Contributing Factors to Teacher A's Resilience

Teacher A exhibited several factors of resilience that were identified in the literature. The first is having strong positive relationships with students (Day & Hong, 2016). Teacher A wrote that they *"love"* their students, and they described the relationships with their students as *"rewarding"*, *"strong"*, and *"close"*. Teacher A also exhibited a strong sense of self-efficacy for building relationships with students and for leading those students to success. High self-efficacy for teaching was identified by Hong (2012) as a factor that contributes to resilience. Additionally, Teacher A focuses on positive interactions with their coworkers and avoids colleagues who are negative. They described having coworkers who, *"...drain [their] energy and choose to do the least possible, which [they] find extremely depressing and difficult to be around"*. According to Hong (2012), focusing on positive interactions is also a factor that contributes to resilience. Teacher A's strong positive relationships with their colleagues is another factor of resilience (Doney, 2013). Teacher A describes some of their coworkers as *"...a team of very supportive, respectful and close coworkers"*. While they indicated that they don't have the resources they need at work, Teacher A has a supportive network of colleagues and family. By relying on this network, Teacher A is using their resources to adjust to negative conditions (Bobek, 2002), and strengthening their resilience. Another factor of resilience Teacher

A exhibits is the problem-solving skill of seeking help and advocating for resources (Castro et al., 2010). When they knew there was a course their students needed to take, Teacher A worked to try to get the course established. Although the course never came to be, Teacher A does not plan on leaving the school.

An Examination of Teacher A's Responses Through the Lens of the Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

Teacher A's comments reveal many factors that both hinder and support their resilience. I will use Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977; 1979) to organize them.

The level of the chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) included the level of the chronosystem to the model and theorized that the time in which an individual exists is influential. "Time" could be historical, chronological, biological, or personal. Teacher A did not indicate any biological, historical, or personal risk or protective factors to their resilience in the chronosystem. While these factors may be present in Teacher A's ecology, they were not mentioned in any of the responses. Teacher A has been a teacher for seven years, and they have been at this school for four. It is possible that teaching here for several years has had an indirect impact on Teacher A's practices in the classroom. In a study of 154 vocational teachers, Jean-Louis Berger, Celine Girardet, Cynthia Vaudroz, and Marcel Crahay (2018) found that the teachers' years of experience increased their feelings of self-efficacy for classroom management as well as their self-efficacy for engaging students. Teacher A's time at this school or years in the profession could influence their feelings of self-efficacy and cause them to have more positive experiences

at work. Teacher A's years of experience could also influence their beliefs about their performance or about their students.

The level of the macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1977) theorized that the macrosystem is the "blueprint" (p. 515) for the other systems in the model. This system contains the beliefs, rules, and norms that dictate the interactions within the other systems. While this system is furthest away from the individual, it has the greatest impact since it is how individuals are socialized.

Teacher A identifies as white and teaches a predominately black student population. Additionally, many of the students they teach are experiencing generational poverty and its effects. Black people, especially those experiencing poverty, have been marginalized and oppressed throughout the history of this country. Over time, oppressive policies and practices created the community in which Teacher A works (Milner, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Additionally, Teacher A's position as a white professional in a black neighborhood of concentrated poverty gives Teacher A power and privilege. This position benefits Teacher A because it places them in a role in which Teacher A can give their students what they think they need, thus bringing Teacher A fulfillment.

The level of the exosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the exosystem as the organizations and social structures that impact the individual indirectly. Although individuals do not participate directly in the exosystem, it still has an impact on their daily lives.

In Teacher A's ecology, a feature of the exosystem is the neighborhood in which they work. The neighborhood is under-resourced and many of the residents, most of whom are black, are experiencing poverty. Schools in neighborhoods like these are more likely to have challenging conditions including higher rates of teacher and administrator turnover, fewer

resources, and students with greater emotional needs (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2012; Papay & Kraft, 2017). As a result, academic achievement on standardized measures is lower in schools in these neighborhoods (Milner, 2012), leaving them open to criticism from the school district and the community. Although Teacher A does not live in the neighborhood in which they work, they are still impacted by it. They indicated that *"...constant criticism from the district [and] community and administration about school achievement...lack of family engagement, high levels of transience, [and] principal and teacher attrition"* are some of the major challenges that deplete Teacher A's energy, and *"take[s] away... [their] feeling of ability to make change"*. All of these challenges can be attributed to living in or working in an area of concentrated poverty (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2012; Papay & Kraft, 2017). Additionally, Teacher A indicated that their students have the *"...added challenge of overcoming the obstacles in their lives"*. Although they did not elaborate on the challenges, this indicates that students' personal lives do have an impact on their school lives which, in turn, has an impact on Teacher A. Some teachers are ill-equipped to work with students whom Milner (2013) asserted have higher levels of "school dependence". However, this is a strength of Teacher A's that ultimately strengthens their resilience against the challenges they experience from this system.

The level of the mesosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the mesosystem as "a system of microsystems" (1977, p. 515). At this level, there are interactions between the individual and at least two of the microsystems in which the person exists. Teacher A relies on their spouse to help navigate the challenges they experience at work. This is the interaction between the microsystems of work and home that Price and McCallum (2015) found helps teachers manage their stress and strengthen their resilience.

The level of the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the microsystem as the level in which individuals have direct interaction with the environment. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner claimed that these relationships are reciprocal.

One feature of Teacher A's microsystem is their students. Teacher A described having positive, caring relationships with them. They claimed that they show their students that they care about them by setting high expectations for them and meeting them where they are. Bronfenbrenner's theory suggests that Teacher A's students reciprocate that care by trusting them and being vulnerable about their needs. As a result, students achieve personal and academic success, which motivates teacher A to continue to build positive relationships with students and to work with their students to meet their needs. This success also motivates Teacher A to continue to work at this school even without having the resources they feel are necessary to do their job. Teacher A's responses are similar to Cross' and Hong's (2012) findings in which two teachers identified their warm relationships with students as a source of joy in a school with challenging conditions. These student relationships strengthen Teacher A's resilience.

Another feature of Teacher A's microsystem is their colleagues. Again, according to Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979), these relationships are reciprocal. Teacher A has strong, positive relationships with like-minded colleagues. Teacher A believes their colleagues work hard, care about their students, and are vulnerable and open to feedback and support. As a result, Teacher A feels trust and safety with these colleagues and regards these colleagues as a source of support through the most challenging times. These colleagues are also a source of motivation for Teacher A. When Teacher A sees these colleagues working hard, it motivates Teacher A to work hard even in the face of challenges. Reciprocally, Teacher A's work and leadership motivates the other colleagues on the team. In contrast, there are teachers whom Teacher A described as

draining. In Teacher A's opinion, these teachers do not work hard enough. As a result, Teacher A avoids them and focuses on relationships they have with the teachers they can trust.

The school's administrators are also a feature of Teacher A's microsystem. However, due to high rates of school leader turnover, Teacher A's relationships with administration is almost non-existent. This is a challenge, but Teacher A focuses on the positive relationships in their microsystem. It is Teacher A's intentional focus that appears to strengthen their resilience and create an environment that protects them from the harmful factors in the microsystem and elsewhere in their ecology.

The level of self. Bronfenbrenner positioned the self at the center of the ecological model (1977; 1979), and he theorized that all of the systems have an impact on the individual.

Inherent characteristics of Teacher A's personality allow them to navigate the systems in which they interact. These characteristics also influence how Teacher A navigates the challenges that come with teaching in a high-poverty school. Teacher A is aware of their strength of building relationships with students and colleagues, and they lean into that strength to persevere through the challenges they face. Teacher A indicated having high self-efficacy for building relationships with students, especially those who need extra caring and support. Based on their responses, Teacher A could be described as a caregiver or a nurturer. While many teachers are unable to meet the unique needs of students experiencing poverty, this is an area of strength for Teacher A. They enjoy the challenge of forming relationships with students that others might describe as difficult or hard-to-reach. Teacher A also indicated having high self-efficacy for leveraging those relationships to guide students to success. Teacher A displayed the problem-solving skills of seeking help and advocating for resources, which is an internal factor of resilience (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010). Teacher A also has the awareness to identify people and

situations who deplete their energy or cause Teacher A to question their ability to be successful. Teacher A makes the choice to avoid these people and situations and decides to spend time and resources with people and tasks that bring them energy and enjoyment. Additionally, instead of focusing on the challenges they experience, Teacher A works to better the school community. They indicated that they are *"...an active leader in the school to make as much change and impact decisions as much as possible"*.

Teacher A is white and teaches mostly black students. While this presents challenges for many teachers, Teacher A recognizes the importance of learning about their students and their students' cultures and seeks opportunities to continuously grow in that area. Teacher A works in a school that they define as not having necessary resources, but their problem-solving and leadership skills, as well as their positive relationships, allow Teacher A to work with what they have.

Summary of the Interactions Within Teacher A's Ecology. Teacher A is impacted by the policies and practices that created a neighborhood of concentrated poverty. These same practices have created challenging working conditions for Teacher A and their colleagues. These conditions have the potential to weaken their resilience. However, Teacher A leverages their relationship-building and problem-solving skills to navigate these challenges and find success in helping students learn and grow.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura theorized that self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs about their abilities to perform a specific task in a specific context (1977; 1997). These beliefs lead an individual to determine whether an action should be pursued and the degree of effort that should be devoted to that action.

Teacher A knows that they are successful at building relationships with their students. When asked why they stay at the school, Teacher A responded, *"I found success"*. Teacher A's acknowledgement of past success is what Bandura (1977) called personal mastery experiences, and according to Bandura, these experiences have the strongest impact on an individual's self-efficacy beliefs. Because of their beliefs about their abilities, Teacher A knows that they can lead their students to success. Their high self-efficacy for teaching also influences their beliefs about their students as well as their interactions with them (Tschannen-Moran, Salloum, & Goddard, 2014). According to Bandura (1977), there is a relationship between efficacy beliefs and behavior. A person's efficacy beliefs determine the activities they choose to undertake. Because they believe they can be successful, Teacher A sets high expectations of their students and works to meet their students where they are. Teacher A is confident in their ability to teach, and they make the commitment that *"...we can always find a path and a way for them to demonstrate their learning and engage fully"*. Teacher A's self-efficacy beliefs strengthen their resilience when their students experience challenges or failures, and the beliefs motivate Teacher A to continue to do their best for their students.

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy is an extension of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Bandura defined collective efficacy as *"...a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and*

execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (1997, p. 477).

These beliefs influence the goals the group sets, how they plan to achieve those goals, and the amount of effort they exert in working toward the goal. When a group has a high sense of collective efficacy for a specific task, they are more likely to persist in the face of challenges or setbacks (Bandura, 1997). Tschannen-Moran, Salloum, and Goddard (2014) asserted that in order for teachers to have high collective efficacy, they must have "professional trust". This means that teachers perceive that their colleagues take their work seriously and go above and beyond to help students reach the goals they set.

Teacher A indicated that they and a specific group of their colleagues have a high level of professional trust. According to Teacher A, there is a vulnerable, supportive relationship between them and some of their colleagues. Teacher A wrote, *"...[t]hese people support me and allow me to support them"*. Teacher A's colleagues *"allow"* them to be a source of support. Individuals on the team are able to admit that they need help, and the team is open to receiving support from one another. Also, this team chooses to put in the necessary effort, and they support each other in accomplishing their goals. When one teacher sees their teammates working hard and being successful, that teacher believes that their work will pay off. This collective efficacy influences how they work together. It motivates Teacher A and the other members of the group to persist, even when there are obstacles and setbacks (Bandura, 1993; Tschannen-Moran, Salloum, & Goddard, 2014). This also strengthens Teacher's A resilience because they know that they are a part of a hard-working team that will support them when they need it.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory examines the relationship between race, power, and racism. One major tenet of critical race theory is that racism permeates every facet of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Racism is "…the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7) and can be seen in the careful construction of communities of concentrated poverty such as the one in which Teacher A works. These communities lack many of the basic resources people need such as fresh food, public transportation, and healthcare.

Teacher A's students are marginalized in their communities but are also a marginalized population within the school district. Schools that serve students in these communities lack material resources such as updated textbooks and advanced technology. These schools are also marked by higher rates of teacher and administrator turnover and are more likely to be staffed by teachers who are underqualified or ill-equipped to teach the subjects and students to which they are assigned (Milner, 2013). Teacher A alluded to this throughout their responses, and they noted that their school is treated differently than most other schools in the district. However, Teacher A did not indicate that they interrogate how race and oppression makes this school different from the others.

Another major tenet of critical race theory is that all individuals are made up of overlapping identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These identities influence how people view their experiences and the world around them. As a person who identifies as white and who works in a school with a predominately black student population, Teacher A holds power and privilege that their students do not. When asked about their experiences with the cultures represented in the school, Teacher A did not indicate having personal experiences with black people outside of their students and their students' families. However, Teacher A responded that they spend time

learning about their students and their families at afterschool events. Teacher A also indicated that they seek learning opportunities through books and trainings to learn more about their students' cultures. However, Teacher A does not indicate learning more about the systems of oppression that directly affect their students and that indirectly affect Teacher A at work. Additionally, Teacher A identifies that their students face personal challenges, but does not explicitly name what those challenges are. Teacher A claimed that their students require care and love and that they need more support, which supports Milner's (2013) claim that students in these schools have greater levels of dependence on their teachers. However, there was no mention of their students' strengths or academic talents. This could suggest that Teacher A views their students with a deficit perspective. Also, Teacher A lists several challenges that are a result of working in an urban area of concentrated poverty (Milner, 2012). However, they do not interrogate why those challenges exist.

Examining the Themes Present in Teacher A's Responses

Two themes emerged from the analysis of Teacher A's responses:

1) Finding fulfillment in loving relationships and meeting students' needs

2) Focusing on what can be controlled.

Each theme is described in turn.

Teacher A Theme 1: Finding fulfillment in loving relationships and meeting students' needs

Teacher A reports being motivated to stay in the school despite poor conditions because of the love they feel for their students and their ability to meet their students' needs. Table 4.1 displays statements from Teacher A that demonstrate these perceptions and beliefs.

Table 4.1: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Finding Fulfillment in Loving Relationships and Meeting Students' Needs

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Drawing gratification from the ability to meet students' social and emotional needs that is heightened and driven by close personal connections with students.	*"I love my students and the care-giving they require"* *"I love the… added challenge of overcoming the obstacles in their lives to see their successes"* *"I have extremely rewarding relationships with my students"* *"My students need and thrive with the strengths I am able to offer as a teacher"* *"I have strong, close relationships with my students and feel very strongly protective of all of them"* *"I am 'mama bear' for most of my students and often fit the role of teacher as well as caregiver"* *"I expect them to… trust me to love them…"*

Finding fulfillment in loving relationships and meeting students' needs

Nurturing, caregiving, and relationship-building are self-identified strengths of Teacher A. They appreciate the fact that their students need this love at school, and this drives Teacher A's work. Teacher A used the word *"love"* several times across their responses. They love their students, and they love the nurturing and extra support that their students need. Being a nurturer and a caregiver meets students' emotional needs while also bringing Teacher A fulfillment. This energizes Teacher A to work hard to meet their students where they are and help them achieve

personal and academic success. It is possible that these relationships feed Teacher A's ego or a possible belief that their students need saving. In an interview with the National Education Association, Christopher Emdin explained that, "[t]he vision that kids need to be saved equates to thinking something is wrong with them" (Elie, 2016, para. 5). He went on to say that, "[t]he savior complex is also problematic because it reinforces the notion that the teacher is the hero" (Elie, 2016, para. 6). It is possible that Teacher A believes that they are the only person who is able to meet the needs their students have. No matter the reason or motive, Teacher A values the relationships they have with their students. These relationships strengthen Teacher A's resilience to persist in the face of many challenges and to remain at the school.

Teacher A Theme 2: Focusing on what can be controlled

Teacher A faces many challenges at work. However, they choose not to focus on the challenges, and they lean into areas that they can control. Table 4.2 displays statements from Teacher A that demonstrate their focus on what can be controlled.

Table 4.2: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Focusing on What Can Be Controlled

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Choosing to focus on the challenges and issues one can control and ignoring issues and problems that one cannot control.	• *Teacher A avoids teachers who "drain [their] energy"* • *"I… am an active leader in the school to make as much change and impact decisions as much as possible"* • *"My students struggled in the higher-level class,…and I spent a great deal of time working with administration to explain the need and to help build rosters"*

| | • *"I am proactive in trying to help resolve the issues and come up with solutions"* |
| | • *"I try to balance my impact and spend energy on things that I have the power to change or affect"* |

Focusing on what can be controlled

Teacher A chooses to stay away from coworkers who are difficult to be around and leans on those with whom they have a positive relationship. Also, Teacher A listed seven major challenges of working at this school:

Constant criticism from the district, community and administration about school achievement. Lack of resources, very poor facilities, lack of family engagement, high levels of transience, principal and teacher attrition, student death.

Teacher A also indicated that they *"absolutely"* do not have the resources they need to do their job. However, Teacher A's close relationships with colleagues and students keeps them at the school despite the many challenges they face. Teacher A knows that this work has the ability to burn them out. Mindful of potential negative consequences, they are intentional about how they navigate the challenges they experience as a means of self-preservation.

Teacher A's ability to focus on their locus of control is a privilege. Since Teacher A does not live in the community or experience the many challenges that students and their families cannot simply ignore, Teacher A can choose to disregard the bigger issues present in the school and in the community and only focus on those issues that Teacher A concludes are within their power to improve.

Teacher B

Teacher B has been a teacher for seven and a half years, five of which have been at this school. Teacher B identified their students and their coworkers as what they enjoy about working at this school and the reasons why they stay. This teacher has been with the same group of students for several years, and Teacher B feels especially close to them. Teacher B wrote, "*[i]t has brought me so much joy watching them grow over the years improving in their schoolwork and personal lives… it continues to be the biggest reason I do not leave*". Teacher B enjoys not only the academic successes of their students but their students' personal successes as well. Teacher B stated that relationships with students are "key" to their teaching success and details how they build and sustain those relationships by saying, "*At the beginning of the year, I begin with simple things to get to know them, understand them and make sure that I can provide the best for them. My students know my expectations and know that I will hold them to those expectations. My students know that I am there for them in all situations, whether it is related to academics or outside of school. Relationships are KEY to a successful classroom*".

Teacher B cares about the overall development of the students they teach. When asked about their expectations of their students, Teacher B described academic, personal, and behavioral expectations in the following basic terms, "*My students are expected to follow directions and lessons, complete work, ask for assistance and always put forth their best efforts*". They expect their students to show growth but also for them to do their best. However, Teacher B expressed that they occupy a central role for their students. "*In order for my students to be successful, I need to provide the best education for them*". Although this is a rather vague and general statement it could indicate a belief in teacher ownership of progress rather than a belief in their students' ability to self-monitor and direct their own academic success.

Teacher B reported having positive relationships with the school's administrators and described feeling supported by them. Teacher B explained that when they need something, they are able to turn to their administrators to listen to them or provide them with what they need. Teacher B's coworkers are also a source of support, and their support appears to be a greater influence on Teacher B than that of the administrators. Teacher B described relationships with coworkers as being *"essential"*, and they explained that the team supports each other through everything. There is a great deal of trust between the teachers on the team, and colleagues can talk freely and openly with one another without judgement. Teacher B described their relationships with their coworkers as *"one of the reasons that [they are] not leaving"*.

Teacher B identified inconsistent communication as a major challenge at the school. Teacher B described a particular challenge they had to overcome. They had to fill in for a colleague, *"when it wasn't [their] responsibility"*, but they *"...took the task on as [their] own responsibility"*. It was important that Teacher B stepped up so that student learning would continue. This might be an example of what Teacher B described as *"approaching each situation with an open mindset"* and went on to explain that *"every situation is different just like every student is different"*.

Teacher B indicated that they have all of the resources necessary to support them and their students.

Other than their daily interactions with students, Teacher B did not describe engaging with the cultures represented at the school. However, Teacher B wrote, *"...[a]ll of their experiences are key in my teaching, incorporating their culture into the classroom"*. Teacher B did not provide examples of what it means to incorporate student culture into the classroom. When asked how the experiences with the cultures represented in their school have informed

their relationships with their students, Teacher B responded, *"I am a teacher because of my students".* Once again, this vague statement provides little insight into what Teacher B believes or does.

Contributing Factors to Teacher B's Resilience

Teacher B's positive relationships with students are a major factor of their resilience (Day & Hong, 2012; Doney, 2013). Teacher B described having *"great relationships"* with their students, and they identified their relationships with students as one of the things they enjoy most about working at the school. They described feeling *"…so much joy watching [their students] grow over the years…".* Teacher B also identified having close relationships with their colleagues. They described their colleagues as *"nothing but amazing"*, and they are also a reason why Teacher B enjoys working at the school. Additionally, Teacher B's coworkers serve as a network of support for one another. Teacher B relies on this network to help navigate the challenges they face at work. Teacher B's ability to seek help from this network is also a factor of resilience (Castro et al., 2010).

Another factor that supports Teacher B's resilience is their adaptability. Hong (2012) defined resilience as, "…the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging circumstances" (p. 419). Additionally, Doney (2013) described it as the ability to adjust to various situations. When asked how their approach to challenges at work is similar to or different from the way they handle challenges at home, Teacher B responded that they, *"approach all situations with an open-minded set [sic]".* They went on to explain that *"[e]very situation is different, just like every student is different".* This response suggests that Teacher B assesses each situation and acts accordingly.

An Examination of Teacher B's Responses Through the Lens of the Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

Teacher B's comments reveal many factors that both hinder and support their resilience. I will use Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977; 1979) to organize them.

The level of the chronosystem. (***Definition:*** *Bronfenbrenner (1979) included the level of the chronosystem to the model and theorized that the time in which an individual exists is influential. "Time" could be historical, chronological, biological, or personal.*)

Teacher B has been teaching for over seven years, five of which were at this school. Berger et al. (2018) found that teachers' classroom management skills improved as their amount of teaching experience increased. It is possible, therefore, that Teacher B's years of experience could result in more positive experiences with students. Although other elements within Teacher B's chronosystem could impact their resilience, their responses did not indicate any biological, historical, or personal factors that support or hinder their resilience.

The level of the macrosystem. (***Definition****: Bronfenbrenner (1977) theorized that the macrosystem is the "blueprint" (p. 515) for the other systems in the model. This system contains the beliefs, rules, and norms that dictate the interactions within the other systems. While this system is furthest away from the individual, it has the greatest impact since it is how individuals are socialized.*)

The concept of race, as well as the associations people have about race, are created within the macrosystem. In American society, it has been established that to be white is to have power and privilege over those who society labels as black (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This power

can be seen in every facet of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Teacher B identifies as a white person, and therefore has power and privilege that their students, most if not all of whom are black, do not.

  <u>The level of the exosystem</u>. (***Definition:*** *Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the exosystem as the organizations and social structures that impact the individual indirectly. Although individuals do not participate directly in the exosystem, it still has an impact on their daily lives.)*

  Teacher B works in an area of concentrated poverty that was carefully designed by oppressive policies and practices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Milner, 2012). Additionally, the school in which Teacher B works is one that mirrors the community in which it exists. It is under-resourced, and students at this school face greater physical and emotional needs than students in other schools in the same district (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2012; Papay & Kraft, 2017). This exosystem directly impacts Teacher B's students and indirectly impacts Teacher B. While Teacher B alluded to students' *"personal lives"* or their *"lives outside of school"*, they did not name specific challenges their students faced. Based on the literature, it is logical to assume that their students, who are adolescents who live in communities of concentrated poverty, are more likely to be exposed to environmental conditions that create developmental, emotional, psychological, and physical barriers to learning (Milner, 2013). While these factors could present challenges to other teachers, Teacher B stated that they support students and are *"...there for them in all situations"* even those outside of school. Teacher B thrives off the growth they see in students' personal lives and reports that being able to nurture this personal growth by supporting students in overcoming personal barriers brings Teacher B joy that in turn strengthens Teacher B's resilience.

The level of the mesosystem. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the mesosystem as "a system of microsystems" (1977, p. 515).)*

At this level, there are interactions between the individual and at least two of the microsystems in which the person exists. While these interactions are present in every individual's ecology, Teacher B's did not indicate any interactions at this level.

The level of the microsystem. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the microsystem as the level in which individuals have direct interaction with the environment. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner claimed that these relationships are reciprocal.)*

A reported feature in Teacher B's microsystem is their students, with whom Teacher B describes having *"great"* relationships and credits the relationships as being *"...KEY [emphasis theirs] to a successful classroom"*. They described their relationships with students as the reason they continue to work at the school.

Teacher B sets academic and behavioral expectations for their students and believes that their students know they will be held to those expectations. Although Teacher B holds students accountable, Teacher B feels a responsibility for their students' learning. Their students respond by meeting those expectations and attaining academic success. Another feature of Teacher B's microsystem is their colleagues whom Teacher B described as *"...nothing but amazing"*. Teacher B also wrote that they *"...have the best team that supports each other through everything"*. Teacher B's supportive relationships with their colleagues are another reason why they remain at the school. The strength of Teacher B's relationships with their students and their colleagues strengthens their resilience and helps Teacher B to persist through the challenges they face.

The level of self. (**Definition:** *Bronfenbrenner positioned the self at the center of the ecological model (1977; 1979), and he theorized that all of the systems have an impact on the individual.*)

Teacher B possesses characteristics that support their resilience in a potentially challenging work environment. Teacher B feels a sense of responsibility which motivates them to do their best to make sure students learn. In doing their best for students, Teacher B also exhibits the characteristic of being willing to ask administrators and colleagues for help. They described their relationship with their administrators as being *"good"* because their administrators are able to provide Teacher B with support when asked. Teacher B wrote, *"[w]hen you need something or need support, they are able to listen and provide that support"*. Teacher B's responses also suggest that they are able to maintain a positive outlook. None of their responses stated or described challenging behaviors by students or colleagues, nor did they describe pressures or challenges placed on them from the district. Although this school is under-resourced, when asked if they have the necessary resources to do their job, Teacher B responded *"yes"*. These inherent characteristics of having a seemingly positive outlook may go a long way to help Teacher B to persist and experience success in the face of inherent challenges and setbacks.

Summary of the Interactions Within Teacher B's Ecology. Teacher B is both directly and indirectly impacted by the policies and practices that created a neighborhood of concentrated poverty and the hard-to-staff school within it. It is possible that Teacher B recognizes their position as a white person in America, and that could motivate their feelings of duty and responsibility to their students. This responsibility, coupled with Teacher B's relationships with students and colleagues, supports their resilience.

Self-Efficacy

(Definition: Bandura theorized that self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs about their abilities to perform a specific task in a specific context (1977; 1997). These beliefs lead an individual to determine whether an action should be pursued and the degree of effort that should be devoted to that action.) One factor that influences an individual's efficacy beliefs is personal mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977). When an individual is faced with a challenge, they draw on their past experiences with similar tasks to determine how they will approach the situation. Having prior success increases an individual's self-efficacy in facing a similar situation in the future (Bandura, 1977).

Teacher B's responses suggest perceptions of high self-efficacy for teaching their students because they have seen their students grow over the course of four years and they see that growth as directly connected to their teaching. This growth is a source of joy for Teacher B because it also confirms their ability to lead students to academic success. For example, Teacher B described a time when they had to fill in for a colleague even though it wasn't their responsibility. Instead of refusing to fill the position or electing to fill it halfheartedly, Teacher B rose to the challenge because they knew that they could be successful in that temporary role. They explained that *"[their] students did not lose learning during this time because [they were] able to teach them"*. Since Teacher B knows that they can lead students to success, they are able to set high expectations for their students. They explained that their students know Teacher B's expectations of them, and they know that Teacher B will hold them accountable to meeting them. Teacher B also feels personal accountability and responsibility for the success of their students. They wrote, *"I need to provide the best education for them"*. Teacher B believes that they can

provide this education, so they do not waver on their expectations of students. The research literature tells us that when teachers have positive beliefs about their students, they engage in more positive interactions with them (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). These perceptions of high self-efficacy for leading students to academic success are important in helping Teacher B build relationships with students which are a factor of Teacher B's resilience.

Collective Efficacy

*(**Definition:** Collective efficacy is an extension of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Bandura defined collective efficacy as "…a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (1997, p. 477). These beliefs influence the goals the group sets, how they plan to achieve those goals, and the amount of effort they exert in working toward the goal. When a group has a high sense of collective efficacy for a specific task, they are more likely to persist in the face of challenges or setbacks (Bandura, 1997).)*

Teacher B described their colleagues as *"amazing"*, and they have a high level of professional trust, which is a crucial factor in perceptions of positive collective efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). When describing working with colleagues, Teacher B explained, *"I know that I can talk to them without feeling judged or worrying about [the] outcome from the conversation"*. In two separate responses, Teacher B wrote that their team *"…supports each other through everything"*. Not only does the team support Teacher B, but Teacher B supports their colleagues as well. Teacher B knows that with the support of this team, they can be successful in leading their students to success regardless of the obstacles they face.

Critical Race Theory

*(**Definition:** Critical race theory examines the relationship between race, power, and racism. One major tenet of critical race theory is that racism permeates every facet of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001்.) Racism is "...the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7) and can be seen in the careful construction of communities of concentrated poverty such as the one in which Teacher B works.)*

While Teacher B alluded to the challenges their students face outside of school, Teacher B did not explicitly name them or explore the oppressive systems and structures that create the challenges for students. This lack of interrogation is what Milner (2019) described as being "race-blind". Milner asserted that educators are race-blind when they, "…avoid examining, thinking about, or acknowledging the ways in which race contributes to systems and structures of oppression and other forms of discrimination" (p. 14). This blindness to the oppression of their students could be a protective factor of Teacher B's resilience.

Teacher B identifies as white and teaches in a predominately black school. However, when asked what experiences they have had with the cultures represented in the school, Teacher B responded, *"[d]aily, with my students"*. They also indicated that their students' experiences are *"...key in [their] teaching"* and that they incorporate their students' culture into the classroom. This vague response makes it difficult to understand how Teacher B defines and understands the diverse cultures present in the classroom that could include different races, nationalities, religions, ethnicities, linguistics, abilities, genders, sexual orientations and family traditions, for example, that could be present in Teacher B's classroom. Teacher B's responses provided no indication that Teacher B seeks opportunities to learn about their students' lives or their unique cultures beyond their interactions at school. When asked how their experiences with

the cultures represented in the school informs their relationships with students, Teacher B responded, *"I am a teacher because of my students"*, again offering little insight into this important question and Teacher B offered no statements regarding the cultures of their students. As a white person in America, Teacher B holds the privilege to not seek opportunities to learn more about their students.

In her seminal essay on white privilege, Peggy McIntosh (1989) listed the ways in which she experienced, and benefited from, white privilege. On her list, she wrote, "I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion" (para. 23). She went on to explain, "I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms" (para. 36). Because of their privilege, Teacher B is able to avoid the need to seeking opportunities to learn about their students' cultures. Although they teach in a predominately black school, Teacher B's whiteness is dominant in society. This avoidance could protect Teacher B from the discomfort of learning about their students' realities. Robin DiAngelo (2011) asserted that white people exist in an environment where they are the dominant culture, and they can avoid any stress related to race. DiAngelo explained, "[t]his insulated environment of racial privilege builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress" (55). It is possible that Teacher B's avoidance of issues of race and poverty is a protective factor of their resilience.

Examining the Themes Present in Teacher B's Responses

Three themes emerged from the analysis of Teacher B's responses:

1) Clear expectations and responsibilities;

2) Ability to rely on colleagues for help when needed; and,

3) Relationships are a verb.

Each theme is described in turn.

Teacher B Theme 1: Clear expectations and responsibilities

Teacher B reports having expectations of themselves in the form of a sense of responsibility or

duty to their students. They also take on tasks that may be beyond their defined responsibilities.

Teacher B has clear expectations of their students. Table 4.3 displays statements from Teacher B

that demonstrate their sense of responsibility as a motivator.

Table 4.3: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Clear Expectations and Responsibilities

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Identifying situations in which a perceived need is present and working to meet that need.	• *"I…make sure that I can provide the best for them"* • *"My students know my expectations and know that I will hold them to those expectations"* • *"In order for my students to be successful, I need to provide the best education for them"* • *"Filling into someone else's shoes when it was not my responsibility… I took the task on as my own responsibility"* • *"The communication throughout the building is not consistent… I communicate as much as possible"*

Clear expectations and responsibilities

Teacher B demonstrates having a vision for what their responsibilities are for themselves and their students. Teacher B indicated having specific expectations for their students' academic engagement and for their behavior. Teacher B also indicated having defined responsibilities at work. The biggest responsibility they feel is the responsibility for their students' learning. It is possible that as a white person, Teacher B feels sympathy for their students and views them through a deficit ideology (Gorski, 2011) in which difference as seen as deficiency. This thinking might lead Teacher B to feel as though they need to save their students (Elie, 2016).

Teacher B Theme 2: Ability to rely on colleagues for help when needed

Teacher B indicates that they are able to ask for help from colleagues and administrators as needed. Table 4.4 displays statements from Teacher B that demonstrate their ability to seek help.

Table 4.4: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Ability to Rely on Colleagues for Help When Needed

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Being confident and comfortable with asking colleagues for emotional and professional support.	*"I have the best team that supports each other through everything"* *"When you need something or need support, [the principal and assistant principals] are able to listen and provide that support"* *"My department and I have helped each other through many easy and difficult situations"* *"I know that I can talk to them without feeling judged or worrying about [the] outcome from the conversation"*

Ability to Rely on Colleagues for Help When Needed

Teacher B is committed to doing their best work for students. This work involves being able to rely on peers or administrators for support, advice, or thought partnership when needed. Knowing that Teacher B can count on this collegial network for support is an important factor of Teacher B's resilience.

Teacher B Theme 3: Relationships are a verb

Teacher B indicates that building and maintain relationships are key for their success at this school. Table 4.5 displays statements from Teacher B that demonstrate how relationships are a verb for Teacher B.

Table 4.5: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Relationships are a Verb

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Engaging in the intentional practices of building and maintaining relationships	• *"There are two key factors that I enjoy at my school: my students and my co-workers"* • *"I have developed great relationships with my students and it continues to be the biggest reason I do not leave"* • *"I have the best team that supports each other through everything"* • *"Building relationships with students is key in teaching"* • *"I begin with simple things to get to know them, understand them and make sure that I can provide the best for them"* • *"Relationships are KEY [emphasis theirs] to a successful classroom"* • *"I have good relationships with my principal and assistant principals… No challenges at the moment"*

	• *"In any work environment, relationships with your co-workers is essential"*
	• *"We support each other at all times. I know that I can talk to them without feeling judged or worrying about [the] outcome from the conversation"*

Relationships are a verb

Teacher B's responses illustrate their understanding that positive relationships are critical for success in any environment but especially in a school. However, as Teacher B described them, these relationships do not occur automatically. Teacher B's responses indicate that relationships require effort and intentionality and actually outlined their intentional approach to building relationships with students. Additionally, Teacher B's responses imply that their positive relationships with their colleagues require trust and support. Teacher B's description of their relationships indicates that Teacher B understands that relationships, especially those with administrators, are subject to change. In Teacher B's statement regarding the relationship with administrators not being challenging *"at the moment"* reveals an understanding that relationships are not static, subject to change, and require monitoring and intentionality to make them work.

Teacher C

Teacher C has been a teacher for eight years and has taught at this school for six of those years. Teacher C listed their students and their colleagues as what they enjoy about working at the school and stated that they are the reason why Teacher C remains at the school. Additionally, Teacher C acknowledged the impact of teacher turnover on their students. They wrote, *"…my students are so accustomed to teachers coming and going that they don't know who they can*

count on". Teacher C wrote that they feel *"...an intense amount of guilt if I ever think about leaving them". They indicated that they have a "good rapport with [their] students"*, and that the relationships are a result of mutual respect between the teacher and the students. Teacher C indicated having high expectations for their students and working alongside them *"...as a team to ensure that everyone is successful"*.

Teacher C described having a positive relationship with administrators but stated that, the relationship lacks the consistent professional instructional support that Teacher C needs. On the other hand, they indicated that, unlike the administrators, their coworkers are a source of support. In fact, they credited a coworker as being the reason why they were able to persist in their first year at the school. They wrote, *"If it wasn't for the teacher across the hall from me during my first year, I may have given up that year"*. Teacher C noted that communication between administrators and staff is a major challenge at the school. They described being given "…directives with short notice or ones that do not align with the best interests of our students".

When asked to describe a challenge they faced at work, Teacher C described working with a group of students whose behavior was challenging. Teacher C had a conversation with the students to understand why they behaved in that way. The students explained that they enjoyed *"tormenting"* new teachers in an effort to get them to leave. Teacher C made a commitment to those students and to the school, and Teacher C began to build positive relationships with those students. This story illustrates Teacher C's approach to challenges. They explained that they *"continue to work through"* obstacles and depend on their support systems for help in navigating challenges. Teacher C identified coworkers and people in their personal life as sources of support, stating, *"I rely on my support systems (coworkers. Family, friends, etc.) to help me through the difficult times [at work and at home]"*.

When asked if they had the necessary resources to support them and their students, they responded, *"I feel that we have the resources available, but we are not using them to their full potential"*.

When asked about their experiences with the cultures represented at their school, Teacher C said they are *"...appreciative of new cultures"*. They indicated that they learn about their students' cultures *"through [their] interactions with students and colleagues"*. Teacher C indicated that those interactions have made them "more aware" of certain things, but they did not elaborate on what those things are. However, they did indicate that they try to make their lessons relevant for their students.

Contributing Factors of Resilience

There are a variety of factors that strengthen Teacher C's resilience. When they began teaching at this school, Teacher C taught a class in which several students displayed behaviors that Teacher C found challenging. That year was so difficult that Teacher C reflected that they probably would not have made it through the year without the support of a colleague. These experiences strengthened Teacher C's resilience because resilience cannot be learned without stress (Doney, 2013; Bobek, 2002). Teacher C has since formed strong, positive relationships with those students and others. They explained, *"...I ended up being the Senior Class Advisor for that class of students because of the relationships that we were able to build..."*. Teacher C also has strong relationships with their colleagues. These positive relationships strengthen Teacher C's resilience (Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012). Additionally, Teacher C seeks help and consults others to *"bounce ideas off of"* them, which are both other strategies for strengthening their resilience (Castro et al., 2010).

An Examination of Teacher C's Responses Through the Lens of the Theoretical Framework

<u>Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model</u>

Teacher C's comments reveal many factors that both hinder and support their resilience. I will use Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977; 1979) to organize them.

<u>The level of the chronosystem</u>. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1979) included the level of the chronosystem to the model and theorized that the time in which an individual exists is influential. "Time" could be historical, chronological, biological, or personal.)*

Teacher C is in their sixth year of teaching at this school and their eighth year of being in the teaching profession. Berger, et al. (2018) found that teachers' confidence in their ability to manage student behaviors increases with years of experience. It is possible that Teacher C's years of experience at this school have helped to build their self-efficacy for managing behaviors, which could impact Teacher C's overall experience at the school. While there might be other factors at the level of the chronosystem, Teacher C's responses did not indicate any.

<u>The level of the macrosystem</u>. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1977) theorized that the macrosystem is the "blueprint" (p. 515) for the other systems in the model. This system contains the beliefs, rules, and norms that dictate the interactions within the other systems. While this system is furthest away from the individual, it has the greatest impact since it is how individuals are socialized.)*

In a capitalist society, there is a dichotomy between the "rich" and the "poor". This dichotomy exists in America, and the American people who experience poverty are disproportionately black and brown (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As a white American and a

professional working in a community of concentrated poverty, Teacher C enjoys privilege that their students do not have.

The level of the exosystem. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the exosystem as the organizations and social structures that impact the individual indirectly. Although individuals do not participate directly in the exosystem, it still has an impact on their daily lives.)*

Schools in areas of concentrated poverty have fewer resources than schools in other areas, and the working conditions in these schools are potentially more challenging for teachers. These schools experience greater rates of teacher turnover as teachers tend to move away from schools that serve predominately black and brown populations, and vacancies in these schools are harder to fill (Horng, 2009). Teacher C experiences this firsthand. They explained that their students have experienced so much teacher turnover that they expressed being unable to trust their teachers. Teacher C wrote, *"[o]ur students are so accustomed to teachers coming and going that they don't know who they can count on".* They went on to explain that they experienced challenging behaviors from students because the students *"...thought it was fun to torment new teachers to try to get them to quit and that they didn't know who they could trust".* While it is more challenging to build relationships with students at this school, Teacher C has experienced success in this area. That success increases their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and strengthens their resilience (Hong, 2012).

The level of the mesosystem. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the mesosystem as "a system of microsystems" (1977, p. 515).)* At this level, an individual experiences interaction between two of the microsystems.

For Teacher C, the interaction between work and home is present in the mesosystem. They indicated relying on their family and friends to help them navigate challenges at work. Teacher C explained, *"[e]ven when I encounter something difficult, I continue to work through it. I rely on my support systems (coworkers, family, friends, etc.) to help me through the difficult times…"*. Seeking help was identified by Castro et al. (2010) as a strategy for strengthening resilience. Teacher C's ability to rely on one microsystem– their friends or family– for support in another microsystem –work– is an interaction within the mesosystem that strengthens Teacher C's resilience.

The level of the microsystem. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) described the microsystem as the level in which individuals have direct interaction with the environment. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner claimed that these relationships are reciprocal.)*

Within the level of the microsystem, there is a direct relationship between the individual and the environments in which they exist.

One element of Teacher C's microsystem is their students. Teacher C indicated enjoying working with their students and described having a *"good rapport"* with them. They also described themselves and their students as having mutual respect for one another. Similarly, Teacher C reported having great relationships with their coworkers. These relationships are important to Teacher C's overall experience in the school and keep Teacher C at the school despite the *"many"* challenges they face while working there.

The level of self. *(**Definition:** Bronfenbrenner positioned the self at the center of the ecological model (1977; 1979), and he theorized that all of the systems have an impact on the individual.)*

Teacher C has several characteristics which help to strengthen their resilience at this school. Teacher C is persistent, and they described themselves as not giving up easily and working through the challenges they face. They explained, *"I would say that I do not give up easily. Even when I encounter something difficult, I continue to work through it"*. When they experienced challenges during their first year at the school, Teacher C explained that they *"...continued to show up for [their students] day after day"*. Teacher C made a commitment to the students at the school, and they continue to feel a sense of accomplishment for being a teacher who stays instead of one who leaves. They also developed a high sense of self-efficacy for building relationships with students and for managing students' challenging behaviors. These are both factors of their resilience (Hong, 2012).

Another characteristic Teacher C exhibited is the desire to get better. They rely on their colleagues for support at work, but they feel some dissatisfaction with administrators because of the lack of feedback they receive. When asked about their relationships with their administrators, Teacher C described the relationship as *"good"* but also wrote, *"I wish that they were more visible in my classroom beyond just my normal observations. Sometimes it feels like they are only there to give a summative rating rather than help me get better by offering constructive feedback with follow-up"*. Teacher C's desire to improve their practice is a factor of resilience (Doney, 2013; Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010).

Summary of the Interactions Within Teacher C's Ecology. Teacher C works in a school with greater challenges when compared to other schools in the same district. Teacher C is especially impacted by the higher rates of turnover at this school. However, Teacher C's ability to grow in their practice and build relationships with students and colleagues strengthens their resilience.

Self-Efficacy

*(**Definition:** Bandura theorized that self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs about their abilities to perform a specific task in a specific context (1997; 1977). These beliefs lead an individual to determine whether an action should be pursued and the degree of effort that should be devoted to that action.)*

Teacher C reported having experience being successful with managing student behaviors and building relationships with students who exhibited challenging behaviors. According to Bandura (1977), that previous experience of having success with these students had a significant impact on Teacher C's self-efficacy for building relationships with students experiencing similar behaviors in the future. Having had that experience in their first year at the school, it is logical to assume that made Teacher C more likely to attempt to build relationships in the future even when they face challenges. Through that experience, Teacher C possibly encountered another factor that influenced their self-efficacy for teaching in this school. They credited the teacher across the hall for helping them persist through that first year. This could be an example of what Bandura called verbal persuasion if the teacher attempted to persuade Teacher C not to give up or suggest strategies for building relationships. Although Teacher C did not describe the details of what the teacher across the hall did or said, it is also possible that Teacher C saw their colleague's success with building relationships and managing challenging student behaviors. Seeing their colleague experience success in this area could have strengthened Teacher C's self-efficacy through what Bandura (1977) called vicarious experiences. Seeing the teacher across the hall have success with students from the same school and neighborhood could have inspired Teacher C to believe they could have that same success and to continue to persist that year.

Collective Efficacy

(Definition: Collective efficacy is an extension of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Bandura defined collective efficacy as "...a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (1997, p. 477). These beliefs influence the goals the group sets, how they plan to achieve those goals, and the amount of effort they exert in working toward the goal. When a group has a high sense of collective efficacy for a specific task, they are more likely to persist in the face of challenges or setbacks (Bandura, 1997).)

There must be a sense of trust among teachers, and they must believe that they can accomplish a shared goal (Bandura, 1993). When teachers believe that their students can learn, they will work to ensure that their students are academically successful. When this happens across a department, grade level, or school, a culture is created in which teachers work together to help students achieve academic success (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). When teachers have trust in one another, "...teachers respect their colleagues' competence and expertise. They work cooperatively with one another, are clearly engaged in the teaching process, and [are] enthusiastic about their work" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014, p.7). Teacher C described high levels of collective efficacy among the team on which they work. They describe having a *"great"* relationship with most of their colleagues, and that their colleagues serve as a *"...support system to vent, bounce ideas off of, etc."*. Teacher C's beliefs about their colleagues and the relationships they have formed continue to be one of the reasons Teacher C remains at the school.

Critical Race Theory

*(**Definition:** Critical race theory examines the relationship between race, power, and racism. One major tenet of critical race theory is that racism permeates every facet of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).)*

Teacher C experiences several challenges that are the result of working in a predominately black neighborhood of concentrated poverty. When asked what are the major challenges they face at work, Teacher C responded that teachers *"...are given directives with short notice or ones that do not align with the best interests of our students"*. It is not clear if the directives come from the principal or from the district. However, the implementation of policies with a lack of regard for students' needs is common practice for schools in under-resourced communities (Milner, 2013). Also, schools in high-poverty communities with predominately black and brown students experience higher rates of teacher turnover. According to Horng (2009), "[b]ecause school working conditions and student characteristics are so highly correlated, teachers may be choosing to not work with low-income students, low-performing students, and students of color because of the poor working conditions at the schools which these students attend," (p. 693). Teacher C stated that when they asked their students why they behave in the ways that Teacher C observed, the students admitted that *"...they thought it was fun to torment new teachers to try to get them to quit and that they didn't know who they could trust"*. Since Teacher C was new to the school, the students challenged Teacher C in an attempt to get them to quit. Teacher C's challenges with gaining students' trust were a direct result of teaching in a school with challenging working conditions that includes high teacher turnover. However, Teacher C did not explore the policies and practices that create the conditions at the school.

Teacher C identifies as white and describes being "appreciative" of "new cultures". Teacher C reported that despite the differences in their backgrounds, they respect their students as individuals. This focus on the general concept of difference when discussing an appreciation of cultures might be connected to the movement towards multiculturalism in education. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, IV (1995), two pioneers of culturally relevant pedagogy, explained the problem with a multicultural approach. They wrote:

> multiculturalism came to be viewed as a political philosophy of "many cultures" existing together in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance…Today, the term is used interchangeably with the ever-expanding "diversity," a term used to explain all types of "difference"—racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, ability, gender, sexual orientation…We assert that the ever-expanding multicultural paradigm follows the traditions of liberalism—allowing a proliferation of difference. Unfortunately, the tensions between and among these differences is rarely interrogated, presuming a "unity of difference"— that is, that all difference is both analogous and equivalent (pp. 61-62).

Even though Teacher C stated that they appreciate differences, they may not consciously examine their own vague understanding beyond the desire to "allow" difference.

When asked what experiences they have had with the cultures represented at the school, Teacher C indicated that their experiences are limited to their interactions with their students and colleagues. Teacher C did not indicate looking for resources or experiences beyond those interactions. Without an understanding of their students' cultures, and without a true exploration of how their cultures differ, it could be suggested that Teacher C's incorporation of their students' cultures is superficial. However, Teacher C's interactions with their students has made them *"more aware"* of *"certain things"*, but they did not describe those things in detail. They

indicated that they use that information to make their lessons more relevant for students. Once again, it is difficult to understand what those points of relevance are or what criteria Teacher C uses to assure this relevance

Examining the Themes Present in Teacher C's Responses

Three themes emerged from the analysis of Teacher C's responses:

1) Seeking feedback and being open to receiving support;

2) Commitment as a form of persistence

3) Consistency builds trust and relationships.

Each theme is described in turn.

Teacher C Theme 1: Seeking feedback and being open to receiving support

Teacher C reported being able to stay at this school because they get help when they need it. Table 4.6 displays statements from Teacher C that demonstrate their seeking feedback or being open to receiving support.

Table 4.6: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Seeking Feedback and Being Open to Receiving Support

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Being aware of one's own needs or areas of weakness and seeking help or valuing support from others to develop strengths and grow	• *"Sometimes it feels like [the administrators] are only there to give a summative rating rather than help me get better by offering constructive feedback with follow-up"* • *"If it wasn't for the teacher across the hall from me during my first year, I may have given up that year"*

	• *"...my coworkers continue to be my support system to vent, bounce ideas off of, etc."*
	• *"This class had several students that would openly be disrespectful… Eventually, I just sat down and had a conversation with these students"*
	• *"I rely on my support systems (coworkers, family, friends, etc.) to help me through the difficult times…"*

Seeking feedback and being open to receiving support

Teacher C credited the support from a colleague across the hall as being instrumental in their persistence during the first year at the school. Teacher C's colleagues are a part of the support system Teacher C created to help them navigate the challenges they experience at work and in their personal lives. Teacher C's reliance on this network demonstrates trust, vulnerability, and willingness to accept feedback. Additionally, Teacher C indicated that they would like more feedback from administrators about their performance. Teacher C also seeks feedback from their students. When they experienced challenging behaviors from a group of students in a particular class, Teacher C had a conversation with them to understand why they behaved that way and possibly to understand what Teacher C could do to improve the situation. That conversation changed the trajectory of Teacher C's relationships with those students.

Teacher C Theme 2: Commitment as a form of persistence

Teacher C reported being committed to solving problems or overcoming challenges. Table 4.7 displays statements from Teacher C that demonstrate their persistence.

Table 4.7: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Commitment as a Form of Persistence

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Making a pledge to keep moving forward even when experiencing challenges and setbacks	*"I have found that I can be a consistent person for [my students] and I have an intense amount of guilt if I ever think about leaving them"* *"...we will be learning and working together as a team to ensure that everyone is successful"* *"...I told them that I wasn't going anywhere and continued to show up for them day after day"* *"I would say that I do not give up easily. Even when I encounter something difficult, I continue to work through it"*

Commitment as a form of persistence

Teacher C demonstrates that they do not give up when they experience challenging situations. Instead, they remain committed and continue on until they achieve success. Teacher C could have stopped teaching at this school in their first year. Instead, Teacher C received help from a colleague and solicited feedback from students as tools to help them move forward. When their students told them that they found it hard to trust teachers, Teacher C made a commitment to those students and continued to *"show up for them"* for the rest of that year and for several years later.

Teacher C Theme 3: Consistency builds trust and relationships

Teacher C reports building strong positive relationships with their students and colleagues and

using those relationships to help navigate the challenges of working in this school. Table 4.8

displays statements from Teacher C that demonstrate the importance of these relationships.

Table 4.8: Definition and Illustrative Statements for the Theme Consistency Builds Trust and Relationships

Definition of the theme	Statements that support the theme
Positive relationships are built through consistent efforts that are rooted in mutual trust and respect.	*"I enjoy working with the students and my colleagues"* *"The relationships that I have formed with my students and fellow teachers have led me to stay here"* *"...I have a good rapport with my students. These relationships are the basis of my classroom management"* *"Long story short, I ended up being the Senior Class Advisor for that class of students because of the relationships that we were able to build after that conversation"* *"I have a great relationship with the majority of my coworkers"* *"...my coworkers continue to be my support system to vent, bounce ideas off of, etc."* *"I rely on my support systems (coworkers, family, friends, etc.) to help me through the difficult times..."*

Consistency builds trust and relationships

Teacher C reported having positive relationships with students. However, they experienced challenges forming these relationships in the beginning and struggled with managing student behaviors. Teacher C struggled through that first year until they began being more intentional about building relationships with their students. Since then, Teacher C has learned how to build relationships with students and uses those relationships to manage their classroom effectively. Teacher C also reported having positive relationships with their colleagues. These relationships have been critical in Teacher C's success in managing student behaviors and in staying at the school. Teacher C reported having a *"good"* relationship with their administrators, but they noted that they could receive more support from them in the form of giving feedback more frequently. This could indicate that Teacher C does not reap the same benefits from these relationships as they do the relationships with their students and colleagues.

Summary

All three teachers emphasized the importance of positive relationships with their students. What is especially interesting is that the three Teachers describe the mutual benefits of those relationships in different ways. Teacher A, for example, believes that they are meeting students' needs by being caring, nurturing, and supportive. In return, Teacher A receives fulfillment and joy from these relationships. Teacher B and Teacher C went further in their descriptions of the importance of building positive relationships in which students feel cared for and supported. Teachers B and C reported leveraging these relationships to manage their classrooms.

Although the teachers described varying degrees of cultural awareness, all three teachers reported that they have positive relationships with students and that they attempt to incorporate students' cultures into their lessons. All three of the teachers described feeling joy when students

are successful at school and in their personal lives. Additionally, all three teachers named their students as being one of the main factors in their decision to remain at the school. These relationships also strengthen the teachers' resilience (Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012).

Relationships with colleagues were also reported as being important to all three teachers. The teachers indicated that not all of their relationships with their colleagues are positive. However, the positive relationships they do have are described as *"respectful"*, *"supportive"*, and *"close"*. These relationships are a source of support, and the teachers rely on their colleagues for help navigating the challenges of the school. This support system strengthens the teachers' resilience (Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013; Hong, 2012). Additionally, the teachers' trust in one another strengthens their collective efficacy for building relationships with students and for helping students be successful (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2014). Not all of the teachers feel supported by their administrators, and the feelings regarding the administration varied. Teacher B and Teacher C described their relationships with the principal and assistant principals as *"good"*, while Teacher B's response of *"[n]o challenges at the moment"* implies some reservations. Teacher C indicated that they desire more instructional support from the administration team. Teacher A has found it difficult to build relationships with administrators since turnover at the school is high. However, Teacher A focuses their attention on the colleagues with whom they have strong positive relationships.

All of the teachers demonstrated having inherent characteristics that support their resilience and help them to find success at this school. All three teachers indicated having high feelings of self-efficacy for building relationships and for teaching. For Teacher C, this self-efficacy was developed as the result of experiencing great challenges during their first year at the

school. Teacher A and Teacher B demonstrated high self-efficacy for teaching and responded that they found success, that they watched their students grow, and that their students learned as a result of their teaching. High self-efficacy for teaching is a factor of resilience (Hong, 2012). Additionally, all of the teachers demonstrated being open to receiving feedback and support from their colleagues. Teacher C credited support from a colleague as one of the main reasons they were able to persist through their first year at the school. They have formed trusting relationships with their colleagues, and they turn to their colleagues for help when they need it. Their ability to seek help when needed is also a factor of their resilience (Castro et al., 2010). Finally, all of the teachers feel a sense of commitment or responsibility to their students. Teacher A believes that their students need them and the strengths they offer as a teacher. Teacher A also makes a commitment to their students that they will always be there to love and support them. Responsibility was a key theme of Teacher B's responses, and they indicated having a duty and a responsibility to teach their students. Teacher C made a commitment to be a teacher that students could depend on. Teacher C strives to be a consistent fixture in the school and feels intense guilt when they think about leaving the school. While these commitments are different, they help each teacher persist in the face of challenges.

Examining What They Did Not Say

The summary above explores the themes that were derived from the statements provided by the three participants in response to the questions in the survey. There was, however, an additional finding that arose from what the participants did not say. While all three teachers described having *"positive"*, *"strong"*, or *"caring"* relationships with their students, none of them provided insights regarding the steps they take to learn about their students, their students'

families, or the community in which their students live. Only Teacher A described seeking

opportunities to learn about their students' cultures. When asked about the experiences they have

had with the cultures represented in their school's community, Teacher A responded *"I have*

taught in the cultures represented by my students for almost my entire career. I spend time at

after school activities, talking with students' families and with students. I seek out trainings and

literature to expose myself and deepen my knowledge and understanding of their cultures".

Teacher B and Teacher C indicated that they learn about their students' cultures through

their interactions with them at school. When asked about their experiences with their students'

cultures, Teacher B's response was simply *"[d]aily, with my students"*, and Teacher C's answer

was, *"I have had positive experiences overall. I am appreciative of new cultures and enjoy*

learning about them through my interactions with students and colleagues". Both of these

responses suggest that Teachers B and C are operating within their white privilege. As McIntosh

(1989) described, the teachers are members of the dominant culture, so they have the privilege to

be oblivious to the cultures of those around them. Even in a school that is predominately black,

the teachers' culture is the dominant one in society, so they do not have to learn about the

cultures of their students if they choose not to. This lack of knowledge is harmful to the students

they claim to love. Without understanding students' cultures and experiences, teachers are not

able to truly be successful with their students. Milner (2010) explained, "[t]eachers who adopt a

color-blind approach often do not possess the racial knowledge necessary for pedagogical

success with diverse students, especially students who are placed on the margins of teaching and

learning based on their racialized interactions and experiences inside and outside of the

classroom" (p. 121). Milner went on to explain,

When teachers operate mostly or solely from their own cultural references and ways of knowing and experiencing the world, the learning milieu can seem foreign to students of color, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, students whose first language is not English, and students who live or have lived in different regions of the country or world. Cultural conflicts in the classroom can result in negative consequences for such students because there are few points of reference and convergence between teachers and students (p. 122)

Additionally, all three teachers referred to challenges in their students' lives outside of school. For example, Teacher A explained that their students have the *"…added challenge of overcoming the obstacles in their lives…"*, but did not explicitly name those obstacles. It is possible that the challenges the teachers referenced were the result of their students experiencing poverty. According to Milner (2013), students living in areas of concentrated poverty are more likely to experience health and nutrition problems, abuse, or homelessness. All of these experiences create barriers to student learning. However, since the teachers did not name or describe specific obstacles, it is impossible to conclude if they engaged in any exploration of how race and poverty create the challenges that their students experience. This is, again, an element of white privilege. McIntosh (1989) explained that, "[p]ower from unearned privilege… is in fact permission to escape…" (para. 40). DiAngelo (2011) argued that white people are free from the "psychic burden" of race and racism. She explained,

> Race is for people of color to think about – it is what happens to "them" – they can bring it up if it is an issue for them (although if they do, we can dismiss it as a personal problem, the "race card", or the reason for their problems). This allows whites to devote

much more psychological energy to other issues, and prevents us from developing the stamina to sustain attention on an issue as charged and uncomfortable as race (p. 63)

Because of their privilege, all three participants have the power to escape the discomfort of examining race and poverty. That escape, while harmful to their students, could be a factor of their resilience.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings and Recommended Actions

Introduction

      This study was conducted in a hard-to-staff school in a large, urban district and was guided by the following research questions:
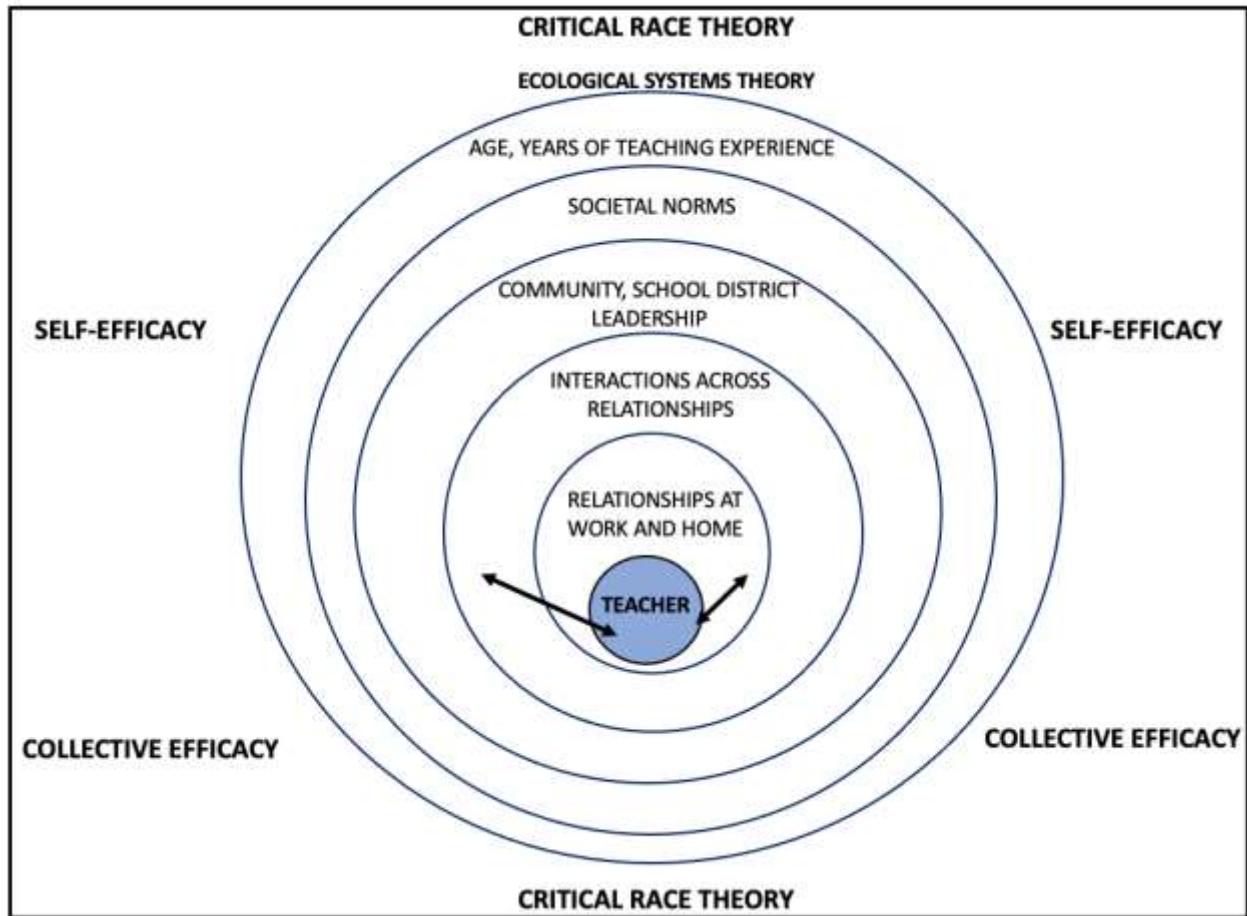
- o *What are the personal factors that strengthen resilience in teachers in hard-to-staff schools?*

- o *What organizational factors impact teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools?*

Participants for the study were selected using snowball sampling. The assistant principal was given a list of criteria to select teachers for the study. Once those teachers were identified, the assistant principal provided teachers with the link to the anonymous Qualtrics survey. Three teachers completed the survey. Responses were analyzed using close reading and the theoretical framework that emerged from the literature review.

      The findings are discussed in relation to the research questions. The discussion of the findings draws upon the theoretical framework designed for the study (Figure 2.1) which is included again for convenience and identified as the Durant Theoretical Framework for Understanding and Fostering Teacher Resilience.

Figure 2.1

The Durant Theoretical Framework for Understanding and Fostering Teacher Resilience

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What are the personal factors that strengthen resilience in teachers in hard-to-staff schools

The participants in this study demonstrated characteristics of resilience that were found in the literature: a) a sense of commitment, b) problem solving as a way to cope with challenges, c) strong positive relationships with colleagues, d) the ability to build strong positive relationships with students, and, e) whiteness as a protective factor.

A Sense of Commitment. Each teacher described facing particular challenges at the school. While the challenges varied, the analysis of the responses of all three teachers indicated that they feel a sense of commitment to their students that is a source of motivation that keeps them at the school. For example, although Teacher C was *"tormented"* by their students, they made a commitment to improve their relationships with the students and not leave the school. Teacher C wrote, *"[a]t that point, I told them that I wasn't going anywhere and continued to show up for them day after day".* They also explained, *"I have found that I can be a consistent person for them, and I have an intense amount of guilt if I ever think about leaving them"* (See Table 4.7). Teacher C's response indicated a sense of commitment that all of the teachers shared. Teacher B wrote, *"[m]y students know that I am here for them in all situations, whether it is related to academics or outside of school".* They also feel a sense of responsibility to their students, and they believe that they *"...need to provide the best education for [their students]"* (See Table 4.3). Teacher A described a commitment to their students' academic and personal success. They explained, *"I expect them to give everything they are able at any one moment and to trust me to love them and challenge them".*

Problem-Solving as a Way to Cope with Challenges. All of the teachers found ways to cope with the challenges by finding solutions to problems. Problem-solving is a skill that was identified as being a factor that strengthens teachers' resilience (Doney, 2013). Doney found that resilient teachers used problem-solving skills to remove, overcome, or prevent challenges. Teacher A described a scenario in which they worked to solve a problem and meet students' needs. They explained, *"[a] course that was requested and is needed according to the course catalog was removed…I met with administration to request that the course be offered again to*

meet the needs. I spent a great deal of time working with administration to explain the need and to help build rosters". Teacher A described themselves as being *"...proactive in trying to help resolve the issues and come up with solutions"*. They also described themselves as being *"...a strong leader for students and colleagues in this space"*. Teacher B described their approach to problem solving with an "*open [mindset]*". They described inconsistent communication as a problem at their school. In an attempt to mitigate the problem, Teacher B attempted to improve their own communication. They wrote, *"[i]n order to navigate this (for myself), I communicate as much as possible"*. When Teacher C experienced a particularly challenging group of students, they communicated with the students to better understand the problem. Instead of giving up, Teacher C *"...just sat down and had a conversation with these students"* to help understand the problem and identify a solution to move forward.

<u>Strong Positive Relationships with Colleagues.</u> The teachers indicated having strong positive relationships with their colleagues. Teacher B described their colleagues as *"...nothing but amazing. I have the best team that supports each other through everything"* (See Table 4.4). These relationships are a significant factor of their resilience (Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013). Additionally, the participants' ability to leverage those relationships as a source of support was revealed to be another factor that strengthened their resilience and aligns with previous findings in the literature (Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013). Teacher C credited a colleague for their success during a challenging year. They wrote, *"If it wasn't for the teacher across the hall from me during my first year, I may have given up that year"*. They also wrote, *"[o]ver the years, my coworkers continue to be my support system to vent, bounce ideas off of, etc."* (See Table 4.6). Additionally, two of the three participants indicated creating and leveraging support systems in other areas of life, with friends and family for example, that also supported their resilience (Day

& Hong, 2016; Doney, 2013). Teacher A wrote *"I rely very heavily on my colleagues for handling stress and for support at school… Outside of school, I rely heavily on my spouse"*. Teacher C described similar support and wrote, *"I rely on my support systems (coworkers, family, friends, etc.) to help me through the difficult times"*.

The Ability to Build Strong Positive Relationships with Students. The participants also described being able to build strong, positive relationships with their students even those who exhibit challenging behaviors or those who do not trust them right away. This is another factor that strengthens their resilience (Hong, 2012). All three participants cited their relationships with students as one of the main factors that keeps them at the school despite experiencing various challenges. Teacher B wrote, *"I have developed great relationships with my students, and it continues to be the biggest reason I do not leave"*. Teacher A described their relationships as *"strong"*, *"close"*, and *"rewarding"* (See Table 4.1). Teacher C explained that *"[o]nce I get to know my students and show that I respect them, they respect me in return"*.

The teachers leverage these relationships and find success with students. This success increases their feelings of self-efficacy for teaching, building relationships, and managing student behaviors, all of which are factors that strengthen their resilience (Hong, 2012). These feelings of self-efficacy are what allows the teachers to persist. Their past successes are proof that they can overcome challenges. When asked why they stay at the school, Teacher A responded, *"I found success"*. This motivates them to persist.

Whiteness as a Protective Factor. An additional factor that might contribute to the three teachers' resilience was their separation from the community. Teacher A referenced their

students having *"the added challenge of overcoming the obstacles in their lives"*. They also listed some of the challenges that come with working in a school in an area of concentrated poverty. They described some of the challenges as being, *"[l]ack of resources, very poor facilities, lack of family engagement, high levels of transience,...student death"*. However, none of the participants indicated a need or intentional process to examine any of the challenges their students face, nor did they indicate the importance or lessons that resulted from the examination of the cultural or societal forces that create those challenges. Only Teacher A described basic ways in which they get to know their students' cultures outside of school. They explained, *"I spend time at after school activities, talking with students' families and with students. I seek out trainings and literature to expose myself and deepen my knowledge and understanding of their cultures"*. When asked how they learn more about the cultures represented in their school, Teacher B's response was simply, *"[d]aily with my students"*. Teacher C's described learning about their students through their *"...interactions with students and colleagues"*. Neither teacher B or C described participating in any activities outside of school that could teach them more about their students, their students' cultures, and the community in which they teach. This could suggest that the teachers by staying on the surface and not delving into a meaningful examination of the systemic and underlying causes of the challenges, the teachers were able to create a buffer between themselves and the community. This buffer could protect the participants from understanding the challenges their students face, and it that limited understanding could also protect their resilience.

Research Question 2: What organizational factors impact teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools?

There are organizational factors that present challenges for the teachers. Some of these challenges extend beyond the reach of the school or the district. Specifically, a school may be impacted by oppressive structures and practices in our society. For example, students who live in areas of concentrated poverty often have greater emotional needs, and depend on their teachers for support (Milner, 2013). These students may exhibit behaviors that teachers have difficulty managing. These challenges, however, may foster the teachers' resilience (Bobek, 2002; Doney, 2013); since, without experiencing challenges the participants may not have learned that they have the capacity to persist. For example, Teacher C experienced a very challenging first year with students who exhibited disruptive behaviors. In reflecting on that experience, Teacher C acknowledged that they, *"...may have given up that year"*, but they made a commitment to their students and instead worked to build strong relationships with the students that lasted until their senior year.

The participants' responses indicated that they thrive off of the challenges they experience. For example, Teacher A wrote that they *"...love [their] students and the care-giving they require"*. Instead of being challenged by the fact that their students need additional support, Teacher A views this in a positive way. The teachers feel pride in being successful doing things that other teachers can't do. Also, their ability to succeed even after experiencing challenges builds their self-efficacy for being successful with those specific tasks.

Finally, the findings suggest that a teacher's capacity for resilience is made up of personal and organizational factors that are interconnected and cannot be understood in isolation. Teachers in hard-to-staff schools experience challenges that are unique. In order to understand

these challenges, one must understand the societal and local practices and policies that create them. For example, it is impossible to do a thorough examination of hard-to-staff schools without understanding how racism creates the communities of concentrated poverty in which these schools exist. It is also difficult to explore the challenges these teachers face without understanding the ways in which the community impacts the schools in which they teach. As a result, the participants in this study are impacted by numerous factors that are outside of their control including students who have greater emotional needs and a lack of resources. However, the factors that cause some teachers to leave this school are what make the participants stay. An example of this would be the participants' success with managing students' behavior and building positive relationships with them. All three participants indicated that these relationships are one of the main reasons why they remain at the school. What's more, their experiences in building relationships and seeing success with their students also strengthen their self-efficacy for building relationships with similar students in the future. When asked why they remain at the school, Teacher A responded, *"I found success"*.

Contributions to the Field of Educational Leadership

This study piloted a theoretical framework (See Figure 2.1) for examining teacher resilience through the lenses of ecological, critical race, self-efficacy, and collective efficacy perspectives. The current study built on previous research efforts included in the review of the literature. Those studies examined resilience using simpler frameworks that used one but not more than two of the theories included in the theoretical framework used here. Examining the data through the more sophisticated theoretical lens of the piloted framework allowed me to both analyze and synthesize the more nuanced demands that the teachers experienced in schools that

are hard-to-staff and draw conclusions regarding the organic and reciprocal factors that contribute to strong, resilient teacher identities. I was able to better understand that the challenges teachers face in these schools cannot be attributed merely to the schools and the students they serve being located in areas of concentrated poverty. Instead, the functionally bonded nature of the theories in the framework helped to reveal, isolate, and underscore the layered connections resulting from the systemic and societal practices that impact neighborhoods, students, schools, and teachers. The framework allowed a deeper analysis of participants' responses to note areas of strength but to see within those positive reports, potential gaps in understanding and less than desirable practices. The findings showed that while all of the teachers reported having strong relationships with students, those same responses, when analyzed using critical race theory, revealed potentially harmful teacher behaviors driven by mindsets that may include beliefs in a white savior complex and mitigated by white fragility.

The theoretical framework employed here may hold promise to help inform practices across systems. Previous research, as well as the findings of this study, suggest that teacher resilience is both personal and also organizational. The theoretical framework used in this study was able to illustrate how actions across systems can impact a teacher's experience in the classroom. At the school level, principals could use this to inform practices designed to foster relationships among teachers. It could also help principals examine the ways in which they could be more present for teachers. At the district level, human resource professionals could use it to inform the questions that are posed to candidates. For example, candidates could be asked to describe their approach to and provide examples of building relationships with students. Also, at the district level, district leaders can use it to perform a base line equity audit to identify the material resources, professional development, and human connections required in and/or missing

from their schools. They could provide opportunities to link the school to resources in the neighborhood. They could be more intentional about the support given to principals in hard-to-staff schools. The framework may be a strategic resource for building and district level leaders as they assess risk and protective factors at each level of a teacher's ecology and their own ecology.

And finally the framework can serve as a visual organizer for professional self-assessment and self-regulation efforts necessary to build and maintain a culture of high expectations for students in hard to staff schools. A culture that is not driven by efforts to save students of color or where professionals enact their privilege to only deal with issues that do not make themselves uncomfortable. Teachers, building administrators, and central office leadership can use the framework to examine the assumptions that guide their individual and collective efforts to not only improve conditions for their students but also to inform and transform their own beliefs and practices.

Recommendations and Implications for Educational Leadership for Social Justice

Based on the findings of this study and the application of the Durant Framework, there are several recommendations that could be made to help ensure that resilient teachers are being placed in schools that are harder to staff and that administrators take steps to build cultures that develop and nurture resilience in ***all*** teachers. At the district level, instead of additional pressure or additional accountability, provide additional support for teachers and for students. One recommendation is to ask teacher applicants about their approach to building relationships, especially with students who exhibit challenging behaviors. Teacher applicants should also be asked how they navigate challenges at work as well as how they cope with stress at work or at home.

The findings of this study could also inform school administrator practices. All the participants in this study described having strong relationships with colleagues, and all three teachers cited their colleagues as being one of the main reasons why they continue to teach at this school. The findings suggest that school administrators should be sure to create a school culture where relationships among teachers is encouraged. This could include establishing teacher teams, peer mentor relationships for teachers who are new to the building or to the profession, and peer observations with feedback. School leaders could be more supportive of teachers by celebrating teacher growth in addition to teacher achievement to strengthen teachers' feelings of self-efficacy for teaching, managing behaviors, or building relationships

The participants' responses also suggested a lack of awareness about their students' cultures as well as the neighborhood they live in. To improve this, administrators could create opportunities for teachers to learn more about the history and culture of the community they serve. They could also prompt teachers to examine the actual challenges their students face as well as the resources in the community that can be leveraged in the classroom. Administrators could also encourage teachers to get to know their students. School leaders could also create opportunities for teachers to examine their racial and cultural backgrounds and to interrogate how they perpetuate racism and oppression in their classrooms.

Ideas for future research

While the participants in this study have been at this school for several years, their impact on student achievement is unknown. A potential future study could be the examination of resilient teachers' impact on academic outcomes. Additionally, the teachers indicated having strong relationships with students. However, the students' feelings about these teachers are not included in this study. In the future, this study could be expanded to include student interviews

that can be compared with the teachers' responses. Finally, this study focused on the experiences of teachers who have been at the school for at least three years. These teachers described factors that keep them at the school. A future study could include the experiences of novice teachers or teachers who are new to the school to compare their experiences with their colleagues and students. Also, similar to Hong's (2012) study, the experiences of teachers who left the school could be compared to those who stayed.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study. This study was conducted at the end of a school year where teachers taught remotely for most of the year due to COVID-19. The survey was sent out towards the end of the school year when schools were just beginning to transition back to in-person instruction, so teachers had additional challenges at this time. Since this survey was administered in the fourth quarter of the school year, teachers were also preparing for testing season. All of these factors could have limited the number of respondents or the amount of time respondents were able to devote to responding to questions. Given these circumstances, I chose to administer the survey electronically. To build trust and encourage transparency in responses, the survey was anonymous. However, since it was anonymous, I was not able to ask follow-up or probing questions.

This study was conducted in an urban hard-to-staff school that serves a predominately black, predominately English-speaking population. It does not give insight into the experiences of teachers in rural schools or in schools with a high population of English language learners. Additionally, this survey represents a very small sample of a larger school district. There were only three respondents from the same school. The teachers' content areas are unknown. This

information could be useful in understanding the teachers' experiences as some subject areas are harder to staff than others. Although the teachers were identified by their assistant principal as meeting the criteria for selection, the school leader's perceptions of these teachers' practice are unknown. Similarly, while all of the participants described having high expectations of students and building strong relationships with them, there is no evidence other than their responses to support these claims. This study does not include the perspectives of these teachers' students. All of the participants indicated that their students experience success. However, it is not clear how the teachers measure success. Additionally, the teachers did not have to provide their curriculum materials, student grades, or any other evidence of academic expectations or achievement.

All of the teachers described feeling a sense of community with their colleagues. It is unknown if the participants are on the same team. Also, the perspectives of teachers on other teams, or teachers who do not experience this same sense of community, are not included in this study.

Implications for My Leadership Agenda and Growth

Through this process, I learned the importance of intentionally collecting data to better understand an issue. I no longer jump to conclusions or solutions without digging deeper to understand a problem. My intuition and previous experiences can guide me, but I no longer make decisions without being able to support them with data and inform that process by consulting relevant theory and research.

I have also learned the importance of asking the right questions. When I designed my survey for this study, there were additional questions that I wanted to ask out of sheer curiosity. However, when I looked at the purpose of my study, my research questions, and the literature

that I reviewed, there was no place for those questions. Additionally, prior to my proposal, there were questions that I had not even considered. This process taught me that I have to be intentional about the questions I ask and to ensure that they are aligned to the area that I wish to study.

I hope to be able to continue to explore the topic of teacher resilience in hard-to-staff schools. Much of the current literature explores why teachers leave these schools. However, I would like to learn more about the dispositions, skills, and behaviors of the teachers who stay. I hope to use that information to inform practices at the school district level or infuse it into my current work in the teacher preparation space.

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Appendix A
Email to Participants

Hello,

      My name is Tamara Durant, and I am a doctoral student at Duquesne University in the Education Leadership program. This program has a social justice focus, and I am interested in exploring areas of inequity in urban PK-12 schools. Namely, I am exploring teacher resilience in schools that experience higher turnover rates than other schools with similar demographics. I am currently seeking participants for my study entitled The Relationship Among Personal and Organizational Factors that Support Resilience in Teachers in Hard-to-Staff Schools. You have been identified by your school leader as a teacher who exhibits the qualities of a resilient teacher. I hope that you will consider sharing your story as it may help school and district leaders make better decisions for teachers.

      This study will be a confidential online survey in which you will answer questions about your teaching, your relationships, and your beliefs. It will take approximately 35 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential and will not be shared with anyone. If you would like to participate, you will find the survey here: https://duq.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1yM7A3Ix0dngUqa. This link will take you to a description of the study as well as your rights as a participant. By clicking yes to continue the survey beyond the consent form, you will give your consent to participate. You may return to the survey at any time, but the survey will close on May 31, 2021.

Thank you for your consideration,

T. Tamara Durant

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
600 FORBES AVENUE   PITTSBURGH, PA 15282
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:
The Relationship Among Personal and Organizational Factors that Support Resilience in Teachers in Hard-to-Staff Schools

INVESTIGATOR:
 T. Tamara Durant
Doctoral Student
School of Education

ADVISOR:
Connie M. Moss, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
School of Education

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in the School of Education at Duquesne University.

STUDY OVERVIEW:
This purpose of this study is to understand the factors that contribute to teacher resilience in urban, hard-to-staff schools. Schools in communities of higher levels of poverty often have more challenging working conditions (Horng, 2009; Milner, 2013). Due to the working conditions, teachers leave these schools at higher rates than schools in more affluent communities. These schools are usually identified by districts as being hard-to-staff because of their high turnover rates. Instead of exploring why teachers leave these schools, I would like to explore why teachers stay in them. I will survey five to seven teachers from an urban public school in Western Pennsylvania. This survey will be completed online and will be anonymous and confidential.

PURPOSE:
You are being asked to participate in a research project that is investigating teacher resilience in hard-to-staff urban schools. You have been identified as a possible participant for this study because you meet the following criteria:
· 	Sets high expectations for students
· 	Has been at the school for over three years
· 	Is able to bounce back after experiencing a setback
· 	Persists in the face of challenges

- ·   Expresses that challenges are something that can be overcome
- ·   Has boundaries between work and home
- ·   Has positive relationships with students (and possibly with families)

PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES:
If you provide your consent to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey in which you are asked 16 questions about your experiences at work. You will receive a link from your principal to anonymously respond to 16 open-ended questions related to teaching in a hard to staff urban school. The responses should take you approximately 35 minutes to complete. You will be asked to provide your response during a 14-day window of time that includes two weekends. This is the only request that will be made of you. Your responses will be anonymous and will be kept confidential.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:
There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, but no greater than those encountered in everyday life. Your participation or non-participation in this research will not affect your employment status or your evaluation as an employee. Some of the survey questions could prompt an emotional response.
This study is designed to benefit students and staff at schools that experience challenging conditions and high teacher turnover. Understanding why teachers stay at these schools could inform decision-making at the school or district level.

COMPENSATION:
There will be no compensation for participating in this study.
There is no cost for you to participate in this research project.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
I have supplied your principal with a link to the study. Your principal did not give your name or any other identifiable information. Your participation in this study, and any identifiable personal information you provide, will be anonymous and kept confidential to every extent possible, and will be destroyed after the data analysis is completed. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. All written and electronic forms and study materials will be kept secure on a password protected computer. Additionally, your contact information, IP address, and location data are not recorded by the Qualtrics platform.

Any publications or presentations about this research will only use data that is combined together with all participants; therefore, no one will be able to determine how you responded.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:
You are under no obligation to start or continue this study. You are free to withdraw consent to participate at any time prior to completing and submitting the survey by simply not submitting responses to the survey. Because the online survey is anonymous, it will not be possible to retrieve your responses once they have been submitted.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

A summary of the results of this study will be provided to at no cost. You may request this summary by contacting the researcher and requesting it. The information provided to you will not be your individual responses, but rather a summary of what was discovered during the research project as a whole.

FUTURE USE OF DATA:
Any information collected that can identify you will have the identifiers removed and will not be used for future research studies, nor will it be provided to other researchers.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:
I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, prior to submitting my responses. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project by completing and submitting my responses to the online open-ended questions.

I understand that if I have any questions about my participation in this study, I may contact T. Tamara Durant at durantt@duq.edu. If I have any questions regarding my rights and protections as a subject in this study, I can contact Dr. David Delmonico, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 412.396.1886 or at irb@duq.edu.

By clicking next and completing the survey, you are giving consent to participate in this study.

Appendix C
Survey Questions

Career/School Questions

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching at this school?
3. What do you enjoy about working at this school?
4. Why did you stay at this school after your first year there? Why do you continue to stay?
5. What is your relationship with your students? How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.
6. What are your expectations for your students' success?
7. Describe your relationships with your principal and assistant principals. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.
8. Describe your relationships with your coworkers. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.
9. What are the major challenges you face at this school? Why are these the major challenges and how do you navigate those challenges?
10. Describe a time when you faced a challenge at work. What was the challenge? How did you handle it? What was the result?
11. How is your approach to handling difficulties at school the same or different than your approach to difficulties in your life outside of school? Explain or give examples.
12. Do you feel you have the necessary resources to support you and your students?

Personal History

13. What experiences have you had with the cultures represented in your school's community?
14. How have those experiences informed your approach to your practice?
15. How have those experiences informed your relationships with your students?
16. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

Appendix D
Teacher A's Responses

Q1. How long have you been a teacher?

7 years

Q2. How long have you been teaching at this school?

4 years

Q3. What do you enjoy about working at this school?

I love my students and the care-giving they require. I love the relationships I build with my students and the added challenge of overcoming the obstacles in their lives to see their successes. I always say "The lows are low, but the highs are SO high" working with my students.

Q4. Why did you stay at this school after your first year there? Why do you continue to stay?

I found success, I have extremely rewarding relationships with my students, and I am able to be a strong leader for students and colleagues in this space. My students need and thrive with the strengths I am able to offer as a teacher.

Q5. What is your relationship with your students? How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

I have strong, close relationships with my students and feel very strongly protective of all of them. I am "mama bear" for most of my students and often fill the role of teacher as well as caregiver. This supports me and gives me fulfillment because I am very good at loving and caretaking and pushing students with love. I am constantly fighting to create personal time and to leave my school life at school.

Q6. What are your expectations for your students' success?

My students are expected to work as hard as they can every day and to communicate the challenges or needs they have with me openly so that I can help them work in a flexible way. School and life are not mutually exclusive, but one size doesn't fit all and if students make me aware of their needs, we can always find a path and a way for them to demonstrate their learning and engage fully. I expect them to give everything they are able at any one moment and to trust me to love them and challenge them.

Q7. Describe your relationships with your principal and assistant principals. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

Our principal and assistant principals change so frequently in this building that it becomes difficult to become close to one team to work well together and know each other's styles and needs. Our principal is critical in this building since we are always somehow an exception to the rest of the district and so much of what goes on here is up to the principal. This is very challenging .We struggle with contract compliance and respect which constantly sucks my energy and joy.

Q8. Describe your relationships with your coworkers. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

I have a team of very supportive, respectful and close coworkers. These people support me and allow me to support them. There are some teachers in the building who drain my energy and choose to do the least possible, which I find extremely depressing and difficult to be around

Q9. What are the major challenges you face at this school? Why are these the major challenges and do you navigate those challenges?

Constant criticism from the district, community and administration about school achievement. Lack of resources, very poor facilities, lack of family engagement, high levels of transience, principal and teacher attrition, student death, These are major challenges to me because they take away from my energy and feeling of ability to make change. I rely on my colleagues for support and am an active leader in the school to make as much change and impact decisions as much as possible.

Q10. Describe a time when you faced a challenge at work. What was the challenge? How did you handle it? What was the result?

A course that was requested and is needed according to the course catalog was removed. My students struggled in the higher level class, and I met with administration to request that the course be offered again to meet the needs. I spent a great deal of time working with administration to explain the need and to help build rosters. I was assured the class would be offered. It was not.

Q11. How is your approach to handling difficulties at school the same or different than your approach to difficulties in your life outside of school? Explain or give examples.

I rely very heavily on my colleagues for handling stress and for support at school with difficulties. Outside of school, I rely heavily on my spouse. I handle difficulties very much the same way...I am proactive in trying to help resolve the issues and come up with solutions. I try to balance my impact and spend energy on things that I have the power to change or affect.

Q12. Do you feel you have the necessary resources to support you and your students?

Absolutely not

Q13.What experiences have you had with the cultures represented in your school's community?

I have taught in the cultures represented by my students for almost my entire career. I spend time at after school activities, talking with students' families and with students. I seek out trainings and literature to expose myself and deepen my knowledge and understanding of their cultures.

Q14. How have those experiences informed your approach to your practice?

My practice is constantly evolving and growing based on my learning and experience. I am very responsive to the students in front of me, but as my understanding of students has grown over the years, I have begun to rely more on my own experience with students and less on the "quick fix" or textbook approaches. I am highly reflective and am constantly monitoring and adjusting based on student responses and needs.

Q15. How have those experiences informed your relationships with your students?

My practice is so intertwined with my relationships with students that I would echo exactly what I stated for Q14.

Q16. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

white

Q1. How long have you been a teacher?

7.5

Q2. How long have you been teaching at this school?

5

Q3. What do you enjoy about working at this school?

There are two key factors that I enjoy at my school: my students and my co-workers.

Q4. Why did you stay at this school after your first year there? Why do you continue to stay?

My students. My current group of seniors have been my students since I began here. It has brought me so much joy watching them grow over the years, improving in their school work and personal lives. I have developed great relationships with my students and it continues to be the biggest reason I do not leave. My co-workers are nothing but amazing. I have the best team that supports each other through everything.

Q5. What is your relationship with your students? How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

Building relationships with students is key in teaching. At the beginning of the year, I begin with simple things to get to know them, understand them and make sure that I can provide the best for them. My students know my expectations and know that I will hold them to those expectations. My students know that I am there for them in all situations, whether it is related to academics or outside of school. Relationships are KEY to a successful classroom.

Q6. What are your expectations for your students' success?

My students are expected to show growth in their own personal knowledge. My students are expected to follow directions and lessons, complete work, ask for assistance and always put forth their best efforts. In order for my students to be successful, I need to provide the best education for them.

Q7. Describe your relationships with your principal and assistant principals. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

In my opinion, I have good relationships with my principal and assistant principals. When you need something or need support, they are able to listen and provide that support. No challenges at the moment.

Q8. Describe your relationships with your coworkers. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

In any work environment, relationships with your co-workers is essential. My department and I have helped each other through many easy and difficult situations. We support each other at all times. I know that I can talk to them, without feeling judged or worrying about my outcome from the conversation. My relationship with my co-workers is one of the reason that I am not leaving.

Q9. What are the major challenges you face at this school? Why are these the major challenges and do you navigate those challenges?

Communication. The communication throughout the building is not consistent. In order to navigate this (for myself), I communicate as much as possible.

Q10. Describe a time when you faced a challenge at work. What was the challenge? How did you handle it? What was the result?

Challenge: Filling into someone else's shoes when it was not my responsibility. How did I handle it: I took the task on as my own responsibility. The result: My students did not lose learning during this time because I was able to teach them.

Q11. How is your approach to handling difficulties at school the same or different than your approach to difficulties in your life outside of school? Explain or give examples.

I approach all situations with an open-minded set. Every situation is different, just like every student is different.

Q12. Do you feel you have the necessary resources to support you and your students?

Yes.

Q13. What experiences have you had with the cultures represented in your school's community?

Daily, with my students.

Q14. How have those experiences informed your approach to your practice?

I am a teacher because of my students. All of their experiences are key in my teaching, incorporating their culture into the classroom.

Q15. How have those experiences informed your relationships with your students?

I am a teacher because of my students.

Q16. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

White.

Q1. How long have you been a teacher?

8 years

Q2. How long have you been teaching at this school?

6 years

Q3. What do you enjoy about working at this school?

I enjoy working with the students and my colleagues.

Q4.Why did you stay at this school after your first year there? Why do you continue to stay?

The relationships that I have formed with my students and fellow teachers have led me to stay here. Our students are so accustomed to teachers coming and going that they don't know who they can count on. I have found that I can be a consistent person for them and I have an intense amount of guilt if I ever think about leaving them.

Q5. What is your relationship with your students? How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

In general, I have a good rapport with my students. These relationships are the basis of my classroom management. Once I get to know my students and show that I respect them, they show me respect in return.

Q6. What are your expectations for your students' success?

I try to hold both high behavioral and academic expectations for my students. They know when they walk into my classroom, that we will be learning and working together as a team to ensure that everyone is successful.

Q7. Describe your relationships with your principal and assistant principals. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

I have a good relationship with my principal and assistant principal. I wish that they were more visible in my classroom beyond just my formal observations. Sometimes it feels like they are only there to give a summative rating rather than help me get better by offering constructive feedback with follow-up.

Q8. Describe your relationships with your coworkers. How do these relationships support or challenge you? Explain.

I have a great relationship with the majority of my coworkers. If it wasn't for the teacher across the hall from me during my first year, I may have given up that year. Over the years, my coworkers continue to be my support system to vent, bounce ideas off of, etc.

Q9. What are the major challenges you face at this school? Why are these the major challenges and do you navigate those challenges?

Communication is a challenge. We are often given directives with short notice or ones that do not align with the best interests of our students. If the lines of communication between admin and teachers could be improved, I think we could be much more productive overall.

Q10. Describe a time when you faced a challenge at work. What was the challenge? How did you handle it? What was the result?

I have encountered many challenges while working at this school; however, in particular, I remember my 9th period class during my first year of teaching. This class had several students that would openly be disrespectful and disrupt class every single day. Eventually, I just sat down and had a conversation with these students. They expressed to me that they thought it was fun to torment new teachers to try to get them to quit and that they didn't know who they could trust. At that point, I told them that I wasn't going anywhere and continued to show up for them day after day. Long story short, I ended up being the Senior Class Advisor for that class of students because of the relationships that we were able to build after that conversation.

Q11. How is your approach to handling difficulties at school the same or different than your approach to difficulties in your life outside of school? Explain or give examples.

I would say that I do not give up easily. Even when I encounter something difficult, I continue to work through it. I rely on my support systems (coworkers, family, friends, etc.) to help me through the difficult times in both situations.

Q12. Do you feel you have the necessary resources to support you and your students?

In general, yes. I feel that we have the resources available, but we are not using them to their full potential.

Q13. What experiences have you had with the cultures represented in your school's community?

I have had positive experiences overall. I am appreciative of new cultures and enjoy learning about them through my interactions with students and colleagues.

Q14. How have those experiences informed your approach to your practice?

There are certain things that I am definitely more aware of. When I am planning a lesson, I am always trying to think of how I can make it relevant for my students.

Q15. How have those experiences informed your relationships with your students?

I still come back to mutual respect. I always convey to my students that even though our backgrounds may be different, at the end of the day, I respect them as individuals and am here to help them be successful.

Q16. How do you identify your race/ethnicity?

non-Hispanic white