Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.

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ABSTRACT

Interest in resilience, as a response to widespread adolescent challenges, has gained prominence and traction in research. With a focus on developing resilience in young women in the secondary school context, this project addresses the growing concern around youth mental health in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Schools have a vital role in empowering young people to understand and protect their emotional health, and in fostering robust, supportive and positive connections with others whom young people can rely on when faced with adversity.

The current study explored young women's perspectives on resilience and aimed to identify ways schools can strengthen their own practices to support the development of resilience for young women in the secondary school setting. The research participants were Year 10 and 11 female students aged between 14 and 16 years, from a large, urban mainstream secondary school in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This age group is a crucial time for adolescents as they move into their senior schooling years and experience the pressures of academic expectations and personal development.

The study drew on the tradition of practitioner research and embraced a holistic perspective and approach, which is gaining momentum and popularity in the field of youth wellbeing research. The methods used to collect qualitative data were interviews and a focus group. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data.

This study revealed that young women's emotional resilience is multifaceted and complex. Findings show that a support group of people needs to be built around

every young woman for them to feel resilient and thrive. Resilience was found to be influenced and shaped by relationships with others; teachers, friends and school health care professionals; trust; and a sense of belonging.

Recommendations and suggestions of ways forward have been developed with direct reference to the school involved in this study. However, the findings and recommendations may be of interest to other secondary schools in Aotearoa, New Zealand that seek to strengthen their practices to support the development of resilience for young women in their school community.

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Firstly, I want to thank TeachNZ for funding my research and allowing me the opportunity to dedicate time to this study. Having the opportunity to undertake research that contributes directly to nurture young women's resilience in a school context I am part of, is a privilege. As I see it, schools have a vital role to play in empowering young women to understand and protect their emotional health and thrive. Their good mental health is an investment in everyone's future.

Throughout my Master's journey I was privileged to be supported by many and only through their care have I completed my study although it took longer than I had anticipated.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene

Global research and interest in resilience have increased tremendously during the 21st century, and resilience is one of the current priorities of public health agendas in countries worldwide (Aranda & Hart, 2014; Herrman & Llopis, 2012). This priority is accepted as a response to the emergence of mental health problems in a diverse and ever-changing world that confronts individuals and their communities. Aotearoa New Zealand is no exception to this problem (Aranda, Zeeman, Scholes & Morales, 2012; Bhamraa, Dani & Burnarda, 2011; Bor, 2014).

Interest in resilience as a response to widespread adolescent challenges has gained prominence and traction in research (Aldridge et al., 2016; Martin, 2002; Zimmerman et al., 2013). With a focus on developing resilience in young women within a secondary school context, this project addresses the growing concern around youth mental health in Aotearoa New Zealand (Gibson et al., 2017; Ministry of Education, 2017). This project aimed to identify sustainable ways in which schools can strengthen their practices to nurture and help adolescent women to thrive as they move forward into the pressures and challenges of senior schooling years and beyond.

There is a consensus among researchers that the rise of youth mental health problems reflects the rapidly changing and complex world in which young people

live. When faced with life's adversities and challenges, feelings of isolation and powerlessness are experienced by many youths as they struggle to cope and move forward (Ager, 2013; Angelkovski, 2016). As Gluckman's (2017) discussion paper on youth suicide in Aotearoa New Zealand reported: "...the way that young people live their lives has changed greatly over recent decades and this has created a range of poorly understood but probably critical pressures that affect their psyche and behaviour" (p.1).

So, time is of the essence as we seek to find ways to alleviate the pressures and struggles faced by youth in our communities as mental health statistics worsen, as revealed in the current results of the New Zealand Health Survey administered by the Ministry of Health (2018). Findings from this annual survey, which provides updates on the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders, show an alarming trend: the incidence of young people's (15- to 24-year-olds) psychological distress has steadily increased from 8.8% in the 2015/2016 year, to 11.8% in the 2016/17 year and most recently, 13.2% in the 2017/18 year.

These grave statistics indicate that many young people desperately need better access to and support from health services before they reach a breaking point, which, as articulated by Burns and Birrell (2015) if "not properly addressed can deteriorate, impacting significantly on the quality of a young person's life" (p.5). This need for more significant support was also emphasised in Gluckman's (2017) report on youth suicide and prevention. Gluckman stated that admissions to hospital for young people due to self-harm "are about 50–100-fold greater than those for [attempted] suicide and many younger people may have suicidal thoughts, even though they may not commit self-harm or attempt suicide" (p.2).

There is widespread agreement that early intervention and engaging youth before problems emerge or escalate can dramatically improve outcomes and prevent transition to long-term issues (Burns & Birrell, 2015; Connor, 2017; New South Wales Health Department, 2001; Stengard, 2010).

Youth suicide rates in Aotearoa New Zealand have continued to rise for the fourth consecutive year, and 2018 showed the highest rise since 1999 (Ministry of Justice, 2018). The rise has placed Aotearoa New Zealand as having the highest youth suicide rate (in the 15-19-year-old age cohort), as reported by UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2017), when measured against 41 countries in the developed world. However, according to Snowdon (2017) "caution in interpreting the data is needed because of concerns about how suicide data are obtained and recorded" (p.25). Some researchers have aired concern around under-reporting by many countries for some time (Gluckman, 2017; McLoughlin, Gould & Malone, 2015; Wasserman, Cheng & Jiang, 2005). There are many reasons why this is so and why these countries have failed to report accurate statistics. For example, in some countries, suicide is not recorded, has a different classification, or is not reported as a suicide for cultural or religious reasons (Rey & Birmaher, 2009). Despite the possible inaccuracy and discrepancies in the data, this does not reduce the seriousness of increasing youth mental health issues in Aotearoa New Zealand and other global communities, or the need to understand more about the pressures on youth so as to develop appropriate preventative measures.

So, what is being done to help?

Finding effective and appropriate responses to meet the challenges of youth mental health in which to support our young people is now more pressing than ever. The urgency of the issue has produced calls for a strong commitment from New Zealand's government and health care agencies to invest greater time and resources.

One such response came as a request from the then Prime Minister, Sir John Key to consider issues in youth mental health and discuss holistic approaches to prevention. Led by Sir Peter Gluckman, the working group of advisors from sectors including Health, Education, Social Development and Justice, prepared the discussion paper *"Toward a Whole of Government/Whole of Nation Approach to Mental Health"* (2017). The paper acknowledged that the current approach in Aotearoa New Zealand for supporting youth with mental health problems is not working. It is under pressure and unsustainable in its current form and a new approach is needed to provide a continuum of care and support. Strongly recommended was an emphasis on primary prevention with appropriate programmes, starting very early in life in schools, to build up children's resilience and emotional skills, which would follow through with spill-over benefits into the secondary context. Delivered by skilled and competent people, programmes at the secondary level would include promoting resilience and mental health awareness, which may help reduce the impact of stressors in young people and the stigma of mental health. While the paper offered no definite solutions, it emphasised the need to tread carefully with any intervention because of the many failed approaches in the past.

As school is a place where most adolescents spend a large part of their time, school communities are in a pivotal position to foster resilience to improve mental health outcomes in young people (Martin, 2002). Schools have a vital role to play in empowering young people to understand and protect their emotional health as well as fostering robust, supportive and positive connections with others, whom young people can rely on when faced with adversity. Furthermore, schools, teachers and leaders have an ethical responsibility to consider, promote, balance and respond to all aspects of the student wellbeing/ hauora and their needs (Education Review Office [ERO], 2015).

To improve the mental health and wellbeing of youth across Aotearoa New Zealand, a substantial ongoing financial investment from the government is required, as is a framework to support schools to deliver programmes and care that is appropriate and relevant to each school community's values and culture.

In April 2012, the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project (Ministry of Health) was launched to provide a wide range of 26 initiatives across a number of schools, community and health agencies for youth aged 12 to 19 years with, or at risk of developing, mild to moderate mental health issues. The project's goal is to improve young people's mental health outcomes and ensure youth have greater access to support. Some examples of the project's initiatives include SPARX, a free online self-help e-therapy tool that teaches youth the critical skills needed to help fight depression and anxiety; and, for schools, Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L). PB4L is a school-wide approach that focuses on improving children's well-being and developing a school culture, systems and practices to support students'

learning. The current study's school has embraced and invested much time and effort into delivering a positive PB4L programme since it was adopted in 2013. However, after the demise of the successful and popular Te Kotahitanga initiative, of which the project school for this research was part of cohort one, PB4L is still in its early days regarding cultural adaptations (Henry, 2015).

"Te Pakiaka Tangata Strengthening Student Wellbeing for Success" (November 2017), is the Ministry of Education's new pastoral care policy document, which aims to help secondary schools achieve best practice in terms of student welfare and wellbeing. The document provides practical and evidence-based guidelines for the provisions of pastoral care and is targeted at improving the mental health outcomes for youth at risk of developing, mild to moderate mental health issues. The aim of the guidelines is to encourage each school community to "develop its own plan for providing high-quality pastoral care, guidance and counselling for [its] students, and for integrating this care into its own culture" (p.9).

Gender Disparity and Resilience

Pertinent to this current project is the discussion of gender differences and the development of resilience. The literature indicates that gaining a more comprehensive understanding of gender differences and how individuals achieve resilience could provide valuable insights to help young women build resilience rather than applying a neutral one-size-fits-all approach.

The importance of gender responsiveness was emphasised in Le Masson's (2016) working paper on gender equality and resilience. Le Masson stated that neutral approaches in projects generally "fail to address the specific needs of gender groups and the constraints they face, leading to their concerns being overlooked and the potential to increase existing inequalities" (p.9). I believe this quote's advice could translate to any context and the message demands greater attention and future focus when finding ways to meet the challenges of helping young women to thrive. To do this well and best meet young women's needs, Hirani, Laiiuk and Hegadoren (2016) explain that "a gendered understanding of resilience is vital to the development of gender-sensitive research tools and effective practices to optimise opportunities to promote mental health and wellbeing" (p. 455). In saying this, it is vital to exercise care when selecting appropriate research tools as they also need to be context sensitive.

One gender difference described in several resilience and wellbeing studies is that when faced with stress or adversity, young women and young men are likely to respond with a different range of behaviours (Al-Bahrani et al., 2013; Parveen and Javed, 2015; Rutter et al., 1998). In Hamblin's view (2016), this difference in response could be because males and females use different strategies and coping mechanisms to regulate their behaviours. Also, Hamblin reports that females tend to use a greater amount of emotion-focused strategies such as pondering and talking about their feelings, whereas males lean towards more problem-focused coping strategies; this aspect was also noted by others (Monteiro, Balogun & Oratile, 2014).

It has also been claimed that social pressure and collective expectations strongly influence and shape gender differences in emotions (Brody, 2000). Chaplin and

Aldao's (2013) meta-analytic review of 166 studies with reference to emotional expression in children and adolescent's states that "gender differences in expressions of emotion may not be static and fixed traits of individuals, but behaviours that are dependent on complex transactions with the environment, consistent with social-constructionist theories of gender differences" (p.754). Along similar lines, separate studies by Dozo (2015) and Durik (2006) found that gender differences in emotional behaviour and responses may be rooted in cultural stereotypes and, as Hussain et al. (2015) state, the "gender role is learned through the process of socialisation where individuals learn behaviours and attitudes prescribed by the society" (p.3).

Researchers Blum, Mmari and Moreau (2017), along with a collaborative team of global health experts, undertook a four-year project interviewing children on the cusp of adolescence in 15 countries worldwide to learn their perceptions of growing up was. As the most comprehensive study to date, it offers a global perspective on this issue and reveals universal themes, irrespective of context, culture or family income. The study stated "the period of early adolescence (ages 10-14 years) is also a transitional period in which many health behaviours are acquired. However, the study found this (period) has been greatly overlooked" (p. 53). The researchers emphasised that health interventions to build resilience need to start much earlier, with preteens, to help avoid or reduce mental health risks later as adolescents. Furthermore, the study showed that many mental health risks are shaped by behaviours embedded in gender norms and enforced societal gender expectations, and these behaviours are established earlier than previously understood.

The call for earlier invention with preteens to build their resilience and prepare them for a stronger and smoother mental health transition into adolescence. This resonates with current education concerns and is a growing issue in primary school communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. According to Donaldson (2018), "primary and intermediate teachers see a huge need for pastoral care and counselling in their schools" (para.19). With the rise of mental health issues like anxiety, depression and self-harm seen in children in Years 1-8, "if you wait until high school it's too late" (Donaldson, 2018, para.3).

Resilience and Context

One issue that has received relatively little attention in the literature is the influence of context in resilience research (Cicchetti, 2003; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Mampane, 2014).

Context has been a largely neglected aspect in youth resilience research, and what there is has been concentrated primarily in North American communities (Flores et al., 2005). This concentration of resilience data stemming from North America is noted in Shean's (2010) Western Australian resilience study, which comments that "while this data may be useful for building a generalised understanding of resilience, it is not useful for understanding the unique interaction between individuals and context in any other context" (p.77). Correspondingly, Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) state that resilience is "content and context specific" (p.405) indicating that findings from one context and community may not translate to another setting and population.

Normative judgments derived from other contexts do have value as they are usually derived from reflection and analysis; however, it is essential to recognise that determinants of resilience may differ from one context to another due to the resources and constraints of a specific setting (Ungar, 2004; Ungar et al., 2007).

Therefore, the current study has a unique context; an urban mainstream secondary school in Aotearoa New Zealand. To understand how to best support young women's resilience, it was necessary to learn the pressures and challenges they are subjected to within their specific context, which may be entirely different to those acting on young women in other settings.

Significance of Current Research

This current study provided an exciting opportunity to advance the understanding of young women and their resilience in the Aotearoa New Zealand secondary school context. More importantly, the findings of this study will be of particular interest and significance to the school in which the study was undertaken as it continues to face the challenge of supporting resilience to enable its young women to thrive. It is anticipated that the practical approaches suggested by this study's participants with regard to how the school could best support the nurturing of resilience in young women like themselves, will be honoured.

The active participation of adolescent women sharing their perspectives and realities is significant to and is a strength of the current research, as it provided a

unique insight into how these young women made their own meaning of social realities, which in turn revealed the processes that aided or hindered their resilience. It was, as Shean (2010) commented "directly linked to adolescents' experiences rather than being based on the other people's perception of their experiences "(p.235).

I believe this study can make a small but valuable contribution to research because while there is an increasing body of literature and research on youth resilience (Luther, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Ager, 2013; Allen et al., 2016), there is little on young women as a specific group. Moreover, studies undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand focusing on young women as the primary group have explored mainly other areas such as teen pregnancy (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000) teenage sole mothers (Neill-Weston & Morgan, 2017) and body image dissatisfaction (Curtis & Loomans, 2014).

Despite the small number of studies explicitly focused on young women, resilience as a research topic in Aotearoa, particularly in the area of positive youth development and meaningful participation, is on the rise and achieving positive outcomes (Arahanga-Doyle, 2018; Jansen et al., 2010). However, these studies encompass 'youth' rather than focusing on young women as a group of interest with gender-specific needs. Hence, the findings of this project will make a contribution to the field of research about young women's resilience in the context of school as well as adding to the body of research in Aotearoa New Zealand about young women.

Design of the Research

This project was carried out in an urban mainstream secondary school in Aotearoa New Zealand, which was chosen for two reasons. The first is that it is my school community, where many young women appear to struggle in the face of adversity but have expressed the wish to cope better. Secondly, learning how my school can respond more appropriately to the needs of this particular group of students at this critical stage of adolescent development is crucial if we want to make a positive difference to the wellbeing of young women in our community.

The age group I have focused on – students in Year 10 and 11 – is a crucial time for young adolescents as they move into their senior schooling years and experience the pressures of academic expectations and personal development. Research shows that many academic problems, self-identity issues and social concerns either begin or accelerate in early adolescence (Eccles, 1999).

Research Aims and Questions

This research project embraced a holistic perspective and approach, which is gaining momentum and popularity in the field of youth wellbeing research, as opposed to employing traditional quantitative research methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Walker et al., 2015).

The study aimed to explore young women's perspectives on resilience and to identify ways in which schools can strengthen their practices to support the development of resilience in young women in the secondary school setting.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In the context of my school environment, what are young women's perceptions of how resilience is nurtured in their own school community?
2. What are young women's perceptions of aspects of schooling that impact negatively on their resilience?
3. What factors promote resilience among young women?
4. How can my school respond to and support the nurturing of resilience in young women?

My Perspective

My interest in researching the topic of resilience was motivated by conversations with young women whom I taught and interacted with, in the secondary school context. In hearing their stories about the stresses and adversities they faced, the common thread, no matter the cause, was the inability to cope with the stressors they experienced. When combined with factors beyond their control such as adolescent biological and emotional changes, personal circumstances, inequalities and issues within a wider and changing society, many young women felt completely overwhelmed. Often it seemed some young women were preoccupied by the obstacles rather than focusing their attention on finding positive ways forward. They could articulate and describe ways to build resilience but struggled to live it.

Furthermore, I was both curious and frustrated by how many young women seemed to resist support that was, to my eyes, readily available within the school community. Resilience was increasingly a topic of interest and urgency with many colleagues who expressed concern for what appeared to be a growing number of less resilient students. Many colleagues believed this upsurge was impacting on student well-being, causing a decline in attendance, personal learning and success. My colleagues wanted to learn and understand how best to nurture and support the resilience of young women yet were at a loss how to do so. This concern ignited the question: How can we as a school strengthen our practices to nurture resilience in the young women in our care?

The answer: To ask the young women themselves to share their perspectives seemed the most apparent, appropriate and empowering approach.

The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters.

In this first chapter, the scene was set for the current study and the significance of the research was established. The rationale is explained, and the research aims, and questions were outlined.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter situates the current study within the existing literature on resilience and discusses a set of themes which arose from the readings.

Chapter Three – Methodology

In the third chapter, I explain the design of the current study. The methodology and specific methods of the research are discussed in detail, including the participants, data analysis and the steps taken to deal with potential ethical issues and the validity of the study.

Chapter Four – Findings

The fourth chapter presents the findings from the qualitative phase of the research, focusing on the key themes that emerged from interviews and the focus group discussion.

Chapter Five – Discussion of the research findings

Chapter five presents an analysis and interpretation of the central findings of this study. The discussion is presented under the themes that emerged during the data collection process and relates to issues that were covered in the literature review (Chapter Two), while acknowledging the limitations of the study.

Chapter Six - Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions are made in the last chapter, which discusses the implications of the research findings for schools and outlines suggestions about ways forward.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

"Our lives are a continuing journey and we must learn and grow at every bend as we make our way, sometimes stumbling, but always moving toward the finest within us"

(McGinnis, 1990, p.93)

Introduction

This review explores the literature on resilience and the risk factors and protective processes that can enhance or inhibit a young person's resilience. How resilience can be promoted to help youth thrive in today's educational setting, with specific consideration to the context of secondary school, will also be investigated. The protective processes that enhance and promote resilience in youth during this period of transition are pivotal to the current research and as identified in the literature, are defined and examined.

Understanding resilience

Wong (2011) suggests that over time, there are many ways in which the theory of resilience, through the examination of risk factors and protective processes, has been explored, defined, revised and evolved. A consensus on the definition of resilience has not been reached. However, according to Crawford (2006), Rees et al., (2015) and Wong (2011), there is a general understanding that it is a matter of individual differences, context factors and environmental and adaptive processes, as a result of which an individual has experienced some level of risk and has achieved positive outcomes that foster resilience. However, the diversity of definitions and the broad scope of factors studied can be confusing. A suggestion made by Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) is to ensure that risk, positive

outcomes and resilience are operationally defined. Masten and Obradovic (2006) state that "each research context will have a unique set of risks and positive outcomes that are dependent upon the resources and demands of that context" (as cited in Shean, 2010, p.2). Likewise, Luthar (2006) suggests that resilience is specific to a given context, domain, and age; how the individual perceives their situation will depend on the risk factors and protective processes within their unique context. Furthermore, according to Shaikh and Kauppi, (2010), the degree of resilience displayed by a person in a given context is "dependent upon the extent to which that context contains elements to nurture resilience" (p.169). Resilience is therefore recognised as a multi-faceted process of adaptation that is in constant flux and unfolds over one's lifespan (Graber, Pichon, & Carabine, 2015; Martinez, 2015). It is formed and built by internal disposition and external experiences, relationships, opportunities and contexts (Flach, 1988).

A resilience definition that aligns with the current research in terms of its ecological and holistic approach is that of Ungar (2008), who describes resilience as:

> The capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources that sustain well-being, the capacity of individuals' physical and social ecologies to provide these resources and the capacity of individuals and their families and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways for resources to be shared (p.225).

Relative to the current study and context, Ungar's perspective positions the individual as having the capacity to find resources that promote and reinforce resilience. It also locates the school community and the people within it as a place where youth resilience can be promoted meaningfully by sharing resources in ways which individuals (youth) value and which provides opportunities for a young person to realise his or her potential. As Wong (2011) points out "because resilience is multidimensional, it takes a village to produce a resilient youth" (p. 596).

Risk factors and protective processes

As young people move toward their developmental milestones there are characteristics that promote or impair the process. These are often referred to as protective processes and risk factors (O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009). Research has shown that resilience is a process, not a static or linear construct (Lerner et al.,2006; Richardson, 2002; Shean, 2010). There is evidence to suggest that resilience can grow or decrease over time depending on the interactions taking place between an individual and their situation and between risk and protective factors in their life (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Werner & Smith, 1992; Zuil, 2016). Hence, depending upon the circumstances and relative strength of protective processes compared to risk factors at any given moment, an individual may be resilient at certain times and not at others (Winfield, 1991).

Some of the literature discusses risk factors, which can be the accumulation of adverse life events (Chang et al., 2017; Phillips, Carroll, & Der; 2015; Rutter, 1985). According to Dias and Cadime, (2017) these risk factors "theoretically increase the likelihood of the onset of a problem or maintain the problem" (p.38). A risk factor is a "characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precedes and is associated with a higher likelihood of problem outcomes" (O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009 p. 28). Likewise, risks are defined as "factors that either singly or in combination have been shown to render children's failure to thrive more likely" (Howard et al., 1999, p. 308).

According to Carson, Swanson, Cooney, Gillum, and Cunningham (1992), the significance of a risk factor can vary based on the individual's characteristics; risk factors are also considered to be interactive and cumulative. As stated by Cowan, Cowan, and Shulz (1996), risk must be regarded as a dynamic process, and response to risk varies between individuals and within their life contexts. To be more specific, individuals who may react positively at one point in their lives may not in another (Rutter, 1987). Additionally, as Leipold and Greve (2009) illustrate,

one individual may see one way of dealing with an adverse situation as successful, while another may see that choice as an escape or an unfavourable outcome.

Mandleco and Perry (2000) suggest that some risk factors are more detrimental than others and can have different effects on different people. Also, the impact of the risk is dependent on an individual's vulnerabilities, characteristics (such as personality traits), resources, and perception of the risk (Greenburg, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As Dillon, Chivite-Matthews, Grewal, Brown, Webster, Weddell and Smith (2007) and Masten (2001) indicate, mere exposure to risk factors, even in significant numbers, does not necessarily mean that youth are unable to overcome the effects of risk and develop into resilient individuals. In the same way, it cannot be assumed that adolescents automatically become more resilient over time through exposure to adversity (Lerner et al., 2006). As described by Rutter (1987) the term 'protective processes' captures the dynamic nature of resilience rather than focusing on broadly defined protective factors. Researchers explain that protective processes – both internal and external – may buffer, intercept, or even prevent risk and are associated with positive development and help youth cope more functionally, overcome adversity and promote resilience (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Friborg et al. 2003; Masten, 1994; Werner, 1982). Protective processes help to safeguard youth from the adverse effects of risk factors (Jenson & Fraser, 2011). Despite the risk factors or challenges in adolescent lives that seem unlikely to change, protective processes can be fostered or nurtured to help youth adapt and become more resilient (O'Connell, Boat & Warner, 2009). Moreover, there is widespread agreement that the more protective processes there are in adolescents' lives, and the fewer risk factors, the greater the likelihood they will be resilient, and vice versa (Lucier-Greer et al., 2015; Kendziora & Osher, 2004; O'Connell, Boat & Warner, 2009).

With growing awareness of the social dimensions of resilience, the list of protective processes has become substantial (Olsson et al., 2003). According to Graber, Pichon, and Carabine, (2015) "different protective processes are more central to

life experience and psychological functioning at different times", (p.12). Furthermore, "overwhelming challenges may develop strengths that surface many years down the line" (p.8). Throughout the resilience literature explored in this review, several factors frequently surface as critical protective processes that support success. Protective processes such as caring, access to supportive relationships (family, teachers and peers), self-esteem and optimism, personal agency and a sense of belonging are mentioned in numerous studies as the basis for promoting resilience in youth (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Lachini, & Ball, 2012; Bender et al., 2007; Carbonell et al., 2002; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Krovetz, 1999; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1993; Ungar & Brown, 2008). It is important to note that while protective processes have been seen to promote youth resilience, this does not mean that a process or combination of processes will necessarily be protective for all youth. The impacts of any of these processes may differ considerably depending on the individual and their situation (Crews et al., 2007; Masten, 2001; Vanderbilt-Adriance et al., 2015).

Adding weight to the current study is Erikssona et al.'s (2010) recommendation for further attention in future research regarding gender differences in protective processes. In their review of 30 identified reviews with reference to key processes that protect youth, the authors' findings indicate male and females could differ in terms of their responses to protective factors. For example, a positive family climate may be more important as a protective process for boys than for girls (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008). Also, as Erikssona et al. expressed, there was no consensus in their findings about which protective processes are more important than others. That males and females achieve resilience differently was shown in a study by Cecilia and Anthony (2017) of 390 adolescents aged between 15 and 24 years, in which young women were found to be more academically resilient compared to the males. As explained in the study "the discrepancies in the findings may be accounted for by the fact that each gender has their strengths and weaknesses in dealing with setbacks", (p.5); likewise, Orth et al. (2008), states, the different genders experience hardship differently and use gender-specific resources. As expressed by Bonanno (2008) there are numerous and frequently

unanticipated paths to resilience, and males and females go about it with various mechanisms.

Gender difference was examined by Kim et al. (2015) in a longitudinal study with youth aged 10 to 18 years. The study sought to understand youth developmental changes and protective processes that could inform community efforts to enhance healthy youth development. It was concluded that protective support systems such as family, peers, and teachers afford adolescents different feedback, opportunities and modelling based on gender. For example, females may realise fewer opportunities and move less freely than males in the community due to stricter parental supervision; hence, these differences may provide insight in to which protective processes are more applicable across gender development and could warrant further research (Fagan, Van Horn, Antaramian, & Hawkins, 2011).

In Sun and Stewart's (2007) Australian cross-sectional study of 2492 young adolescents to assess self-perception of resilience, female students were found to be more likely to seek help and reported more positive connections with family and adults in the community than their male counterparts. The researchers noted "early adolescence is a time when resilience is especially necessary as a healthy foundation but needs to be gender sensitive in order to enable the person to make adequate choices" (p.19). Findings from the study indicated further investigation is called for in respect of the gender differences and individual characteristics as protective processes in young adolescent mental health issues and the promotion of wellbeing.

Despite the challenges frequently found in life, some adolescents remain well-adapted and thrive (Martinez, 2015); however, many young people do not. Research has shown that the main difference between adolescents who adapt well despite facing risks and those who end up poorly adjusted is the presence of protective processes (Lee, Cheung, & Kwong, 2012). As such, the subsequent section of this review examines how protective processes may shield or even

prevent risk to help youth overcome adversity and nurture resilience (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, 1994; Werner, 1982). These protective processes were selected for review and inclusion because they are among those most commonly observed in the literature as having an impact on resilient outcomes, specifically in the context of the secondary school environment. Supporting youth through the journey of adolescence and promoting their resilience depends on gaining an understanding of 'their' world.

A sense of belonging - the concept

A sense of belonging has been defined in the literature as the extent to which an individual feel included, respected, accepted, and supported by others in different social contexts (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Hagerty et al., 1992). A sense of belonging has been alluded to as an essential element of psychological well-being in early health literature (Annant, 1967). It can be understood as a fundamental human need for individuals to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Booker, 2006). According to Maslow (1962), the requirement to belong is a basic need and a natural, life-long desire, as people want to be socially connected to other people, feel accepted, and be part of a group. As Baumeister and Leary (1995) communicate, belonging is so vital to our survival that it counts as one of our basic human needs along with nourishment and shelter.

A sense of belonging is a basic need that leads people to build social bonds and to affiliate with members of a group (Hagerty et al., 1996). For example, a feeling of belonging can mean being an identified member of a family or a group of friends or part of a community. Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) likewise conveys that developing and maintaining relationships is an essential human need. Research indicates that people who hold close relationships with others who have feelings of belonging have healthier outcomes in mental and physical health and performance (Allen & Kern, 2017; Juvonen, 2006). The desire to belong is a fundamental human motivation to affiliate with others (Griffith & Powers, 2007),

leading individuals to try to find a place among others, and answer the question, "How can I fit in and also be all that I can be?" (Oberst & Stewart, 2002). A sense of belonging, as Roffey (2011) states, is "so critical to well-being, we all seek ways to connect with others" (p.16).

A sense of belonging is a significant protective factor that contributes positively to an individual's psychological development (King & Boyd, 2016). Mucchielli (1980) informs us that membership is not just about being in or out of a group; it involves the development of personal identification and social identity. As Roffey (2011) stated when referring to the importance of connectedness to youth, "being able to establish and maintain positive social connections has numerous benefits and is essential to everyone" (p.14). Individuals who report belonging to groups are more likely to exhibit positive psychological functioning across a range of variables, including higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, better life satisfaction and healthier transitioning into adulthood (Daley & Buchanan, 1999). In times of need, feeling accepted within a social group can protect and assist the individual (Roffey, 2013; Steger & Kashdan, 2009).

Belonging in youth

Lerner and Steinberg (2004) define the life stage of adolescence as the second and third decades of life (12 to 22 years of age), and over the last 150 years, its duration has extended (Arnett, 2000). According to Steinberg (2014), "this critical developmental period is conventionally understood as the years between the onset of puberty and the formation of social independence" (cited in Curtis, 2015, p.1).

At no other time in the course of the human life cycle do so many transformations – physical, cognitive, and emotional – happen simultaneously (Scherf, Behrmann & Dahl, 2012). Several researchers (O'Brennan & Furlong, 2010; Quinn & Oldmeadow, 2012) agree that while the development of a sense of belonging is

essential for all ages, the priorities and expectations relating to belonging change from childhood to adolescence, making the issue especially significant during this period. Youth, advancing to adulthood, is a time where many mind-sets and behaviours are developed that have long-term benefits, and it is a critical time for nurturing a sense of belonging (Allen & Kern, 2017). As Allen and Kern (2017) emphasise "a sense of belonging plays a fundamental role in adolescent development" (p.7).

In addition to change, adolescence is a time of self-exploration and endless possibilities (Arnett, 2004; Larson, 2017). Youth can conceive dreams and aspirations, shape and solidify values and ideals, and ultimately develop into healthy, contributing members of society (Bonnie, Stroud & Breiner, 2014). Nonetheless, according to Baumeister and Muraven (1996), negotiating these changes can be an intimidating task for many adolescents.

Many researchers, including, Harter, Waters, and Whitesell, (1998) and Routt (1996), discuss the importance of support throughout the transitional stages of adolescence, which contributes to the on-going maintenance of belongingness, and the advancement of identity formation. According to many authors, social support is considered one of the most important protective factors in promoting resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Griffin, Holliday, Frazier, & Braithwaite, 2009; Peacock-Villada, DeCelles & Banda, 2007). Allen et al. (2014) also noted that adolescence is a time when young people need support and connectedness, as this is the time when they are at the highest risk of becoming disconnected and isolated. Having a sense of belonging as an adolescent is an essential factor for positive development. As described by Allen and Kern (2017), it "can provide a deep sense of connection that a young person carries with them into young adulthood and beyond. Without it, the young person can feel lost, disoriented and alone, without the social skills needed to effectively function in their adult years "(p.12).

Considering the significant amount of literature demonstrating the importance of belonging during adolescence, there is little literature that investigates how a

sense of belonging may affect young women as a distinct group. There is a particular need for such research, given that overseas findings emphasise that genders respond differently to feelings of belonging (Cicognani, et al., 2014; Stracuzzi & Mills, 2010). It has been found that young women need a greater sense of belonging than young men (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Sanchez, Colon, & Esparza, 2005). Adolescent women have more friends than do their male peers; however, girls need more nurturing behaviour and have more significant interpersonal concerns than young men do (Kiesner, Cadinu, Poulin, & Bucci, 2002; Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001). For example, Steinberg (2008) noted that intimacy-related issues might be a more conscious fear for adolescent women (compared to young men) as they tend to be founded on satisfying emotional needs.

A sense of belonging to school and resilience

While adolescents may have a sense of belonging in many aspects of their life, such as family and friends, without doubt, schools are an especially prominent environment for fostering this protective process (Allen & Kern, 2017; Bouchard & Berg, 2017). Schools are environments in which to build and promote resilience, and to implement positive interventions, as most adolescents spend a considerable part of their teenage years in school (Dray et al., 2014; Olsson et al. 2003). Significantly, schools not only have an ethical and moral obligation but also a legal responsibility to promote and respond to the well-being of the students in their care (Ministry of Education, 2017).

The literature highlighted the essential role schools play in building and enhancing resilience in young people and in understanding that belonging is an integral component of resilience in this context (Esquivel, Doll & Oades-Sese, 2011; Roffey, 2011; Sanders & Munford, 2016). As Osher et al. (2014) state, by protecting learners, the school creates "a safe harbour." Beck and Malley (1998) also point out that research has recognised that schools' social structure and climate can help to develop school belonging through promoting shared physical

and emotional connections between young people, peers, and teachers. Being able to draw on support from their environment influences adolescents' abilities to build resilience (Lee, Cheung & Kwong, 2012). Enjoying positive relationships with family, teachers, and friendship groups in the school community are essential for a young person's resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

A sense of belonging for youth has been described by Goodenow (1993) as a "sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others ... and of feeling oneself to be an important part of ... life and activity ... " (p. 25). Goodenow's definition was extended by Whitlock (2004) as 'connectedness' - a term progressively used to depict a healthy, protective relationship between youth and the environments in which they live. Whitlock's (2004) mixed methods study examined the perspectives of 318 adolescents and their connectedness in the context of school and community. It was revealed that opportunities to experience a sense of place and belonging during adolescence promote both general well-being and resilience. In addition, when youth felt actively involved and respected within the school community, they felt a greater sense of belonging to school than others who did not feel this way. Similarly, youth who believed they had little agency felt less connected to the school. Furthermore, Whitlock (2004) found that the context of the school was less important to students than the school climate, which helped foster a sense of belonging. Other studies concerning students' well-being and sense of community also highlighted that a sustained and positive school climate matters for youth development (Aldridge et al., 2016; Bottiani, Bradshaw & Mendelson, 2016; Thapa et al., 2013).

Gaining a better understanding of how youth construct their sense of community was the foundation of a study by Evan (2007,) which comprised 17 in-depth interviews with youth aged 15 to 18 years. It was found that when "young people felt heard, they felt like an integral part of that community" (p.699). Additionally, the study participants, when given adult support and genuine opportunities to contribute to their community, reported a greater sense of belonging and empowerment. Research signals that adolescents who actively participate in the

school community are likely to be more resilient and have an increased sense of belonging (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003).

A similar connection between student agency and a sense of belonging was identified by Neely (2015), whose study involved 24 in-depth interviews with youth participating in a journalism programme. The study found that when youth are empowered and have a voice in their communities, they have a greater sense of connection to it. As Sanchez et al. (2005) stated, "in a school where students feel a sense of belonging, it should be known that all people may have a place and can be honoured for who they are and what they can offer" (p.627). Seeking new ways to foster a stronger sense of belonging through school cultural celebrations for students aged 13-16 years was the aim of a study by Niemi and Hotulainen (2015). They found that a student's sense of belonging was determined and influenced by the importance placed by the school community on the student's role and voice, and probably also the value placed on their cultural representation. The study findings also revealed that through the medium of school celebrations, enhanced peer relationships via social participation increased students' sense of belonging.

The role of friendship and peers

Throughout adolescence, young people spend an increasing amount of time with peers and friends, rather than with their families and other adults. Therefore, friendships play a crucial role in the formation of identity (Quinn & Oldmeadow, 2012). Healthy friendships yield social support and acceptance, provide a foundation for well-being and can also provide strong mechanisms of resilience (Collishaw et al., 2007; Drapeau et al., 2007; Graber et al., 2015). Youth who feel a sense of belonging with their peers exhibit better psycho-social adjustment and smoother transitions into adulthood (Tanti et al., 2011).

Rudolph's (2009) study revealed that youth are more connected to school when they have more friends there, and the more socially isolated students are, the less sense of belonging they feel. Also, the study showed that adolescents with strong mutual friendships reported higher levels of a sense of belonging in a school, which indicates that it is not merely the number of friends that matters, but the quality of the relationships one has. These results correlated with similar research findings by Bouchard and Berg (2017) and Vaquera and Kao (2008). Stewart (2008) also reports that a high quality of peer relationships or supportive friendships satisfies an adolescent's need to belong because it fulfils the requirement to relate with others. According to the findings of Hamm and Faircloth's (2005) qualitative study, a sense of alienation and separation from peers is a problem for many adolescents, which can damage self-confidence and sense of worth. Their study indicated that this problem could be alleviated and buffered by having close friends at school who share similar values and behaviours. Furthermore, the value and positive effects of friendship lessened the vulnerabilities and worries brought about in the school setting for many of the participants. Friends are in a unique position to offer care by being attuned to background knowledge, which can help bridge the gulf, nurture a sense of belonging and strengthen resilience (Osterman, 2000).

Coming to understand themselves and how they are perceived in society are significant moments in adolescents' development (Benson & Elder, 2011). Depending on the influence and awareness of peer acceptance, it can shape and determine self-perception, a sense of belonging and define the school experience for many youths. Unger's (2000) study, which examined the accounts of 41 high-risk youth with regard to peer pressure, revealed that the protective processes, such as self-efficacy, had been overlooked in peer pressure studies and that adolescents are not always subject to the influence of peer group behaviour. However, 15 years later, an exploration of 34 adolescents' narrative accounts and meaning making formed the basis of Schall, LeBaron Wallace and Chhuon's (2015) research on how locus of control beliefs contributes to perceptions of peer acceptance and belonging. As defined in the literature "locus of control refers to

the extent that individuals feel influence over their outcomes" (Rotter, as cited in Schall et al., 2015, p. 471). Schall et al. (2015) found that the capacity to engage successfully both academically and socially is gauged by youth self-perception. Adolescents with low social connectedness and a sense of belonging felt they had little control over their social interaction with peers and sensed they were influenced more by external factors in their context. Future research on the protective processes of belonging and peer acceptance needs to be "contextualised within the reality of the lives of the adolescents who are to benefit" (Schall et al., 2015, p. 473). Furthermore, Howard, Dryden, and Johnson, (1999) emphasise that as the body of resilience literature increases, an important point to be made is to remain mindful that young people's understandings and personal accounts may not align with those of adult researchers.

Student-teacher relationships

According to Longobardi, Prino, Marengo and Settanni, (2016), the student-teacher relationship is an essential protective process as the youth advances through secondary school; increasingly so as the adolescent reaches the senior years. This phase of schooling has been identified as one of the high-risk phases for student non-achievement, being defined by fundamental social, emotional and behavioural changes (Longobardi et al., 2016; Quinn & Oldmeadow, 2013). Adolescents who have dynamic and caring relationships with teachers and other school adults are likely to feel a sense of belonging, which is also related to higher academic achievement, positive behaviours, and constructive social outcomes (Ellis, Hart, & Small-McGinley, 1998; Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

The importance of the role of the teacher in building a sense of belonging with their students was acknowledged in Uslu and Gizir's (2017) study of 815 adolescents, using a quantitative design. Gender differences regarding school belonging and how these were influenced by student relationships with teachers,

peers, and family involvement in school were examined. The results indicated that before expecting youth to feel a sense of belonging to the school community, they must first develop an attachment with their teachers. Also, the results showed that for males, family involvement at school was a significant protective process for a sense of belonging, whereas for females, the role of family involvement at home was more significant. As Allen et al. (2016) state, "teachers play a determining role in whether or not students feel that they are cared for, or that they are a welcome part of the school community" (p.33). Likewise, Carson (2014) comments that "being aware of individual students' sense of belonging, acceptance, and inclusion is an important first step in sustaining a students' academic and affective development and well-being" (p36).

Both Allen et al.'s and Carson's views were recognised in Sanders and Munford's (2016) recent research with vulnerable youth, which revealed that the key to fostering a sense of belonging was the committed and warm relationships formed with school professionals. It was reported that opportunities for students to have a voice and be proactive in consulting school professionals for assistance and resources helped build a greater sense of belonging. As a result, the school became a safer haven for the participants and made a difference in the ability of vulnerable youth to stay at school. These findings demonstrate the valuable role practitioners play in cultivating sustainable and caring relationships with youth to help build a protective sense of belonging. However, as Edwards (1995) points out, it is essential that school administrators ensure that teachers also feel a sense of belonging to the school so that they, in turn, can help their students feel the same.

A significant challenge highlighted in the reviewed literature was the need for teachers to have a clear understanding of the phenomenon of resilience and be well-informed of its complexities, along with being able to confidently recognise the characteristics displayed by young people considered to be 'at risk' (Briggs, Johnson & Shepherd, 2002). This need was identified in a mixed methods study undertaken by Green, Oswald, and Spears (2007), which aimed to determine the roles teachers played in fostering resilience in their students. When questioned,

many teachers were found to have a limited understanding of the construct of 'resilience' yet held a strong desire to help young people to manage adversity. In contrast, Russo and Boman's (2007) study revealed that most teachers' understanding of resilience was apparently robust, but they lacked confidence in identifying levels of resilience and in building students' resilience.

As noted by Howard and Johnson (2000), many teachers are unaware of the significant contributions they can make in developing resilience and tend to underestimate their part in supporting children to build protective processes. With increased confidence and faith in their role, educators and other school professionals can be agents for change in empowering students to address their adversity (Angelkovski, 2016).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem in adolescents is becoming an important research topic in response to the increasing and concerning worldwide mental health trends in adolescents (Hrafnkelsdottir et al., 2018; Maldonado et al., 2013), and according to Arahanga-Doyle et al. (2018), "Aotearoa New Zealand is no exception" (p.1). Self-esteem, as a protective process, was identified in the literature reviewed as a contributing factor for a higher sense of belonging at school and the fostering of resilience (Carbonell et al., 2002; Jose, Ryan & Pryor, 2012; Law, Cuskelly & Carroll 2013).

When an adolescent feels good about themselves and their place in the community, they are more likely to overcome life obstacles than an adolescent with low self-esteem who engages in negative behaviours to cope with life struggles (Griffith & Powers, 2007; Motepe, 2007). According to Biro et al. (2006), "self-esteem has been viewed both as a trait (reflecting stability over a period of time), and a state (reflecting response to situations or life events, or a response to cues from other people)" (p. 501). However, self-esteem can waver, depending on recent

disappointments or successes (Pajares & Schunk, 2002). Harter (1999) describes the nature of self-esteem as being dependent on how the individual perceives success, and on social context and processes occurring at the individual, family, school and community level.

Ma's (2003) quantitative study of young adolescents across two school settings showed that high self-esteem in academic and social spheres was the single most fundamental predictor of school belonging. Ma's study also showed that low self-esteem was related to feelings of alienation, decreased participation and lack of school belonging. As Freeman (2005) points out, young people's self-esteem and school belonging seem to maintain a circular relationship with each variable affecting the other.

Girl Guiding, a leading United Kingdom charity for girls and young women, which undertakes annual research to find ways to support the well-being and empowerment of young women, reported in its 2016 findings that each person is unique, and will respond to various interventions differently and in their own time. Another finding, shared by 82% of the 120 young women aged 11-21 in this extensive qualitative study, was that they felt "the adults in their lives are out of touch with their concerns and not providing the information or support they need to remain resilient in the face of increasing and changing pressures" (p.10). It was suggested by the participants in the charity's study that to foster resilience and grow self-esteem, it is essential to have safe spaces to talk and more school support. Some concerns and pressures identified by the young women in the study included bullying, body confidence and image expectations, gender stereotypes and everyday sexism, which impinged on their self-esteem and resilience. The study found that "stereotypes and body image expectations affect the way girls feel they should look and behave and impact on their aspirations and the things they enjoy" (p.15). These insights have also been made in other studies that investigated the impact of stereotypes on young women (Ellemers, 2018; Ertl, Luttenberger, & Paechter, 2017), body image (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005;

Tiggemann, 2005) and bullying, including cyber-bullying (Favela, 2010; Garett, Lord & Young, 2016; Kljakovic, Hunt & Jose; Nilan et al., 2015).

Allen et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis of 51 quantitative studies to inform secondary schools on the factors that best support young people identified optimism and self-esteem as protective processes that influence students' sense of belonging. This fits with similar findings by Jose et al. (2012), Law et al. (2013) and Skrzypiec et al. (2014) that school belonging for youth relates to higher levels of happiness, self-esteem, and self-identity. Other research has shown that a lack of belonging links to anxiety and depression (Shochet, Smyth & Homel 2007).

Interviews and surveys of graduates' 'lived experiences' of urban high schools informed Akin and Radford's (2018) study, which aimed to improve teacher effectiveness in developing the characteristics of self-esteem and resilience in youth. Akin and Redford found that "resilience and self-esteem are key factors to student success and can be impacted by teacher actions and behaviours" (p.20). In addition, participants stated that having educators who mirrored the student body helped build resilience at school. Creating positive relationships with community speakers and educators was also presented as a determining factor in fostering self-esteem and one that should be encouraged.

Optimism

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. —Helen Keller

Optimism is the individual's perception and expectation of positive outcomes, now and in the future, as well as the belief that things will turn out well (Catalano et. al, 1998; Reivich, 2010). In Parveen, Maqbool, and Khan's (2016) view, "optimism is a common human experience; however, it can take on a variety of forms

depending on individual circumstances and particular social contexts" (p.2). According to Gillham and Reivich (2004), "optimism is associated with a variety of positive outcomes and is important to nourish for this reason" (p.150). Research has shown optimism to be an essential protective process for youth during times of adversity or feelings of sadness and can have a powerful effect in adolescents' lives (Carver, Scheier & Segerstrom, 2010; Cousins, Cohen & Venable, 2014; Tetzner, & Becker, 2015; Haggstrom Westberg et al.,2017). Therefore, as mentioned previously in this review, the school context and people within it are in a good position to promote optimism to protect adolescents' well-being and build resilience to deal with problems in life, rather than avoiding them and giving up (Weare, 2015).

According to Gillham and Reivich, (2004), when the stresses of life, tasks, and obstacles become difficult, optimism can help the individual to be more persistent to overcome or alleviate the problem, although unrealistic optimism can have negative effects, as discussed later in this section. As Parveen, Maqbool and Khan (2016) note, "positive emotions not only increase satisfaction and well-being in the moment but also help people build resources that lead to experiencing life as more satisfying and fulfilling in the long term" (p.18). The literature also presents a positive correlation between optimism, self-esteem, and happiness, meaning that people who have high levels of optimism also tend to have high self-esteem (Hutz et al., 2014; Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2002; Wani, 2017). Optimism is a way of thinking and not a perpetual part of one's character; it can be learned, making it a determining factor of happiness, well-being and personal success (Reivich, 2010; Seligman, 2006).

Helping adolescents to internalise optimism through goal setting is seen as one way to drive and inspire them (Sun & Shek, 2012). Sun and Shek's study (2012) revealed that "setting up valued and attainable goals, planning pathways, and maintaining self-confidence and mastery, so as to keep adolescents engaged in the pursuit of goals" (p.5), within the context of a caring and sensitive environment

established by teachers, schools, peers and the wider community, could reinforce optimism and promote resilience.

In Thomson, Schonert-Reichl and Oberle's (2015) investigation, a sub-scale of the Resiliency Inventory (RI) was used to measure the optimism of 1,250 young adolescents from 23 urban and suburban schools. It was found that youths' perceptions of their sense of belonging to their school influenced their levels of optimism and impacted on anxiety levels. Of interest to this study was the finding that supportive and positive relationships with adults are critical during this phase of transitional development, with regard to creating positive beliefs about themselves and looking forward to the future. Also, it was suggested that adolescent optimism levels may have a genetic factor or may be formed through a shared environment, influenced by their family's level of life satisfaction.

Haggstrom Westberg et al. (2017) found a significant increase in pessimism during early and mid-adolescence; an explanation of this result was the exposure to new life events and experiences that are prevalent at this time of youth development and which optimism as a protective process may help to mitigate. However, as Sun and Shek (2013) point out, "unrealistic optimism can be detrimental if people only expect good things to happen and rarely prepare themselves to cope with the situations, or do not make an accurate evaluation of their life" (p.2). Furthermore, optimism appears to change the way young people perceive adversity, as optimistic youth often view adverse events as harmless when they are not (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

Limitations of the current literature

Most of the existing studies on youth resilience have been conducted in the United States and Great Britain, and relatively little research has been conducted in

Aotearoa New Zealand. Such studies have tended to focus on the impact of well-being and mental health initiatives and are not gender- or resilience-specific. The current research will add to the existing pool of knowledge about resilience and make it more relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand secondary school educators and communities in terms of how we can best support young women in our care to build resilience.

The existing literature on resilience also displays a preference for quantitative approaches, which have the advantage of being less time-consuming methods and using larger samples than qualitative research. However, a quantitative approach does not elicit holistic, more profound insights and understandings of "the human experience in specific settings" (Rahman, 2017, p.3), which were sought in this current study. Qualitative research is thus discussed in the following chapter as the method adopted for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this research project to examine the topic of resilience from the perspectives of adolescent women. Firstly, a theoretical basis for employing this methodology in this research is outlined, and then the methods of data collection are described and justified, followed by an explanation of how the data was analysed. Finally, the steps taken to ensure adherence to key ethical issues in the research are discussed.

By using the following research design and methods, the aims of this project and research questions were addressed.

Research design

This was a qualitative research project, drawing on insider and practitioner research. Qualitative research "aims to uncover the lived reality or constructed meanings of the research participants" (Mutch, 2005, p.45). This study relied on adolescent participants to generate knowledge about the topic of resilience. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), "a goodly portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals around those phenomena and through consensus, forms criteria of reality" (p. 197). Aspects of qualitative research that make it appropriate to studies of building resilience include its ability to create fresh perspectives on resilience by focusing on the intricacy of people's experiences and the specific contexts and circumstances of their lives (Ungar, 2003; Punch, 2012). Qualitative research also resists the generalisation of findings and provides a more holistic picture of participants' experiences and views (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The realities and lived experiences of participants were essential to the phenomenological design of this study

(Groenewald, 2004) and furthermore, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) a qualitative approach provides space for the participants' views, which are frequently lacking in quantitative research. However, a limitation of qualitative research is it is more time-consuming than quantitative research and requires smaller sample sizes; this makes any conclusion challenging to generalise to the broader population (Aubusson, Ewing & Hoban, 2009; Punch, 2012). This challenge is reiterated by Noble and Smith (2014), who state that "qualitative research is complex in that it produces large amounts of data and analysis is time-consuming and complex" (p.2).

Practitioner research

Because this project was conducted in an educational setting and in my own workplace, it locates me as a practitioner researcher with the aim of improving, benefitting and making meaningful change in the school environment (Gitlin et al., 1992; Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 1999). According to Costley, Elliott and Gibbs (2010) practitioner research is useful to both the community of practice and the individual researcher; "it embraces complexity and can be empowering and innovative" (p.4).

Nevertheless, some researchers (Enthoven & de Bruijn, 2010; Rodrigues, 2008; Saunders, 2007) illustrate the challenges of practitioner research. One concern mentioned by Saunders (2007) is the "lack of distance from their work often leading to conclusions which can be, in the field of objective research, critiqued for lack of credibility and validity" (p.12, as cited in Appleby, 2013). Another challenge raised by Appleby (2013) is the possibility that "management and other leadership bodies may not welcome critical and seemingly confrontational 'new knowledge' (p.20). However, this direct concern as it related to the current research project was simply addressed; by having the active support of the whole school community, which is currently seeking ways to build the well-being of its students. However, as Ellis and Loughland (2016) stress, "introducing change takes both

time and energy" (p.124), which may impede the successful implementation of the changes and reforms this project recommends.

Despite the challenges and concerns of practitioner research, the benefits prevail (Hilton & Hilton, 2017). As an approach, practitioner research allowed me to work alongside young women to examine the topic of resilience. It is an experience that empowers with the aim of being transformative and having a desire to make a change in the system (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003). As noted by Campbell (2013), an essential aspect as a practitioner-researcher is the "need to look beyond themselves as the audience and share their voices with their fellow teachers" (p.4). I anticipate that sharing the findings of this research with my school colleagues, to reveal the ways in which we as a school community can build resilience in young women and help them to thrive, will enhance teacher practices and relationships with their students in which to ensure clearer understanding of young women's needs and perspectives.

Insider research

Robson (2002) states that insider research is "used to describe projects where the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research" (p.382). Insider research has the unique advantage of an insider's intricate understanding of the community context (Appleby 2013; Coghlan, 2007). Likewise, Drake and Heath (2011) highlight the value of insider research because "the practitioner-researcher has deep and intimate information and insight into the context and practices of a community where the research is being undertaken" (p.11). Furthermore, as Appleby (2013), Hockey (1994), and Saidin (2017) corroborate, researching in a familiar setting and understanding its cultural structure where advanced levels of communication can be achieved.

Concerns about the objectivity of a project carried out by an insider researcher is described by DeLyser (2001). DeLyser suggests insider researchers may face difficulties during the research process because of over-familiarity with the research context and participants. As the insider researcher in this research, it

was essential that research ethics were closely followed and monitored to ensure that the aims of the research were achieved without the potential of bias (Saidin, 2017).

Research Methods

In Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) view, the only "correct" methodology is the one that provides the most useful data for the research question. To achieve the study aims of this project, a qualitative approach was considered the most useful. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) report, the majority of resilience research is based on quantitative data, and although this approach has its merits, it allows no opportunity for new ideas or theory to emerge.

According to Berg (2001), it is essential that practitioner researchers use more than one method of gathering information so that data can be triangulated. Triangulation calls for the use of multiple data sources to verify and illuminate one another (Shagoury & Power, 2012). Putting this knowledge into practice, the data gathering methods used in the current research were semi-structured interviews and a focus group.

Initially, the intent was to hold a focus group with the participants, then interviews later. However, it was a struggle to recruit young women for the focus group, so the data collection forged ahead with the students who had chosen to undertake an individual interview. Once the interview process was concluded, these same participants were invited to take part in a focus group, and four students chose to do so.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with seven young women participants aged between 14 and 16 years were carried out to learn about their perspectives on resilience, with questions based on findings in the literature and guided by the research

questions developed for this study. The interviews took place in a distraction-free meeting room on the school premises. Resilience was not defined for the participants either prior to or during the interview situation. Semi-structured interviews were an ideal method of data collection for uncovering and developing themes that would later influence the direction of discussion in the focus group and afforded flexibility to alter the sequence of questions during the flow of the interview.

Qualitative research that used elements of both phenomenological and narrative design was the best choice for this research because it was congruent with my thought that the lives, stories, and perspectives of the young women participants were the best source of data in this study. The adopting of a narrative approach in this project aimed to provide a real sense of what an individual's world is like through rich detail and insight (Bruner, 1986). Such an approach is concerned with representation and voice (Trahar, 2006). Also, the rendition of the narratives may draw on themes that appeared in the participant's stories (Polkinghorne, 2007).

The purpose of interviewing individuals in this research was to provide an opportunity for participants to provide in-depth information, in a more private setting than within the dynamics of a focus group. Prior to the interview, each participant received the semi-structured open-ended questions. This allowed time to consider and decide whether they wished to continue with the research. Viewing the questions before the meeting proved valuable, as many of the participants said they felt prepared to talk and less nervous about the process. Dixon (2015) comments that "body language on the part of the researcher that is calm and conveys openness will increase the adolescent's relaxation, which helps her tell her story" (p.2075).

The flexibility of a semi-structured interview allowed participants to lead some of the conversations and have a greater sense of ownership of the research process. As Qu and Dumay (2011) point out, interviewing techniques need to optimise the experience for the participants.

As Bell (2010) notes, semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with flexibility as they can query answers for clarification and examine participants' experiences and beliefs. The value of interviewing is not only that it builds a holistic snapshot, but also, according to Berg (2007), it enables participants to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (p.96). A narrative approach was used where participants could tell their stories, accounts, and realities guided by semi-structured open-ended questions. The main goal was to collect data that emerged in dialogue rather than as direct answers to questions. Dixon (2015) suggests "for youth, it is especially important to emphasise non-directed, open, and inclusive questions. The questions need to let the children direct the flow and say what they want to say" (p.2073).

Of interest in this project was the term coined by researchers Reinharz and Davidman (1992) as 'same-gender interviewing'. This is when both the researcher and interviewee are of the same gender. Dixon (2015) notes that "adolescent girls felt comfortable talking about their experiences and feelings to another female who has possibly 'been there'". Likewise, Oakley (1981) comments that women interviewing other women enjoy a greater rapport, as a result of their shared experiences. Furthermore, Oakley states that "if the researcher doing the interview is accustomed to this age group, she may be more comfortable talking with the adolescent female" (p.40). Beyer (2013) concludes that researchers must know the population group they are studying.

Focus group

Mutch (2005), defines a focus group as an interview technique that brings together participants to respond to questions in a group situation and to discuss a topic as provided by the researcher (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Additionally, Kvale (1996) refers to the focus group method as a "construction site of knowledge" (p.2). As this research lay within a qualitative paradigm, it was a method appropriate in which to explore the young women's perspectives on resilience.

A total of four young women consented to be part of the focus group; they had all previously been interviewed in this project. While none of them were friends, they were aware of each other; three participants shared current core classes. One participant was a Year 10, the remainder were Year 11 students. While this may seem like a small sample, the purpose of this study was not to generalise, but instead to examine in detail (Campbell, 2013). Moreover, the number of participants was based on the suggested number for focus groups of youth of between five and 10 (Hoppe et al., 1995; O'Kane, 2000).

One challenge in a focus group is 'group think' (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The phenomenon of 'group think' arises where participants are influenced by each other's responses to the extent that they limit their responses to match those already expressed in the group. It was essential that in this research each participant had an equal opportunity to be heard. Therefore, rules were laid out before the focus group began. It was important to stress to participants that it was okay to agree with each other and it was also okay to share differing or different perceptions. Furthermore, the interviewer must be mindful to encourage responses without influencing or showing judgement towards participants, in order to create and maintain good group dynamics in which participants can share their perspectives freely (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Hansen (2006) points out that the interaction in focus groups may also "spark ideas" that may not have been thought of by one person. In the current project, I noticed this phenomenon. I also observed that when there was active disagreement within the group, the young women were pressed to assess their perspective more thoroughly than in the previous individual interview situation (Millward, 1995).

Analysis of data

In this research, data analysis was used to assemble the data in a meaningful way that was transparent, rigorous and thorough, while remaining 'true' to the young women participants' perspectives and accounts.

In this project, both data collection methods – the semi-structured interviews and the focus group – yielded qualitative data. The semi-structured interviews and focus group were voice recorded and transcribed. I was aware that the validity and trustworthiness of this research rested heavily on the analysis of data. As Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy (2010) stress, the researcher must be aware of personal biases or preconceptions when analysing such data. Maintaining one's awareness, sensitivity and rigour in the research is imperative in order to remain objective and helps foster confidence in the credibility of the research and as a researcher (Patton, 2002). The aspect of 'rigour' was critical in this research as the purpose was to find an authentic representation of the views of the young women and their understanding of the process of resilience, not the researcher's.

As Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell and Walter (2016) state, "the researcher is often both the data collector and data analyst, giving the potential for researcher bias" (p.1802). This bias was reduced by actively involving all participants in this phase of the project. They accepted the opportunity to view the transcripts of their interviews for a review of accuracy and to validate the content (Doyle, 2007). Participant quotes used in the findings chapter are written verbatim, allowing their direct voices and experiences to be heard and honoured in this research (Seitz, 2007). All young women participants indicated an interest in receiving a summary of the research project when it is completed.

Thematic analysis is the method employed in this research study to interpret the data and make sense of it. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (p.5); furthermore, it can generate surprising insights (Nowell et al., 2017; van Manen, 1997). Unlike the quantitative strategy of using pre-determined categories, this qualitative strategy takes its categories from relationships between conceptual ideas generated from the narrative data (Birt et al. 2016). As suggested by Mutch (2005), the thematic analysis approach or constant comparative analysis was completed manually.

Once the data was collected from the participant's interviews and focus group, this study was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase outline for thematic

analysis as a framework to identify patterns or themes that emerged (as cited in Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase outline:

Phase 1: Become familiar with the data by reading the transcripts repeatedly
Phase 2: Generate initial codes
Phase 3: Search for themes
Phase 4: Review themes
Phase 5: Define and name themes
Phase 6: Write up and produce the report

Amid the analysis process, it became apparent, as noted by Braun and Clarke (2006), that "analysis is not a linear process where you simply move from one phase to the next. Instead, it is a more recursive process, where you move back and forth as needed, throughout the phases" (p.15).

A fundamental criticism of qualitative research is that it does not have checks for validity and reliability (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). To ensure integrity and rigour was addressed in the current research, each phase of the thematic analysis was adhered to by following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria as outlined in Nowell et al. (2017).

Ethical considerations

Integrity and ethical considerations were applied in all phases of this educational research. Oliver (2010) remarks that ethical considerations are an on-going concern throughout a research project. Bell (2010) points out that research ethics is mainly about the transparency of the agreement between the researcher and participants, to ensure that the process cloaks and protects those involved from any harm.

As the researcher in this project it was necessary to be prudent. Miller et al., (2012) comment that "researchers need to be prepared to think ethically throughout the life of their study" (p. 8). For research to be morally sound and without prejudice, an appropriate ethical framework is paramount when researching children and young people (Morrow & Richards, 1996). The primary concern must be to ensure the protection of the best interests of the participants. Due to the age of the young women in this project, every care was taken to minimise potential harm to them. Cohen et al. (2007) and Dixon (2015) stress the importance of safeguarding the views of adolescents without compromising their well-being. Likewise, Lehtomäki et al. (2014) suggest affording the participants as much voice and ownership as possible over the span of the research process to ensure transparency.

The following guidelines outline how ethical considerations were put into practice in this research.

Minimisation of harm

An area of concern was the unequal power relationship between me as the practitioner researcher and the young women as participants. To make sure this conflict of interest was dealt with, during the selection process, all students I had previously taught were excluded as participants in this research. Additionally, to ensure no coercion of students or undue influence (Manti & Licari, 2018) recruitment of participants was through advertising of the research, not by being approached by me or any other school staff member. As Nijhawan et al. (2013) point out, "the responsibility of conducting research ethically and genuinely lies in the hands of those involved in it. Everyone must understand their obligations and should not misuse their power for their own benefit" (p.139).

Similarly, Mishna et al. (2004) discuss the topic of power imbalance which is often underlying in research with children. Their work draws attention to the need to be mindful as a researcher that "recognising the power imbalances that occur in

research with children does not make them disappear" (p. 235). Being proactive in finding ways to avoid this issue is crucial.

Guided by a method suggested by Dixon (2015) to create equal power between the researcher and participant, the study conducted multiple interviews with the same person, to promote a greater level of depth. This advice proved valuable as on the second meeting participants appeared more confident in their speech and body language and revealed narratives in greater detail than before, indicating the increasing rapport and equality between researcher and participant. In agreement with this method is Reinharz, (1992) who advocates meeting more than once, as it raises the empowerment of participants by encouraging deeper reflection and trust.

From the outset, the participants were well-informed about the aims and methodology of the project, who would have access to research results, how their data might be used and what their rights were as research participants. Participants had the choice to opt out of either one or undertake both forms of data collection.

It was also acknowledged that the time of year in which data collection would take place was a busy time in the school calendar and therefore if they chose to participate, that the research would not encroach on any of their learning.

The participants were hosted in a quiet space at school, as an appropriate setting to privilege the participants' voices and create a safe and comfortable environment. Developing a rapport with the participants before the start of the data collection and the integrity and care given to the young women participants throughout the process, was essential to ensure they could express themselves safely in their own unique ways.

Debriefing with the school student counsellor was offered to the participants during the research process, including after the data collection to ensure they received full support regarding any issues that may have arisen that potentially could cause psychological harm.

Informed consent

Organisational consent was sought from the school via the principal, who later presented the information forms to the board of trustees for approval. As representatives of the school, they expressed interest in and support for this research project.

In order to gain informed consent, all possible participants and their primary caregivers were emailed forms, which included detailed information about the purpose and design of the research, characteristics of the data collection methods, voluntary participation, potential risks and benefits of participation in addition to email contacts for any further answers to appropriate questions about the project (Manti & Licari, 2018). Parental consent and child assent were mandatory for all participants under the age of 16 (Nijhawan et al., 2013). All parties were made aware that there were no hidden benefits, and that participants could withdraw from the research at any stage without disadvantage to themselves and were informed that they also had the right to refuse to allow their results to be used.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Participants were assured of their anonymity in the writing up of the thesis, and that they would not be identified in outputs from the project (Allen, 2017; Cohen et al. 2002). Before the focus group session, the participants were informed about the confidentiality of fellow participants as vital to the research. It was stressed and agreed to that what was shared in discussion remained in the room.

Participants were assured that the information they provided would only be used for research purposes and that only the researcher and her supervisors would have access to the sound recordings and the transcripts. They were also informed that the sound recordings of the interview transcripts would be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

Limitations

This project had a few limitations. The process of recruiting participants had limitations; because of the academic nature of the project some students may have believed they could not contribute to the study and automatically opted out without further consideration. This limitation is further explained by Ladkin (2017):

> *" On the surface, a volunteer system seems free of any student biases and appears to encourage all students to participate. This system displays a hidden unequal power, whereby students who fit the culture, which the school enforces upon them, are significantly more likely to volunteer than are others" (p.38).*

Another limitation was that the small number of participants involved in this project meant that other perspectives may have been missed that could have contributed to the understanding of young women's resilience.

An advantage of this project is that the findings apply to a particular context: an urban mainstream secondary school in Aotearoa New Zealand, but the concurrent limitation is that the results may not translate to other populations and communities. Notwithstanding this limitation, the findings are useful and constructive in the context where the findings were gathered. Furthermore, other populations and school communities could assess the usefulness of these findings in future research.

Conclusion

The current research project aimed to examine the topic of resilience through the perspectives of a cohort of adolescent young women at an urban secondary school. This chapter has discussed the methodological approach used in the research project. Ethical approval was sought and granted by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The findings of this project are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, the discussion of findings drawn from the data collection will be presented. The findings are framed with quotes which illustrate and represent a range of experiences articulated by the participants. In the following chapter, the results are interpreted and linked to literature specific to the research topic.

The research participants were Year 10 and 11 female students aged between 14 and 16 years, from a large, urban mainstream secondary school in Aotearoa, New Zealand. A total of seven students were interviewed individually and four young women participated in a focus group. The small sample size was deemed appropriate in order to obtain in-depth data from each student and to give maximum opportunity for student voice.

The aims of the project were to explore young women's perspectives on resilience and to identify ways schools can strengthen their own practice to support the development of resilience for young women in the secondary school setting.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In the context of my school environment what are young women's perceptions of how resilience is nurtured in their own school community?
2. What are young women's perceptions of aspects of schooling that impact negatively on their resilience?
3. What factors promote resilience among young women?

4. How can my school respond to support the nurturing of resilience in young women?

As outlined in the methodology section, the findings of this project emerged from the analysis of data gathered from semi-structured interviews as well as a focus group. The quotes from the participants are attributed individually; and in parts are presented as a collective voice. As Wang (2017) explains, "let them speak for and about themselves because reality exists within these students' perceptions" (p.2).

Overview of the findings

The findings begin with the participants' definitions of resilience followed by the personal strengths they identified that help overcome obstacles and adversity in their lives. This section explores what participants perceived as barriers to building resilience at school. Relationships that made the most impact on the participants' resilience at school were explored. The concluding section provides, the participants' suggestions on how their school can respond and support the nurturing of resilience in young women.

Findings

Defining Resilience

The participants were asked to share their perception of resilience. They said:

Resilience is being able to bounce back from certain things that you might have to deal with like, small cases of bullying, teasing and just things go on in society and

not letting them hurt you as deeply. Just being strong enough to push them aside and have faith. (Participant 1, interview)

> *Resilience to me is pretty much when you are faced with hard challenges you don't just straight away give up. That's pretty much how I would see it when you come to hard situations rather than just turning around, you need to face it and go through with it and try your best even if you don't fully succeed. (Participant 2, interview)*

The ability to push through tough times and recover from things. (Participant 4, interview)

When faced with adversity or difficult times at school, the participants identified qualities such as perseverance, inner strength and, determination that helped grow resilience. These three attributes reportedly played significant roles in promoting resilience for one participant, *"It's important to remain self-disciplined and be emotionally and mentally strong and being able to you know live through things." (Participant 7, interview)*

Another participant discussed resilience as a gradual and *continuous* process. The participant perceived self-awareness and confidence as factors of emotional intelligence which she admired in other students viewed as resilient, referring to them as 'role models.' She summarised her thoughts:

> *Resilient young women will be intelligent in the way of not academically necessarily but just life, life intelligence, I don't know what the word for that is. They will be strong, but that can be built with resilience over time and they will have confidence which will also be built with resilience and they*

will be people you can look up to. You can spot those kinds of young women they're quite easy to spot round the school and are good role models. (Participant 3, interview)

The participants reported that they thought that as they grow older and gain greater life experience, they become more resilient, which they also perceived as a continuous process. Being resilient was seen as a necessary factor to lessen stress in the face of adversity. Also, on reflection, after undergoing tough times, those life experiences were viewed by participants as challenges which helped to learn more about themselves. The ability to persevere through adversity was commented on by the participants:

Experience. Just going through life and just experiencing those things and gaining knowledge from experiencing it helps me build resilience. (Participant 7, interview)

The things that I've been through and things that I've experienced personally and then yeah, I guess the more you experience the stronger you get, because the more you've dealt with it. (Participant 1, interview)

Well you just know that you can overcome obstacles and that you manage. It's knowing inside that you can cope, and you can deal with things because you've done it before. (Participant 2, interview)

Inner Strengths

The young women were asked to share the inner strengths they thought they possess, which helped them overcome challenges and adversity. As a collective,

the strengths participants identified which supported their resilience in school were having a sense of purpose, optimism, and self-belief.

A Sense of Purpose

Having a sense of purpose at school gave the participants the feeling they had influence and control over their future by having something to strive towards. Common ideas emerged and these were:

I have a very clear vision of where I want to go in life, so I think it helps that I'm really focused on my goals and that I am determined to achieve them. (*Participant 5, interview)*

Just always having the goal and striving towards that goal and getting there. (Participant 7, interview)

The data suggests that some participants recognised the connection between immediate goals and future goals. Some examples of immediate goals articulated were passing the end of year external exams and acquiring a learner's driver's licence. Future goals included having a good job, attending university or other tertiary institutions, buying a house, having children and travel. Having goals beyond school helped some young women to remain focused on immediate goals as they saw them as steps that lead to achieving long term ambitions.

Possessing personal motivation and self-determination were described as factors that helped some young women build resilience and feel a sense of purpose:

> *Definitely motivation. Because you can't get anywhere without motivation because you need to try, and stuff and some people don't want to try because they can't be bothered. But if you have the motivation and you go "well, okay I would*

get somewhere if I did something about it" rather than just going "oh, I'll just not do anything. (Participant 2, interview)

I think if you have to work for something, not just being handed it on some platter all the time. If someone doesn't give you the answer straight away, you have to keep working for it. Work it out by yourself. (Participant 4, interview)

However, one young woman discussed her struggles with maintaining continual self-motivation, but knew from experience, that by persevering and believing in herself, she would reap the benefits of success. She said:

Sometimes I find it hard to be motivated. If I have an internal assessment that I'm struggling with finishing it will take me a bit a longer because I'll need the energy to keep going and I won't be so motivated. But I just tell myself you need to push through, finish it, it will be worth it in the end if you put in all the effort now. (Participant 7, interview)

Rather than allowing challenges to become significant problems, many participants reported that they actively took steps to resolve the issues. One young woman revealed by taking a proactive role to solve her problems, meant using her initiative to ask for support and guidance when needed. In her eyes, staying optimistic throughout the process of resolving issues, helped her move forward and build resilience. She said:

When I have a problem, I want to change it. I have that mind-set of "this is the problem; I need to change it". I know what's best for me. I have that hands on, let's fix this approach, even if I can't do it myself, I will let people in to help me solve it. I think that definitely helps. (Participant 3, interview)

Optimism

Being optimistic was referred to by other young women in this study, who said using this inner strength helped them when faced by a challenging situation or problem. As one participant shared, *"having an open mind and trying to look at things positively and just not letting problems bother me or get me down keeps me feeling strong" (Participant 2, interview).* Other participants resonated with this and applied it to their everyday lives using a range of effective personal strategies. Their advice was:

> *Yes, that's the message, don't be scared about facing things, because you've done it before. If you haven't done it, give it a go, you will probably be able to do it and then you'll just feel good about everything. (Participant 3, interview)*

You have to love being your own person, I try to think for myself and look for the positives in me and my life. (Participant 5, interview)

Surround yourself with positive people and do things that make you happy. I just do things that keep me happy, I guess. Emotionally I just do things that keep me feeling positive. (Participant 7, interview)

Some participants reportedly saw their life experiences as giving them insights which could potentially help others. Qualities they saw arising from their experiences included having empathy for and an affinity with others in similar situations. One young woman said:

> *I'd like to be more resilient so that people can look up to me in the way that I look up to others because I think that's very important and I would like to be*

able to help other people be resilient and feel good about themselves. I've managed to survive tough times and come out the other side, I would like to think I could support other young women who are going through what I have so they know they're not on their own. (Participant 3, interview)

Self-belief

According to participants, believing in oneself was perceived as a powerful inner strength. Possessing a healthy self-belief and self-esteem enabled many young women in this study to feel resilient, as they viewed themselves as having worth and able to manage life stresses with the personal knowledge they would *"be ok."* Some participants voiced they *"don't care"* how others viewed them as they felt secure about who they are, and *"try not to take things too personally."*

One young woman who felt this way said:

Personally, I think I'm a very resilient person. I know I don't really care about what other people think, except for people whose opinions that I really care about, like my friends, my family, and my boyfriend. But even then, I know what makes me happy and I know what I like and if someone else tells me that this is not good or this is not right or you can't do this then it doesn't really matter to me as long as I'm happy and yeah. So, I'm quite strong in that sense. That I don't let what others say affect me as deeply as some other girls might. (Participant 1, interview)

Another participant expressed similar feelings also:

Don't think too much about what other people say, especially if there is someone that you don't see as important in your life. (Participant 2, interview)

Over half of the participants perceived themselves as possessing healthy self-esteem; however, self-confidence was something that some felt they lacked and wanted to build on. Several participants noted their confidence and self-efficacy did vary depending on the situation, for example, one young woman said she lacked the confidence to make new friends yet felt confident as a performer in a school drama group. One participant said she felt awkward and lacked confidence when talking to people she did not know well. She said, *"It's something I'm learning to do. It's difficult for me, but it's getting there",* she followed with *"I'm not really sure how to go about it, I don't know how to make myself feel more confident to do that" (Participant 4, interview).* Another young woman expressed how she struggled with self-confidence:

Definitely confidence because I have hardly any confidence which is why have stage fright and stuff. Talking in front of lots of people. But definitely confidence is something I need to work on and believing in myself. (Participant 2, interview)

All participants agreed that self-confidence was a quality that could be built even if various personal experiences caused you to lose it or it lessened at times. Two young women referred to *"changing their mindset and attitude"* as ways to improve their self-confidence but were unsure on *"how to go about it."*

Barriers to Resilience

In the following section, participants share their perspectives regarding the barriers they perceive hinder their resilience within the school context. The themes that emerged as barriers for young women in this study were; the pressure of academic stress, isolation and 'fitting in.'

Academic stress

Over half of the participants discussed the feeling of pressure to maintain high academic results at school. One young woman referred to the stress she placed upon herself to achieve in her learning as *"insane."* The participants voiced that the pressure of continuous high self-expectations led to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and a disconnection to school, which consequently, triggered and fuelled stress which impacted on their daily lives in terms of their well-being, and resilience.

> *"I feel like in class you kind of have those expectations upon as a girl and just in general as students, to kind of just be good and to be good at everything……yeah, and it's like experienced, jack of all trades and master of none, which especially like in my position I'm in a lot of the top classes and it's very like you just have to be perfect at everything; and having that mindset where your teachers are like, "You have to get excellence," it's like I just get so stressed and I get so worked up. I have these expectations that I have to be perfect and that really breaks me down. I get terrible headaches". (Participant 2, focus group)*

> *"Sometimes I wonder why I'm here (school), well I know why I'm here but I'm too hard on myself and I can't keep up. I don't feel it's good for me to have such high personal expectations as it makes me feel crap inside and I can't see how to change it". (Participant 4, interview)*

One participant talked about the disappointment of her exam results and how it affected her self-esteem:

So recently for biology after mock exams, I always strive to study a lot and get good results. When I got my paper back, I got one achieved and one not achieved and so I was a bit knocked down by that. But I don't think it's so much the teacher's expectations as my own expectations, and it's because my expectations are way too high for myself. I'm not sure where that comes from, because I also have no pressure from my teachers or my family; it's all me. (Participant 5, interview)

However, after reflecting on her reaction to the experience and analysing how she felt at the time, it helped her to mentally prepare for similar situations that may arise. She added:

I think in the future I just need to remember not to think the worst of myself all the time and not get upset if something happens. At least I tried my best. It's more just about having the balance.

Other pressures relating to academic expectations and success such as managing one's time and future subject selection were areas of concern revealed by some participants. For example, during the focus group, one participant spoke of feeling overwhelmed when trying to manage her time effectively, but unsuccessfully, which made her feel powerless and less resilient. She shared:

Time management help! Because that's one of my big problems, because I procrastinate when I get really stressed, because I haven't done anything. (Participant 3, focus group)

The feeling of being overwhelmed was echoed by another young woman, as she also contributed to the conversation:

I feel that too. It's an awful feeling. It's just an awful feeling. And, I'm a perfectionist on top of that and an overachiever; so, it all just kind of goes into one huge lump. (Participant 2, focus group)

Subject selection for the following year was a complicated and stressful process for many participants, particularly as the range of available studies widened as they moved further into the senior area of the school. Several young women echoed the statement, *"I feel like it's a good thing, but there is way too much choice." (Participant 1 focus group).* The pressure to prioritise academic subjects and forgo subjects that were enjoyable and interesting was expressed. Many participants spoke of their concerns and struggles when trying to decide what were the right subjects for them. As one young woman shared her worries and that of others:

> *It's way too stressful because I don't know what I want to be and choosing my subjects for next year was really difficult. I wanted to keep my options open, but I also wanted to do the classes that I liked and enjoyed. (Participant 3, focus group)*

Despite participants setting personal immediate and long-term goals, many shared a fear of the unknown. More specifically, they expressed being afraid of making the wrong decisions at school and how this could affect future pathways or opportunities they had yet to consider.

> *I really don't know what I want to be yet. I've almost finished high school, but I haven't decided and it's like what am I going to do? Because I can't just go to university and spend $50,000 on something that I'm not going to use. (Participant 2, focus group)*

I'm really scared that I'm going to turn around one day and say, "Hey, actually I want to do this," but because of university standards I can't do it, because I don't have all of the prior knowledge. I feel like the schooling system needs to be more flexible to that, but that's very difficult to do. (Participant 3, focus group)

Isolation, 'Fitting in' and the importance of friendship

Many of the young women interviewed in this research spoke of feeling isolated from others, fitting in and struggling to feel a sense of belonging at some time during their secondary school experience.

For many of the young women, it took some time to find friends with whom to develop quality and positive connections. During this time of searching and waiting for the 'right friends,' some participants experienced feelings of loneliness and anxiety which affected their overall well-being and resilience, and as a further consequence impeded on their learning and self-confidence. They shared:

I used to go to the Health Centre, pretending I was sick and sometimes wag classes, which I know affected my learning but sometimes I just wanted to talk to someone who would listen because I had no one to talk to school. Then most days, I would go back at break times and hang round the centre so it would look like I had friends, or I was busy doing something. I didn't want other students thinking I was a loser or pity me. It was a horrible time, I ended up hating going to school and that was sad as I like learning and I think I'm a nice person. Eventually, it got better, I met a good friend there (at the Health centre). (Participant 3, interview)

I'm not very good at making friends or talking to new people, that kind of thing. Unless it's about maths or something like that. I wish I was better at making friends because sometimes I really need a good one. (Participant 4, interview)

So, in Year 9 I had quite a few issues with my friends and I don't even know what happened. (Participant 5, interview)

I didn't have any friends for a long time, but I have two friends now, but we don't talk about important stuff. So, I'm really there for myself at school and out of school. Like when it's really bad at school I ring up my parents. (Participant 6, interview)

An insight made by one young woman when referring to making good friends was, *"You need to wait and be patient, and there's nothing wrong with that." (Participant 3, interview)*

One participant outlined feeling ostracised by people she thought were friends and with whom she believed she "fitted in with". She illustrated how the assumptions made by her peers took her by surprise and it soon became apparent, she did not belong.

I feel like lots of students have lot of preconceived ideas on who you are; like personally, last year I became friends with quite a few of those kind of popular football guys and the pretty girls, and then near the end of the year when all the award season kind of happened, and they all looked at me and were like, 'Oh you're a bit of a geek,' and they kind of backed off. It was like, "Huh?" It's like yeah, I'm smart – am I smart? Well, I try and I'm very hard working. (Participant 1, focus group)

Another young woman shared a similar story where she too had been suddenly ignored and rejected by so-called friends, which made her feel powerless to change the situation. She described how she felt at the time:

It leaves you feeling not great about yourself and in a position where you are so insecure and your ashamed of being yourself. (Participant 7, interview)

Being a victim of bullying at school by a fellow class member, was a traumatic experience experienced by one participant. She reported that she suffered mental health issues and felt increasingly isolated as the bullying escalated and she struggled to have her voice heard by those she confided in.

> *I definitely learnt that it's a struggle in the school system to get the point across on how this person is making you feel, because I feel like I probably went to the Dean the first time in Year 9 and they didn't take it very seriously and that kind of hurt of a bit. I think at the start of it they thought it was just a guy who likes the girl which it wasn't, and it might go away. I've been to the Dean so many times and it's ridiculous how many times it kind of gets shoved under the rug. And it was only till, a couple of months ago in Year 11 when they finally did something. Yeah, like my mental state was so bad after that time and it's like that can have an effect for years and years. It put me in a position where I was uncomfortable at school and that shouldn't be a way any student feels. It should be a safe space. (Participant 3, focus group)*

Being bullied, significantly affected the participant's sense of belonging to school. She recalled:

I would cry myself to sleep that means I get a bad sleep that night and it means I'm not as productive the next day, it means I'm not doing as well in school because I'm upset, and I'm scared of being around this person. Like it impacts the student while they are at school and I feel like it's the school's job to protect me from feeling like that. Like, I was scared to come to school. (Participant 3, focus group)

Another participant shared her story of when she was blindsided by a teacher with whom she had trusted with personal information. She said:

Yeah, I've had an experience where I talked to the teacher and then the teacher used that as an example in class. They didn't use my name, but I knew it was my story and I'm like "Hold on a second, I told you that in confidence and I made you aware when we were having that conversation that I didn't want people knowing about this, but then you told the class, and just because you didn't say my name doesn't mean that people can't work it out." That then permanently broke that trust. I thought "you need to ask for permission; even if it is anonymous because there are kids in the class who are going to sit there and go through the class list and eliminate people until they find the one, and then they're going to destroy your life, because they have nothing better to do." (Participant 2, focus group)

The young woman revealed, previously, she had valued and enjoyed a positive relationship with her teacher, but the repercussions of this disclosure meant her opinion of the teacher diminished, she questioned her own judgement, and it made it difficult for her to trust and use honest dialogue with other adults in the school. She described feeling isolated and exposed. Also, she perceived that fellow students were privy to private knowledge about her which damaged her sense of belonging and self-confidence.

Trying to establish a sense of belonging was experienced by one young woman who moved to New Zealand as an early adolescent. This change of circumstance placed her in an unfamiliar culture in an unknown environment. She shared:

> *I used to get into a lot of drama because of my point of view about things. I was raised very differently compared to most kids here. My father is very strict, and we just do what we are told at home. It's been hard sometimes to behave and act like other kids who have very different backgrounds to me. (Participant 5, interview)*

Despite feeling isolated and different to her peers, she perceived her "Kiwi" life as an opportunity to take different subjects at school which she was passionate about. She acknowledged that having a strict family background created a strong worth ethic and felt a sense of belonging to school through achieving well and receiving recognition for her efforts. She felt by focusing on the positive aspects of a challenging and new situation, rather than dwelling on the negative, helped built her resilience.

One participant revealed that she preferred her own company to associating with people she had no sense of connection to at school. She felt unable to find others with whom she could be her authentic self, sharing her experience she said, *"I enjoy the solitude, I like it and the calmness and the freedom it gives me to be my own person."* She did not view herself as being lonely as spending quality time with family, particularly her grandmother and sister, fulfilled the need for social interaction, friendship and feeling a sense of belonging. She said:

> *I tend to find myself that I don't fit in with anyone and what I did was accept that fact because being by myself I can be who I am without judgement and*

I don't have to think about what anyone else thinks. I'm happy with that. (Participant 2, interview)

Several participants disclosed they would rarely choose to be alone at school. At times, several young women said they sought "space"' at school to think and reflect on important issues going on in their lives, and it was used mainly as a strategy to deal with frustrations arising from school relationships.

Sometimes you need to be away from people to calm down from something and so you're by yourself, which helps clear the mind. (Participant 1, interview)

Moreover, seeking solitude for short periods of time, was perceived by many participants as a purposeful and healthy exercise that supported their well-being.

Relationships

The data analysis revealed that positive relationships play a highly significant role in the ability to promote and foster resilience in young women at this school. An insight made by one participant regarding the influence of relationships within this school context was *"I think that a lot of our teenage years are spent at school in school surrounded by the same people, and that shapes a lot of who you are." (Participant 1, interview).* In this section of the chapter, the relationships that made the most impact on the participants' resilience were teachers, counsellors, friends, and family are examined.

Teachers

All the young women in this study, except one, cited teachers as the primary relationship that influenced their resilience at school. The findings from the data indicated that relationships between teachers and students were generally protective and contributed to student feelings of self-worth and a sense of belonging within the school context.

Participants valued teachers who nurtured positive and caring relationships with them and who took the time to listen carefully and objectively to their concerns, whether it was a personal matter or school related. They shared:

I have a pretty good connection with my hub teachers, I talk to them about a lot of my in-school issues mainly. (Participant 3, interview)

Well I really love all my teachers because they're always really supportive and they help me when I need it. (Participant 5, interview)

Teachers, definitely. I've got quite good relationships with my teachers. (Participant 7, interview)

Noted by one participant, she felt her student's voice was honoured through experiencing an equal relationship with teachers. She felt teachers showed genuine interest in her as an individual and that they tailored solutions to best fit her needs.

> *I have a few adults at school who are there for me, mainly teachers. What I really like about them is before jumping to any conclusion they listen; they listen to what I have to say; they listen to my opinion; they listen to how I feel about certain things. And, they take that all into consideration before providing me solutions that I get to choose from. So, it's all very personalised; they personalise it for me and that is the best way you should do it in my opinion. (Participant 3, interview)*

Some young women expressed a desire for stronger connections and a greater need for relatedness with their teachers; this was not limited to academic support but also guidance and concrete help. Participants felt valued as a person when teachers looked beyond the surface of the student and saw an individual. As one young woman shared when talking about her teachers who also acted as her mentors:

> *It's like you have those teachers where you have that relationship with your teacher, but then you also have that relationship where they're your friend. And, it's not an unprofessional one, but it's one where you can go and talk to them and say, "I've got this problem, how can I fix it, how can I work through it? You've been in my position before, you're an adult and you've been a teenager, you've gone through life, can you give me advice?" And, they're really helpful in just giving you options and giving you solutions. (Participant 2, focus group)*

Many young women expressed the desire to have regular and meaningful conversations with their teachers. The participants' comments reflect a greater need for increasingly open and honest discussion between students and teachers about issues that affect them.

Getting more on a personal level with the students would help me a lot. (Student Participant 6, interview)

> *I guess for teachers just to go around and ask how the students are doing and sometimes students would say "oh yeah I'm fine" but really, they are not. Definitely spending time with students would definitely build resilience. (Participant 2, interview)*

Teachers who inspired students learning and were passionate about their subjects, made a significant impact on many of the young women in this study, making them feel good about themselves, and their schooling.

> *I've liked lots of the teachers that have taught me, one of my favourites she's great, remembers student's birthdays and little details, she sits down and just talks to me normally, and I feel I can trust her to hear my personal stuff. She always expects the best of me, and she works hard to make the learning interesting. You can tell she cares. (Participant 2, interview)*

I love going to drama classes, Miss X she loves teaching drama and inspires me to give things a go, she has lots of energy and believes in me. (Participant 5, interview)

Yeah, it's good this year, my English teacher he makes a boring subject fun. (Participant 6, interview)

Many of the participants judged teachers on their ability to listen. The young women felt less likely to share information about themselves or warm to them if they felt unnoticed or sensed the teacher was disinterested. According to participants, having a lack of rapport between themselves and their teachers, was the result of some teachers "putting up a barrier" which made it difficult to establish meaningful connections.

> *Yeah, there are plenty of my teachers where you go into class and they're like, "Hi, how have you been?" and it's like you have a conversation; they do that with all the students and it's just a casual thing. But then you go into some classes and your teachers are like, "Okay, sit down, get your books out," and that's it. I feel like there's definitely a different relationship*

between those two teachers that I have with them, because one teacher is like, "you're my teacher" and the other one is like, "you're my teacher but I can talk to you" and there's a very big difference. (Participant 2, focus group)

One participant's advice to teachers about fostering relationships with students was:

Make themselves open and just have normal conversations and build that relationship; just like, "I did this at the weekend, what did you do at the weekend kind of thing." Like, still in a professional way, but building that friendship up because that builds trust and that builds confidence. (Participant 3, focus group)

Friends

As voiced by many participants, being similar, understanding, and trust came through strongly in the data as crucial for good friendships. Once participants had established healthy friendships at school, they turned to those friends for valuable support and resilience in times of need.

My friends, we help each other out and we can talk to each other if we're having any troubles. (Participant 4, interview)

Having trustworthy friends was of the greatest importance for one young woman who made specific mention of her circle of friends.

I go through a lot with my friends. I talk to them about everything, so I know that I can trust them with anything. And just having a really good circle of

friends is, no matter how many people that's in there, it's just good for a person and for me. Because I know I can trust them with anything. (Participant 5, interview)

For one participant, friends were the first people she turned to, before adults, when confronted with an issue or wanted someone to listen.

Personally, for me, at school if I have a problem or something happens to me, my first isn't to go straight to the teacher, or like an adult; it's to go to my friends. So, I'm not necessarily that… like, I know my teachers are there for me, but I'm not really that close with any of them. (Participant 1, interview)

Some participants spoke of other close friends, outside core friendships, whose friendship and company were enjoyed and had evolved, through a mutual love of extracurricular interests such as drama. One young woman shared *"An observation that I've kind of made throughout all of my schooling really, is that lots of friendships form from the classes you're in." (Participant 2, focus group).* She, like many other participants, said most of the good friends they made, had been people met in core classes which had allowed for the opportunity for friendships to flourish due to the considerable time spent together during the day.

School Health Professionals

The school health centre staff, primarily the counsellors, appear to play a pivotal role in nurturing and promoting resilience of the young women in this school/research setting. Most participants throughout their secondary schooling to date had found themselves in situations where they sought refuge, advice and

well-being support from these healthcare professionals. The young women spoke highly of the care afforded by the counsellors.

If I feel the need to, I go and do counselling at the Health Centre which is really helpful. (Participant 3, interview)

> *I have been to the counsellors quite a few times. I deal with anxiety and stress and like I have panic attacks. Then there are some days where I am just like I just can't deal with anything at the moment. You go to the counsellors and they talk to you, it makes a difference. (Participant 3, focus group)*

When faced with adversity, one participant shared how her counsellor gave poignant advice regarding resilience, which the young woman pondered over, embraced and adopted for future reference.

> *I was talking with my Counsellor and she said, "when you do something and you use resilience, let that empower you, to go face the next problem with resilience". That really helped me. That if you do something, feel good about it. Feel good that you solved this and then move on to the next thing and also solve that with resilience. That helped me, that was a recent thing, but I'm going to try and live by that because so far, it's been really good for me. (Participant 2, focus group)*

Another participant expressed how her counsellor offered her a range of tools to assist her needs.

My counsellor also offers me all these stress relief techniques, and she also offered me time management help because that's one of my big problems. (Participant 5, interview)

Even if initially unsure and pessimistic of the possible outcomes, participants placed trust and faith in their counsellor to provide meditation and support between themselves, their teachers and families when issues arose of importance and urgency, predominantly academic. As one young woman voiced:

I got support from the counsellor to bring the teachers I had… like the classes I had problems, she would bring the teachers in, I would bring my parents in, and we'd all have this group discussion. I wasn't really like optimistic about it; I didn't think it was going to do much, but it has helped me so much, and I feel so much more support. (Participant 3, focus group)

This whole section shows how the counselling services has supported students with problem-solving and negotiation and strengths-based approaches.

Family/ Whaanau

When faced with school-related stresses and adversities, many participants relied on family /whaanau to nurture their resilience and give comfort. Family, particularly mature female members were cited as reliable sources of support that helped some participants and provided the emotional support, advice, and stability they needed to alleviate distress and overcome hurdles.

When I tend to struggle with things and feel like I'm crumbling, I talk to my grandmother and she's quite good at making me see the positive side of

things and getting rid of all the negatives and stuff. (Participant 2, interview)

I think going through tough situation helps you build resilience and it helps if you have a mother or something or anyone who's a bit older than you or more wiser than you. Because my mother helped me, last year I went through something really bad at school and she helped me a lot. She just showed me how to be confident again and stuff like that. (Participant 6, interview)

The participants described feeling protected by whaanau and having the approval of parents gave them the strength and confidence to face adversities and issues when they arose. Some young women commented they knew their parents had faith in them to do their best, and by having this unconditional support and back-up helped increase their resilience within the school environment.

My parents are definitely like, "As long as you're trying, as long you're trying your best then we're happy with whatever you get." (Participant 2, focus group)

My parents help me a lot and the good thing is they don't put any pressure on me they just say to do my best which is really helpful. (Participant 4, interview)

According to one participant, feeling comfortable to discuss personal matters with family/ whaanau took time and practice but was worth the effort. She said:

Like I said before I'm learning to talk with my family and express that and when it goes successfully it's really really good, it really helps. That's my support crew. (Participant 3, interview)

Ways the school could best support nurturing of resilience.

Participants were asked to share their ideas on practical ways the school could best support nurturing of resilience in young women like themselves. The following six findings are not prioritised or in no particular order and will be discussed further in the next chapter. Many of the young women echoed the views of others.

Participants want:

1. A safer school environment with increased promotion of the role of the school counsellors and related health services.

Advertising the counsellors, making sure everyone knows that they are there if they need help, and just creating an environment where students feel safe. (Participant 7, interview)

2. Non-judgemental adult guidance and understanding to help build friendship connections between young women.

We need to promote healthy friendships between peers, and how to promote to get out of not healthy friendships with 'so called' friends. (Participant 4, interview)

3. Creating leadership opportunities for those young women who have not experienced it before.

> *More leadership opportunities maybe? So, we have junior council which I was involved in which is good. But if we have something for girls who maybe haven't experienced leadership before and aren't willing to just put their hand up and say I'll do it. Maybe if we have*

workshops or something they could go to? Maybe days that they have to go to? Maybe as a Year 9 or Year 10 or even all the seniors as well, which has team building and self-confidence activities. That would be good. (Participant, 5, interview)

4. A room where young women could go during school hours if they needed 'time out' but did not feel like talking to a counsellor or another adult.

I feel like there should be a classroom, like where there's a teacher there; where it's not like an opportunity or you got sent there because you've been naughty, but it's somewhere like I have a class but I cannot handle being in there right now. (Participant 2, focus group)

Have a limit on it; so, you can go there, like you get three lessons a term, or like x amount a year, where you're allowed this one class, one period, where you can have time out. (Participant 1, focus group)

5. To learn life skills within the school context to ensure they are well prepared for life as independent adults.

I feel like it should be like a new group type of thing and you could have the option once or twice a week to go, maybe like during the long group time on a Thursday, to go to the class where you can learn how to do your taxes, how you can save smart, learn to ask effectively over the phone for stuff, learn how about nutrition, self defence and how you can do certain things like repairing equipment, how to use basic machinery like a lawn mower or cooking equipment etc.; so that life is easier now and later on. (Participant 1, focus group)

6. A women-only safe space to go and meet other young women at break times or set days.

Yeah, just meet new people of different ages, have a chat and have your lunch. (Participant 1, focus group)

Have a guest speaker sometimes to share information about young women's issues and health etc., maybe the Year 13 girls talk about themselves and their school experiences, future goals. (Participant 2, focus group)

Allow female teachers to come with their lunch and chat. (Participant 3, focus group)

But, like no commitments or strings attached because I feel like that scares people. (Participant 1, focus group)

In the following chapter, a range of key themes which have come forth as findings in this study will be discussed further and include relationships (teachers, school guidance counsellors and friends), a sense of belonging, and trust; the correlation and relationship between trust and resilience.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of the central findings of this study. The discussion is presented under the themes that emerged during the data collection process and those that were covered in the literature review.

This study revealed that young women's emotional resilience is multifaceted and complex. This project's data analysis indicated that resilience was influenced and shaped by:

1.Relationships with others; teachers, friends and school health care professionals.

2. Trust.

3. A sense of belonging.

Theme 1: Relationships

Findings from this study revealed that a support group of people needs to be built around every young woman for them to feel resilient and thrive. For the young women, knowing they could rely on someone who cared and was there for them unconditionally was significant to their resilience (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2010). These findings are consistent with other research mentioned earlier in Chapter two, which found positive and caring relationships to be an essential component in the resilience of youth in the school context (Lee, Cheung & Kwong, 2012; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). The influence and impact of stable and supportive connections to key figures in their lives – teachers, school health care professionals and friends – helped shape the participants' school experiences and how they faced stressors and daily challenges.

Teachers

The teacher-student relationship has been shown in previous research to be an essential protective process that influences young women's resilience at school (Longobardi, Prino, Marengo, & Settanni, 2016) and, for the majority of young women in this study, this was found to be so. Experiencing mutually respectful and equal relationships with their teachers was valued by the participants, and many expressed a desire to forge even stronger connections and engage in more regular and meaningful conversations for support and guidance. Teachers were seen as individuals rather than as a collective group. This finding emphasises the significant individual contribution every secondary school teacher can make to a young woman's wellbeing and resilience. It was essential to the young women that teachers were genuine in their approach and open to listening to the young women's concerns (emotional and academic) with care and interest (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). The participants noticed teachers who demonstrated a love for their respective learning areas and tried to understand their students' needs and show an interest in their lives. These teachers made participants feel good about themselves and inspired their learning, therefore, building resilience.

However, participants indicate that establishing a meaningful mutual relationship was not always easy. It was felt that some teachers kept their distance and put up an invisible emotional barrier. Attention is drawn to Fosen's (2016) study of teacher-student relationships, which suggested that students will miss out if they fail to connect with a teacher who practices a passive approach towards developing a relationship with them.

School Health Professionals

The school health centre staff, primarily the counsellors, played a pivotal role in nurturing and promoting resilience of the young women in this school All the participants bar two, throughout their secondary schooling to date, had found

themselves in situations where they sought refuge, mediation, advice and well-being support from these healthcare professionals.

School councillors play an essential and significant role in the life of a school as they contribute to the resilience of youth in multiple ways (Masten, 2008). Their contributions can include mediation and addressing barriers between students and teachers, students, teachers and parents, and promoting initiatives within the school environment to improve student's resilience by helping to develop their coping skills (Ministry of Education, 2017). The young women advocated the services provided by the counsellors, whom they said went the extra mile at times to ensure they received the personalised care they needed and the right tools and strategies to help build their resilience. Furthermore, it was suggested the roles of the counsellors and related health services require better promotion and advertising within the student body to ensure all youth feel safe to access the mental health support they need and understand what is available to them.

Friends

Friendships are an important part of school life and a source of valuable support and resilience in times of need (Osterman, 2000). Often, friends were the first people turned to for emotional support. However, making friends and creating positive relationships at school can be a stressful and lonely experience for many (Erdley & Day, 2016).

As revealed in the findings, a few young women in this current study were still struggling to find friends with whom to connect and share a close bond. This sense of separation from others and isolation cripples their overall school experience in addition to impairing their self-esteem and self-confidence (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). Feeling a lack of confidence when speaking to others and making the first step in initiating a new friendship was daunting, and many young women said they didn't have the knowledge or skills on how to approach this problem and wished they did. Expressed collectively in the current study was the request for

non-judgemental adult guidance and understanding to help find ways to promote friendship connections between young women, regardless of age, in the school community.

Many friendships flourished in core classes where considerable time is spent with others; however, sharing a love of interests and participating in social activities drew similar individuals together and widened their network of friends (Sakyi et al., 2015). Turning to close friends who were like themselves and understood what they were experiencing proved valuable for many participants when trying to buffer life's stresses and helped strengthen resilience by giving validation and emotional support (Osterman, 2000).

Theme 2: Trust

An important discovery that arose from the data was the role of trust, as a protective process, which provided the participants with a feeling of security and a foundation on which to build and develop healthy interpersonal relationships within the school context. When faced with adversity or stress, many young women in this study turned to trusting relationships to help strengthen their resilience. According to Sun, Jingping, Leithwood and Kenneth (2015), "trust is defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the other party is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent" (p.2). This definition of trust lists the characteristics described by participants in this study as those needed in healthy trusting relationships.

Trust was shown to underpin and be a measure of the value of specific relationships, depending on the perceived levels of trust. The significance of mutual trust in relationships was evident as many young women talked about others they assessed as being deserving of disclosure and, therefore, who created a stable source of emotional support for them at school; this result is supported by similar findings by Camara, Bacigalupe and Padilla (2017), who explored the role of social support in adolescents.

The importance of feeling genuinely listened to by adults was expressed by many of the participants, as it created opportunities for building interpersonal relationship trust. As revealed in the previous chapter's findings, perceiving that their voice was valued and acknowledged made it easier for young women to disclose personal information with teachers and other school professionals they deemed trustworthy. Having a trusting relationship with an adult in the same context, and separate from one's family group, can be empowering for an adolescent and have positive effects (Griffith, 2014).

However, after experiencing a loss or betrayal of trust in others, in particular teachers and friends, participants said they found it difficult to rebuild damaged relationships. Consequently, the impact of loss created feelings of alienation and a wariness of establishing trust in new relationships, which some participants had not experienced at this level before. For example, two participants spoke of experiences of being let down, at a time when they needed adult guidance, by people whom the young women had deliberately sought out and believed were in a strong position to support them but failed to.

However, after disclosure, the young women felt their concerns were viewed too lightly and left unresolved, leaving them feeling wounded and vulnerable and in one young woman's view, disillusioned about the system she knew had let her down. These examples expose the sometimes-unequal relationships between the participants (students) and adults in school settings As Durnford (2010) states 'where one party holds most of the power, there is little room for listening to the less powerful party or for authorising their perspective" (p.33). The potential for power relationships as such to limit student agency is raised in this scenario.

Several other participants in this study spoke of diminished respect for people who they had lost trust in when trust was breached, some participants said they questioned their judgement and relied upon their own inner resources to process and cope. On reflection they realised that these life experiences were viewed as challenges that helped them to learn more about themselves and learn to trust

themselves to make the right decisions. The experience was also felt by the participants to have strengthened their resilience.

As a collective, the young women articulated the need for teachers and school management to trust in them too. They called for the opportunity to hold forums where they can openly raise and discuss topics and issues pertinent to youth. The participants acknowledged that while many of the topics have been difficult to talk about in-depth within the class context, they need to be addressed. It was felt that by placing faith and trust in the student body to facilitate appropriate forums that discuss mental health topics, it could make a positive difference to many young people in the school community.

Theme 3: A Sense of Belonging

Feeling the pressure and stress of continuous high academic self-expectations was a significant catalyst and precursor to anxiety and feelings of despair and inadequacy, which impacted on participant's sense of belonging to the school. (Shochet, Smyth & Homel 2007). Many participants who spoke about this debilitating problem revealed they did not share the breadth of their concerns with others and by keeping it to themselves frequently inflamed the problem, which caused further isolation and disconnection. Despite having stable and encouraging parental support as a protective factor, there was no correlation between participants' academic stress levels and family influence, as the pressure often came from the participant's expectation of themselves. Feeling disconnected and overwhelmed for these participants created a barrier to resilience, which continued to spiral, until intervention by a school counsellor helped gain balance and perspective on the problem. However, on reflection and after experiencing one too many stressful periods, one participant found that practicing optimism kept

her grounded and better mentally prepared for potential similar situations (Gillham & Reivich, 2004).

One student talked about her difference, in terms of being from a different culture, when she spoke of trying to establish a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar culture and environment as an isolating experience (Bhugra, 2004). She combatted this experience by drawing on her resilience and identity to show her strong work ethic and learning successes in terms of what she had to offer. Establishing a reciprocal connection to her teachers helped foster a sense of belonging and stability within the school community as a valued member (Allen et al., 2016; Sanchez et al.,2005; Uslu & Gizir, 2017).

A desire to foster a greater sense of community for themselves and other young women in the school was emphasised in the current study. Many participants felt that having learnt useful tools, strategies and empathy through experiencing life's challenges, that they can help and empower others in similar situations who need mutual support and care. They could see that connecting with others had numerous benefits, as well as fostering a stronger sense of belonging as part of the school family/whaanau (Roffey, 2011).

In the findings, one suggestion made collectively to support young women's resilience and sense of belonging within our school community was to create a safe space to go and meet other young women at break times or on set days. This space could be accessed by all young women and be a safe place to meet, discuss issues, share experiences or just sit and relax. Female teachers would be welcome to interact and enjoy the space also. As Malley (1998) points out, research has recognised that a school's social structure and climate can assist students' sense of belonging in schools by promoting shared physical and emotional connections between young people, peers, and teachers. A further suggestion to help young women feel comfortable at school when feeling they needed 'time out' but did not feel like talking to a counsellor or another adult, was to provide a quiet room where

they could go during school hours. Listening to our young women and providing genuine opportunities for them to contribute to their community creates a greater sense of belonging and empowerment, which in turn can improve mental health outcomes (Evan, 2007; World Health Organisation, 2003).

In the following and final chapter, recommendations and suggestions of ways forward are developed with direct reference to the school involved in this study. However, the findings and recommendations may be of interest to other secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand that seek to strengthen their practices to support the development of resilience for young women in their school community.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL WORD

According to Aranda et al., (2012), "resilience is now considered to be a valuable asset or resource with which to promote health and well-being and forms part of a broader trend towards strength based as opposed to deficit models of health" (p.548). However, as noted by this writer, this study shows there is much educators and schools can do to nurture the resilience of the young women in their care by listening to their voices and, following their suggestions for ways forward and future focus.

Recommendations

In addition to the participants' suggestions in the previous chapter, I recommend some areas for further consideration. These are:

1. Provide ample opportunities for young women throughout their secondary schooling to talk and practice emotion and problem-focused coping skills and strategies and how coping changes over time.

2. Supporting teachers to become better at communicating with youth.

3. Create opportunities for youth-adult partnerships and collaborative input within school practices and systems. For this to work will require a deliberate and marked shift away from adults' perceptions and presumptions of young people's emotional capabilities and needs, to one where it is a bringing together of knowledge, ideas and expertise of all involved.

4. It would be valuable for a similar study to investigate the different cultural perspectives of young women in our school community and their resilience. To gain an understanding of how resilience is related to culture and how strong cultural identity helps individuals face adversity would be of benefit to schools. This aspect was not able to be assessed in the current research, as ethnicity data of the

participants was not collected. However, it is quite an important area of interest seen as a protective factor also.

5. A qualitative study of school culture and the role and influence of teachers' values and beliefs to gain better understanding of a school culture that nurtures resilience for young women.

6. Being aware of 'deficit-based models of research and adopting innovative and contemporary data collection methods used with youth. These methods endeavour to acknowledge the context and culture of the participants as well as seeking to understand their unique perspectives and lived realities, for example, photo-elicitation (Reeves, 2018; Sibeoni et al., 2017), participatory art based (Water et al., 2017), web-administered diaries and digital storytelling (Anderson & Mack, 2017; Chatzitheochari, et al., 2017) and digital technologies i.e. mobile phone applications and digital games (Svensson & Larsson, 2015) to name a few.

Final Word

This research was conceived through conversations with young women with whom I taught and interacted with, in the secondary school context. In hearing their stories about the stresses and adversities they faced, the common thread, no matter the cause, was the inability to cope with the stressors they experienced. Yet, they expressed the wish to cope better and feel stronger in themselves. This desire to have resilience was the driving force that led to this current study.

I believe by asking these young women to share their perspectives appeared the most apparent, appropriate and empowering approach to gain unique insights into the protective processes and risks that shape their resilience. Their active involvement also ensured the data collection was directly linked to their experiences rather than being based on other people's perceptions and

observations. This study provided these young women with a voice and recommendations that may help this school nurture young women to thrive.

I will conclude this thesis with an apt and fitting quote from Dame Whina Cooper (as cited in Sayers, 2018), who reminds us of the crucial role we play in nurturing and supporting the youth in our care for they determine the future:

"Take care of our children. Take care of what they hear, take care of what they see, take care of what they feel. For how the children grow, so will be the shape of Aotearoa."

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) Assent/Permission Form for Children Under the Age of 16

Project Title: Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.
Primary Investigator: Laraine Heaslip

13 August 2018

Kia ora,

I am doing a research study looking into young womens' perspectives on resilience at secondary school. [Resilience is how people cope with challenges and feelings and look after themselves when things aren't going well. It is the ability to bounce back from disappointment].

A research study is a way to learn more about people. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to share your thoughts and stories so I can learn what you have found helpful in coping and how you take care of your well-being at school. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are either a Year 10 or 11 female student at our school.

If you decide to participate, you will be part of a focus group of between 5-6 young women your age, who will discuss the topic. You can also choose to have an individual interview with myself on a later date. The focus group will take 45 minutes and the interview 30 minutes of your time. The times we will meet will aim to best fit around your school timetable/assessments. Interviews could take place during morning tea or lunch breaks as well as before school. If you decide to participate, we can discuss times later.

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you decide to stop after we begin, that's okay too.

There are some things about this study you should know. Both the focus group sessions and interviews will be recorded using my personal audio recording device. Recordings will help with accurately documenting your responses - the recordings will be used to make a written record and then be destroyed. Your responses and identity are confidential and will not be shared with any other people. You will be able to check what I write and check you are happy with that. In respect to the other participants, it is important that the conversations that take place in the focus group session are not shared with others and remain private. If you choose to participate, I will give you a copy of the questions, so you have time to think about what you would like to say.

I am doing this study because I think all young women in our school may benefit from it. I think these benefits might help guide us as a school community and learn how we can best support your well-being and other young women as school members. Your student voice is valued and is important in this study, as it will tell the school on ways to help build your resilience.

When I have finished with this study, I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study. You can view a copy of this report if you want.

If you are interested in participating in this study, I will need consent from your parent/caregiver.

If you are happy to participate in this project, please fill in and tear off the attached consent form and drop it off at the school Health centre before 24th August which I will then collect or you can email it if you prefer. My email address is below. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study or your participation in it.

Researcher Name: Laraine Heaslip

Contact:

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2018-1047 Heaslip

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 30th July 2018 to 30th July 2019. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

……

Student Assent Form

If yes, please circle what you would like to be part of

- Both focus group and interview
- Just focus group

- Just individual interview

Please print your full name here……

Thank you for completing this form – Please sign below to show you feel that you understand what the research project is about.

……Date: ……/……/2018.

(Signature of student participant)

Researcher Name: Laraine Heaslip

Contact:

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2018-1047 Heaslip

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 30th July 2018 to 30th July 2019. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix B: Parent/Caregiver Consent Form

Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Information for parents/caregivers of potential student participants

Primary Investigator: Laraine Heaslip

13 August 2018

Kia ora

My name is Laraine Heaslip and I am an experienced teacher at XX High School, having taught there for 13 years. This year I am on full-time study leave and I am currently a Master's student at Unitec, Mt Albert Campus in Auckland. The Master's requires students to investigate and provide significant new insights into a research topic. This research leads me to investigate a topic of great importance to me, that of young womens' resilience at secondary school.

The title of this research project is *Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.* This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee.
This study seeks to explore young womens' perspectives on resilience. I see this as a valuable project for all those concerned and will contribute to an understanding of young womens' perceptions of resilience and how to nurture it in our school community.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to give permission for your daughter/ child in your care if she would like to take part in my research project. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because they are a young woman in either Year 10 or 11 at our school.

If you decide to permit your child to participate, it will involve her being part of a focus group as well as a separate individual interview in order to find out what she finds helpful in coping and keeping healthy at school. The focus group will take 45 minutes and the interview 30 minutes of their time in a private room adjacent to the school Health centre. The times we will meet will aim to best fit around their school timetable/assessments. Interviews could take place during morning tea or lunch breaks as well as before school. If they decide to participate and are given parental consent, we can discuss times at a later date.

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality

The school and students will not be identified in this research, and pseudonyms will be used in all transcribed materials and the final written thesis. The information received by participants will only be used for academic purposes and will be presented in my thesis. When I have finished with this study, I will write a report about what was learned. You and your child can view a copy of this report if you wish.

There are some things about this study you should know. Both the focus group sessions and interviews will be recorded using my personal audio recording device. Recordings will help with accurately documenting your child's responses - the recordings will be used to make a written record and then be destroyed. Their responses and identity are confidential and only my research supervisors and I will view the interview transcripts.

The participants will be able to check what I write and check that they are happy with that. In respect to the other participants, it is important that the conversations that take place in the focus group session are not shared with others and remain private. If your child chooses to participate, I will give them a copy of the questions, so they have time to think about what they would like to say.

Participation in this study

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if for any reason they do not wish to participate, they will be excused at any point of the process, with no questions asked.

If you are happy for your child to participate in this study, please fill in and tear off the attached consent form and drop it off at the school Health centre before 24th August which I will then collect or you can email it if you prefer. I would ask that you kindly discuss this letter with your child, and their part in this research. I will be explaining it again to them when we meet and reiterating their role in the study is completely voluntary.

My contact details are listed below, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study or your child's participation in it.

Researcher Name: Laraine Heaslip

Contact:

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2018-1047 Heaslip

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 30th July 2018 to 30th July 2019. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

…….
…..

Parent/ Caregiver Assent Form

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you are 18 years or older and have read the information provided above and have decided to allow them to participate in the study. Thank you.

I give permission for my child (print name)……to participate in this research study.

Signature of parent/caregiver……
Date:……/……/2018.

Researcher Name: Laraine Heaslip

Contact:

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2018-1047 Heaslip

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 30th July 2018 to 30th July 2019. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix C: Advertising Flyer

Volunteer Participants wanted

- *Are you a young woman in Year 10 or 11?*
- *Would you like to be involved in sharing your thoughts and stories about resilience as a young woman at our school and help make a difference?*

If you answered YES to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

Participants will be asked to:

1. Talk about your experiences and thoughts about resilience within a small group of other young women your age and/or be part of an individual interview.

2. Give your time -*45 minutes if you choose to talk within a group and/or at a later date -an individual interview of 30* minutes -during school hours. Everything you choose to share is confidential. You can withdraw at any point if you want too.

By listening to your stories it will help our school learn the best ways to support you and other young women build your well-being.

If this research sounds like something you would like to do, please email me for more details or collect an information form from the School Health centre.

Appendix D: Interview Question Schedule

Interview Schedule - Individual Interviews

Project title: Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.

Aims

This research seeks to:

1. To explore young women's perspectives on resilience in an urban New Zealand secondary school setting.

2. To identify ways schools can strengthen their own practice to support the development of resilience for young women in Year 10-11.

Researcher: Laraine Heaslip

Individual interview discussion questions:

- Was anything discussed in the focus group you want to add?
- What personal strengths help you overcome obstacles in your life?
- What personal strengths would you like to build on?
- Can you think of a time when you were faced with a challenge or problem at school, what did you do?
- If you were given the opportunity to tell young women in Year 9 how to be resilient, what would you tell them?

Interview Schedule - Focus Group

Project title: Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.

Aims

This research seeks to:

1. To explore young women's perspectives on resilience in an urban New Zealand secondary school setting.

2. To identify ways schools can strengthen their own practice to support the development of resilience for young women in Year 10-11.

Researcher: Laraine Heaslip

Focus group discussion questions:

- What does resilience mean to you?
- What qualities do you believe resilient young women have?
- What helps build resilience in young women?
- Who and what are the main sources of support for your well-being at school?
- What advice would you give our school to help other young women like yourself build their resilience?

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TE WHARE WĀNANGA O WAIRAKA

Declaration

Name of candidate: Laraine Maree Heaslip.....

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled :

Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.

is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of .....Master of Applied Practice.

Principal Supervisor: Jo Mane

Associate Supervisor/s: Hayo Reinders

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.
  Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: **2018-1047 Heaslip**.....

Candidate Signature: ..... Heaslip .....Date: 09/07/2019

Student number: 1483095

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TE WHARE WANANGA 0 WAIRAKA

Full name of author: ...Laraine Maree Heaslip..... .....

ORCID number (Optional): .....

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'):

Change implementation in teaching

.....

Stories of resilience: supporting young women to thrive at secondary school.

.....

Practice Pathway: CISC 9090.....

Degree: ...Master of Applied Practice.....

Year of presentation: ...2019.....

Principal Supervisor: .....Jo Mane

Associate Supervisor: .....Hayo Reinders

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AND

Copyright Compliance:
I confirm that I either used no substantial portions of third party copyright material, including charts, diagrams, graphs, photographs or maps in my thesis/work or I have obtained permission for such material to be made accessible worldwide via the Internet.

Signature of author: .....  ..... Heaslip

Date: ...09.... /...07...../.....2019...