

Reframing Responses to Workplace Stress: Exploring Entry-Level Residence Life Professionals'
Experiences of Workplace Resilience

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Keywords: Resilience, Employee Retention, Burnout, Student Affairs, Human Resources

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand entry-level, live-in residence life professionals' experiences of resilience in the workplace. Resilience is a multilevel, biopsychosocial construct that broadly refers one's ability to maintain or improve positive function in response to adversity (Cicchetti, 2010; Masten & Wright, 2010). Workplace resilience is specifically concerned with such adaptive processes and outcomes in response to job stress.

Resilience research has been conducted primarily from a post-positivist, diagnostic perspective that has failed to give attention to the diverse experiences of resilience in different contexts. This study was conducted using a constructivist perspective to develop an understanding of workplace resilience in the unique context of live-in residence life work in institutions of higher education where job stress, burnout, and attrition occur at high rates. Ten participants were purposefully selected through expert referral for two 90-minute, in-depth interviews to discuss their history, experiences, and reflections regarding adversity and resilience in the workplace. Data were analyzed inductively to discover themes regarding resilience for residence life professionals.

Findings illuminated participant experiences of workplace adversity and resilience, as well as participant beliefs about themselves and the nature and role of resilience in the workplace context. Discussion of findings resulted in four primary conclusions: (a) adversity and resilience coexist in balance with each other; (b) resilience can be learned, as well as lost; (c) resilience is personal and experienced uniquely by individuals; and (d) resilience is a systems issue that is promoted through partnership. Implications for future policy, practice, and research were discussed.

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General Audience Abstract

Entry-level residence life professionals living where they work experience high rates of job stress, burnout, and attrition. These individual concerns also create challenges for organizational effectiveness. Many studies have uncovered factors related to these issues, but few have considered what promotes perseverance in the face of such adversity. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand entry-level, live-in residence life professionals' experiences of workplace resilience, a construct that broadly refers one's ability to maintain or improve positive function in response to adversity in the workplace.

This study was conducted with a constructivist approach to understand the individual experiences of diverse participants. Ten participants engaged in two individual 90-minute, in-depth interviews to discuss their history, experiences, and reflections regarding adversity and resilience in the workplace. Data were analyzed inductively to discover themes regarding resilience for residence life professionals.

Findings illuminated participant experiences of workplace adversity and resilience, as well as participant beliefs about themselves and the nature and role of resilience in the workplace context. Discussion of findings resulted in four primary conclusions: (a) adversity and resilience coexist in balance with each other; (b) resilience can be learned, as well as lost; (c) resilience is personal and experienced uniquely by individuals; and (d) resilience is a systems issue that is promoted through partnership. Implications of these findings suggest that individual and organizational outcomes of adversity and resilience are intertwined, and further understanding and promotion of workplace resilience in this setting could be mutually beneficial by contributing to improved employee wellbeing and performance.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The nature of work has changed dramatically in the United States and worldwide in the past three decades (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). A growing demand in the service and technology sectors and decreased demand in manufacturing have changed the nature of work broadly and rapidly (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). These changes have influenced and taken place against a backdrop of economic fluctuation that has led to workforce downsizing, expansion of flexible work options, and ambiguity about job prospects (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

As employers reshape organizations, employees face perceptions of job insecurity and increased workload absorbed from cut positions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). The number of hours worked by employees has significantly risen as well, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates that the average work year has increased by nearly 700 hours during the past 20 years for couples in their prime working years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

The prevalence of occupational stress has grown during this shift (Duxbury & Higgins, 2012; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). While stress is normal and may be beneficial when regulated at appropriate levels, rising levels of occupational stress have been linked to an increase in negative physical and mental health outcomes, as well as reduced work performance (Le Fevre, Matheny, & Kolt, 2003; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; Hilton, Whiteford, Sheridan, Cleary, Chant, Wang, & Kessler, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Since the 1990s, the number of employees reporting high levels of occupational stress and depression has increased by 13% and 12%, respectively (Hilton et al., 2008). The rising prevalence of stress is concerning for employee quality of life, and also for the cost of stress-related outcomes to employers (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Rosch, 2001). Outcomes of occupational stress in the U.S. cost industries more than 200 billion dollars a year (Rosch, 2001; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

There have been many competing definitions of stress in the literature (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986). Le Fevre, Matheny, and Kolt (2003) simplify Hans Selye's original 1964 definition of stress as "a set of physical and psychological responses

to adverse conditions or influences” (p. 727). Stress is described as eustress, stress that promotes positive outcomes, or distress, stress that results in negative outcomes (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Practical management advice suggests that maintaining employee stress at an optimal level will result in increased motivation that leads to optimal performance; however, there is limited research into eustress to develop this concept (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Distress, on the other hand, is widely researched, and is often simply referred to as “stress” (Le Fevre et al., 2003). Workplace stress, stress specifically occurring in relation to work, refers to distress that results when an occupational environment and its demands exceed an employee’s ability to effectively cope (World Health Organization, 2016).

Workplace stress has been studied widely since the mid-twentieth century (Motowidlo et al., 1986). Early studies focused on the physical outcomes of stress, such as body strain and cardiovascular disease (Hilton et al., 2008; Motowidlo et al., 1986). Later studies shifted to concern with the impact of this stress on employee performance quality, such as productivity, attendance, and attrition, as well as the cost to employers of managing and failing to manage this stress (Hilton et al., 2008; Motowidlo et al., 1986). Recently, interest has grown in understanding the causes and impact of workplace stress on mental health and its impact on productivity and overall wellness (Hilton et al., 2008). This growth of inquiry has largely coincided with the recent significant shifts in the nature of work and demands on workers (Hilton et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Higher education is not immune from increasing occupational stress. The impact of stress on morale and wellbeing affects faculty and student affairs administrator satisfaction, productivity, and attrition (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Richard & Krieschok, 1989). Much of this body of research focuses on stress factors and the relationship of stress to negative outcomes, with some attention given to preventing or addressing stress in faculty (Allee, 2015; Gillespie et al., 2001). Very little is known about stress prevention or management (Allee, 2015). This is surprising considering up to 50% of new employees in student affairs will leave the profession within the first five years of service, stress being a primary factor (Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, & Lowery, 2016).

Underperformance due to strain on mental health manifests in a variety of ways. Increased workplace stress compromises reasoning due to cognitive fatigue (Motowidlo et al., 1986). Another impact is increased vulnerability to frustration as task load increases, resulting in

negativity and hostility (Motowidlo et al., 1986). Attention to detail declines as workplace stress rises (Hilton et al., 2008). Poor performance due to stress often results in additional strain from internal or external judgments on production and behavior (Hilton et al., 2008). While employees agree that flexible work options, such as telecommuting, have added some sense of control to more demanding work conditions, being constantly connected to work through technology has increased perception of demands, feelings of isolation from colleagues, and overall levels of stress (Leka & Jain, 2010; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Stress-related health issues have also increased. U.S. workers are working on average 12 hours more per week than in 1991 (Hilton et al., 2008). Employee perception of the number of hours one is expected to work is a strong predictor of distress, with distress increasing as perceived number of expected work-hours increases (Hilton et al., 2008). Up to 30% of employees report it is normal for them to feel emotionally exhausted at the end of every workday (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Between 1997 and 2001, the number of workers who missed work due to stress tripled (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Types of stress-related illnesses include migraines, depression, anxiety, sleep issues, musculoskeletal disorders, and cardiovascular disease (Hilton et al., 2008; Leka & Jain, 2010). The American Institute of Stress found that stress was implicated in 80% of all work-related injuries (Atkinson, 2004). Increasingly, workers turn to negative coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, social withdraw, and chronic complaining or gossip that perpetuate negative health outcomes (Hilton et al., 2008).

Attrition is another outcome of higher levels of occupational stress (Hilton et al., 2008; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Attrition is not necessarily negative, as it may allow employers and employees to find better fit and more opportunities, and it is not always attributable to distress (Frank, 2013; Marshall et al., 2016). The American Institute of Stress estimates that 40% of all workplace turnover can be attributed to high levels of workplace stress (Atkinson, 2004). This type of attrition, which is potentially preventable, can create high levels of career and personal distress for employees and costs employers in talent, organizational knowledge, recruiting and training costs, and efficiency of employees who will take on the extra work left behind (Marshall et al., 2016; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Causes of workplace stress have been examined in the literature in an effort to address its negative outcomes (Motowidlo et al., 1986). Much of this work focuses on internal and external environmental and individual risk factors, and several models have emerged to describe the link between stress factors and outcomes (Le Fevre et al., 2003).

Environmental factors such as quality of supervision, role in the organization, physical and psychosocial security of work climate, and workplace pressures contribute to stress (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Leka & Jain, 2010; Marshall et al., 2016; Motowidlo et al., 1986; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). These environmental factors might be stable, or they may result in periodic stressful events, the frequency and intensity of which impact employee stress in varying ways (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Motowidlo et al., 1986). External environmental factors such as the economy and the political landscape may also impact workplace stress in a more indirect way (Froman, 2010; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Individual risk factors describe employee characteristics that may make them more susceptible to negative stress outcomes. Characteristics such as Type A behavior, fear of negative job evaluations, perception of limited control, and incompatible fit with workplace culture or values are examples of individual risk-factors contributing to stress (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Motowidlo et al., 1986). Individual risk factors that are not internal may indirectly influence occupational stress. Work-life balance issues and spillover of work into family and personal relationships also contribute to stress (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).

As researchers have studied the impacts and causes of increased workplace stress, attempts to determine interventions for abating, mitigating, and managing stress have followed (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). These efforts, known as stress-management initiatives (SMIs) in the occupational health field, offer options for employee self-care and skill building to promote wellness (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). The strategies commonly employed by SMIs include corporate benefits packages encouraging flexible work schedules and use of leave time (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Increasingly common strategies include professional development and interventions that use cognitive-behavioral techniques to foster skills that facilitate positive coping through reflection and use of strategies (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Findings show that cognitive-behavioral techniques are most effective and show good return on investment; however, cheaper techniques such as relaxation and meditation coaching are the mostly widely employed (Richardson &

Rothstein, 2008; van der Klink, Blonk, Schene, & van Dijk, 2001). In-house counseling to address employee stress has been shown to reduce absenteeism by up to 60% (Clarke & Cooper, 2000).

Despite the potential effectiveness of corporate wellness programs and SMIs, most are reactive when stress has already occurred, and many employees do not access these services (Hilton et al., 2008). Up to 78% of employees experiencing workplace stress do not seek or receive assistance for their issues (Hilton et al., 2008). This may be attributable to a lack of appropriate referrals or attention from supervisors, as most managers report the belief that none of their employees may need such assistance (Hilton et al., 2008). This is common despite evidence that workplace stress is prevalent at about 30%, comparable to the prevalence of mental health issues in the general population (Hilton et al., 2008). Interestingly, about 30% of employees with high levels of distress consider this to be a normal aspect of their jobs, and as a result do not seek assistance (Hilton et al., 2008).

As previously discussed, much research into workplace stress has focused on negative outcomes and their causes. Growing interest in positive psychology approaches, which focus on building upon attributes to improve quality of life rather than focusing on deficiencies, has led to a recent increase in studies of workplace stress focused on what helps people positively manage and rebound (Seligman, 2002). Researchers have found a strong role of positive emotions in providing a foundation for resistance to and coping with stress (Froman, 2010). Positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, inspiration, and love have been studied as to their relationship with positive reactions to stress (Froman, 2010). Stemming from learning about positive emotions and stress, the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) explores the ability to accurately perceive, understand, and manage emotions in self and others in the development of intellect (Froman, 2010; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Individuals with strong EI have been shown to experience less negative physical and psychological outcomes of stress, and they experience better recovery (Armstrong, Galligan, & Critchley, 2011).

Self-determination is another construct that has been shown to promote positive outcomes. People with high self-determination have an internal sense of drive and strength to direct their thoughts and energy toward achievement (Froman, 2010). The innate ability to address stress improves outcomes (Froman, 2010).

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is the collective pooling of personal strengths derived from hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience and applied toward positive interactions and outcomes in the workplace (Dawkins, Martin, Scott, & Sanderson, 2013; Froman, 2010). Hope and optimism have a positive impact upon motivation and effort (Dawkins et al., 2013). Self-efficacy, one's belief in one's own ability to successfully accomplish a task, is positively related to work performance and engagement (Dawkins et al., 2013). Resilience, though defined in many different ways, is generally considered the ability to rebound from adversity, and relates to improved overall performance and wellbeing (Dawkins et al., 2013; Froman, 2010).

Resilience is of particular interest to the study of workplace stress and health (Froman, 2010). The changing nature of work and pressures on workers has drawn attention to individuals who seem to effectively cope and even thrive in the face of severe and pervasive adversity (Froman, 2010). The earliest conceptions of resilience came from studies of children who were thriving despite serious adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003). Studies focused on discovering traits that distinguished resilient children, and, eventually resilient adults in various settings (Masten & Powell, 2003; Richardson, 2002). The field of resilience inquiry has grown during the past few decades to include research into the processes underlying resilience and methods for developing resilience (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003; Richardson, 2002). Many competing definitions and conceptions of resilience have developed from this research. This will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Two.

As a result, resilience research has produced a variety of models to demonstrate the resilience process (Masten & Powell, 2003; Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990). These models describe how components of resilience may interact, but causal mechanisms underlying the process have yet to be determined (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten & Wright, 2010). Only recently have models been developed to address the particular nature of resilience in the workplace (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013; Rees, Breen, Cusack, & Hegney, 2015; Winwood, Colon, & McEwen, 2013).

Workplace resilience models were developed through inquiry into the resilience process of employees who bounce back after experiencing high-level or pervasive occupational stress (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013; Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013). Unlike earlier resilience studies that focused on adversity in the form of severe or pervasive traumatic life events, workplace resilience models acknowledge the severity of the cumulative stress that can

be experienced in the workplace, especially during the last few decades (Rees et al., 2015; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004; Winwood et al., 2013).

The sharp rise in workplace demands and adverse environmental conditions has given way to a noted increase in workplace stress and related negative health outcomes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). The study of resilience in the workplace has grown broadly during this time. Many studies have been conducted in a variety of professions where abnormally high levels of stress, burnout, and attrition are likely encountered such as nursing and medicine (Matheson, Robertson, Elliott, Iversen, & Murchie, 2016), mental health counseling (Bowden, Smith, Parker, & Boxall, 2015), the corporate setting (Meneghel, Salanova, & Martinez, 2016), criminal justice (Williams, Ciarrochi, & Deane, 2010), and teaching (Curry & O'Brien, 2012; Doney, 2012; Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016; Tait, 2008).

Despite numerous studies of resilience in education, attention has only recently been given to professionals in the higher education workplace. This is surprising given the volatile landscape of higher education today (Allee, 2015; Gillespie et al., 2001). Increased regulation, decreased funding, and growing public demands have increased the occupational stress on higher education workers (Gillespie et al., 2001). These studies have focused mostly on faculty (Gillespie et al., 2001; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). Limited research has explored resilience in student affairs professionals, though their experiences of workplace stress, burnout, and unusually high attrition rates are well documented (Brown, Bond, Gerndt, Krager, Krantz, Lukin, & Prentice, 1986; Buchanan & Shupp, 2015; Evans, 1988; Frank, 2013; Marshall et al., 2016; Tull, 2006; Ward, 1995). An extensive review of the literature yielded only one such study of mid-managers in student affairs (Allee, 2015).

Entry-level student affairs professionals, including live-in staff members, are widely studied in regard to their occupational stress. The nature of their work lends to long hours, heavy workload, emotional interactions, and unpredictable crisis management (Brown et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2016; Ward, 1995). Risk factors for stress come from a work environment where turnover is regular and supervisors may lack experience (Buchanan & Shupp, 2015; Frank, 2013; Marshall et al., 2016; Tull, 2006). Frequent outcomes of stress reported by this group are body signals (e.g., extreme fatigue, headaches, and others), difficulty interacting or maintaining positive relationships, mood changes, lack of concentration, and general inefficiency (Brown et

al., 2015). The five-year attrition rate for this group is estimated to be 50%-60% (Marshall et al., 2016). A better understanding of resilience may provide helpful insights into improvement of interventions and reactions to stress in this population. The nature of student affairs work and occupational stress will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Two.

Statement of the Problem

During the past three decades, the nature of work has dramatically changed in response to the growth of new industries and worldwide economic fluctuations (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). These changes have transformed the way employees experience work, resulting in longer hours, increased workload due to downsizing, flexible work arrangements, and increased job insecurity (Hilton et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Changes in the nature of work have influenced a significant increase in occupational stress that compromises employee quality of life and has real financial and climate costs to employers (Le Fevre et al., 2003; Rosch, 2001). Performance issues, stress-related illness and absenteeism, and attrition are some of the outcomes of occupational stress employees' experience (Hilton et al., 2008; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Atkinson (2004) estimated that 80% of all work-related injuries can be attributed to stress.

Researchers have taken interest in the sources, processes, and underlying mechanisms of occupational stress. Inquiry has focused on both the dysfunctions and strengths of the workplace environment and individual employees (Motowidlo et al., 1986; Froman, 2010). Studies have been conducted to develop models of occupational stress to develop effective interventions (Cooper & Cartwright, 2000; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; van der Klink et al., 2001). Positive psychology has informed a group of interventions for addressing occupational stress (Froman, 2010). These interventions focus on building upon environmental and employee attributes to insulate against stress and promote improved coping and recovery (Froman, 2010).

Resilience, a positive psychological concept referring to an individual's ability to rebound from severe adversity, has been increasingly studied to understand its potential application as an intervention (Froman, 2010). Models of workplace resilience have recently been generated to better understand occupational stress, and a number of studies have been conducted in high-stress fields with positive applications resulting, including health professions,

criminal justice, and education (Mansfield et al., 2016; Matheson et al., 2016; Rees et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2010; Winwood et al., 2013).

The higher education professional setting and the student affairs profession in particular have received much attention in the occupational stress literature, yet very limited attention in regards to workplace resilience (Evans, 1988; Allee, 2015). As student affairs professionals continue to report high levels of stress and experience an unusually high attrition rate of 1:2 in the first five years of service, gaining a better understanding of resilience in this setting may be of great value to student affairs professionals and their employers (Brown et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore individual employee workplace resilience in the student affairs professional setting. For the purposes of this study, workplace resilience is defined as a contextual, dynamic, multi-level response to workplace adversity that preserves, promotes, or enhances individual wellbeing. (Masten & Wright, 2010; Ungar, 2004).

The unique population and environment that were the focus of this study had not been explored in resilience studies to date. For this reason, a constructivist theoretical perspective guided the use of an existing conceptual framework and the methods of this study. This perspective prioritized inductive exploration of participants' lived experiences in meaning making to avoid missing important experiences of workplace resilience that may have been unique to participants in this context (Ungar, 2004).

An adapted version of King and Rothstein's (2010) general conceptual model of resiliency was used to frame this study (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). The model depicted six interrelated parts of the resilience process: (a) workplace adversity, (b) an individual's initial responses to adversity, (c) moderating effects of an individual's personal characteristics, (d) moderating effects of external opportunities, supports, and resources, (e) an individual's array of self-regulatory processes, and (f) affective, behavioral, and cognitive resilient outcomes (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013, p. 65).

The sample in this study consisted of 10 resilient entry-level, live-in residence life professionals with more than 2 years but less than 6 years of full time experience who worked at four-year colleges and universities. Resilient individuals were considered eligible for the sample because the aim of this study was to understand resilience through the lived experiences of those

who demonstrate the capacity. Resilient individuals were identified by professional experts. For the purposes of this study, entry-level positions were considered those requiring the least amount of experience in the administrative chain, with high student contact, and limited management responsibilities (Mills, 2009). Live-in housing professionals were considered those living in a private apartment in residential facilities amongst students.

Data were collected during the course of one semester through semi-structured interviews using a modified version of Seidman's in-depth phenomenological interviewing method (Seidman, 2013).

Research Questions

1. How do resilient entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of workplace adversity?
2. How do resilient entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of resilient responses (affective, behavioral, and cognitive) to workplace adversity?
3. How do resilient entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe the outcomes of their resilient responses to workplace adversity?
4. What meaning do resilient entry-level, live-in residence life professionals make of their workplace resilience?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant for future practice. Findings could be used by student affairs leadership to create environments that are supportive in building and maintaining resilience in employees.

Another group whose future practice may benefit from this study are supervisors of entry-level, live-in residence life professionals. Understanding the stressors, protective factors, and outcomes for these vulnerable employees is essential for those who are their first-point of contact and often mediators of their interactions in the organization.

Finally, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals stand to personally improve their practice based on the findings of this study. Professionals who are self-aware and understand their capacities to build upon resilience protective factors and diminish risk may experience a positive influence on resilience and impact on their overall wellness.

This study also had significance for future research. I studied the experiences of entry-level, live-in residence life professionals regarding their resilience. Future research could focus on these experiences of student affairs managers, as their impact on the resilience of others in the organization is well documented (Brown et al., 1986; Frank, 2013). Future studies might also investigate the development of protective factors and management of risk factors on employee wellness and attrition in student affairs to understand if propositions regarding development and outcomes apply to this setting (Winwood et al., 2013). Another possibly significant area for future research is in the exploration of the topic using quantitative research methods. While I focused on the experiences of individuals using qualitative methods, a quantitative study of resilience in the student affairs workplace might yield results that are more broadly generalizable of others in the profession and may be predictive of outcomes related to resilience.

Finally, this study was significant for informing future policy. University human resources policies regarding wellbeing benefits, such as physical and mental health care, leave, and flexible scheduling options, can be structured with an understanding of how they promote or increase risk in regards to resilience. Human resources policies regarding rewards, such as leave cash-outs, attendance bonuses or wellness incentives, can also be reviewed and restructured to promote resilience through an understanding of their impact on protection and risk. One additional way this study may inform future policy is through human resources or departmental level performance policies. Integrating value for resilience-building professional behaviors into performance metrics or utilizing resilience-building interventions for sub-standard performance may provide a positive psychological approach to performance policy that promotes overall resilience.

Delimitations

As with all research, the present study had some initial delimitations. Data collected for analysis were yielded from the questions asked in the interview protocol. These questions were not all that could have been asked regarding perceptions of resilience. The study was bounded by the data collected from the limited questions asked in interviews. A second delimitation was that the study was bounded by those who chose to participate. While efforts were made to reach a broad range of potentially eligible participants, self-selected participation bounds on all of the potential experiences that may have been documented. Another delimitation was that the data collected for analysis was collected at limited times throughout the academic year. The data

represent experiences bound by the specific timeframes selected. Despite delimitations, this study is valuable in that it may add insight into individual workplace resilience in the student affairs setting. Limited research is currently available to address this topic, despite the stressful nature of this setting (Allee, 2015).

Organization of the Study

The study is organized in five chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature for the study. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study, including the sampling techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter Four describes study findings, and Chapter Five discusses those results and their implications for future practice, research, and policy.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Two bodies of literature informed the development of this study. The first pertained to the concept of resilience. The review of resilience literature included a historical perspective on the development of resilience as a concept and the ways it has been studied and applied. It also included a review of competing epistemological paradigms in resilience research that served as an important guide for the construction of this study.

The second body of literature pertained to student affairs professionals working specifically in residence life and the nature of their work. The review of this literature included a description of student affairs work in institutions of higher education, an exploration of the unique nature of the work of live-in residence life professionals, and a deeper description of the wellbeing risks and outcomes associated with this work.

This chapter concludes with a description of the conceptual framework used to guide this study.

Resilience

Resilience is a term used in everyday language to signify a variety of meanings. The word originated from “resile,” a verb describing the mechanical properties of rebounding from some type of pressure or impact (Strümpfer, 2003, p. 70). The definition of resilience as it applies to the study of people and communities is more elusive, an ongoing source of debate amongst scholars, and a source of critique of the concept (Luthar et al., 2000).

In general, resilience refers to “positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 543). This can apply to individuals or groups, such as communities or organizations (Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2010). The two central concepts, (a) serious adversity and (b) positive, adaptive outcomes are shared among the variety of prevailing definitions of resilience (Luthar et al., 2000). An individual cannot be considered resilient without experiencing serious adversity (Masten, 2001). Resilience is described as traits, processes, and outcomes, and can be conceptualized as a combination of these (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015; Ungar, 2003).

Resilience is a contextual, temporal, domain-specific process (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). An individual can exhibit resilience at one point in time and not another, and one’s resilience can vary based on domain, such as work, school, or personal life (Fletcher &

Sarkar, 2015; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Resilience includes the interaction between person, risk and protective factors, and the environment, causing this dynamic variation (Helgeson & Lopez, 2010; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004).

Resilience is also additive. One's experiences of resilience are based on an accumulation of prior experiences, not just the current adversity (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). In addition, adversity contributes to the potential development of new protective factors or new vulnerabilities that change the individual and one's potential responses to future adversity (Luthar et al., 2000).

Resilience is a stand-alone construct that relates to but is not interchangeable with similar constructs. Emotional intelligence is a construct describing how individuals understand, manage, and apply their emotions and those of others (Armstrong et al., 2011). It relates to resilience as a potential promotive and protective factor (Armstrong et al., 2011). Coping is another related concept. Coping can be considered a strategy for resilience, but it does not equate to resilience, as coping does not require recovery or improvement as an outcome (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015). Grit, "perseverance and passion" toward the achievement of long-term goals, is distinct from resilience, but each could contribute to the successful expression of the other (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Positive psychological capital, or PsyCap, is a construct that has grown from positive psychology research in business settings to describe internal personal capital that can be leveraged for positive outcomes (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). PsyCap includes the four constructs of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2007). Thriving is a construct built upon the resilience construct, and is considered to be achieving higher levels of performance as a result of adversity (O'Leary, 1998). It can be considered as a part of the resilience construct as an outcome of resilient processes or it can be considered a separate construct that is not a required outcome for resilience (O'Leary, 1998).

Defining a Complex Construct

Scholars have found it difficult to agree upon one comprehensive conceptual definition of resilience (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2001). This is due to multiple factors including the complexity of the construct (Masten, 2001) and its contextual nature (Ungar, 2004). Resilience is a dynamic, multi-level construct that incorporates human interaction with self, others, and the environment at biological, psychological, social, and spiritual levels (Masten, 2001; Masten & Wright, 2010; Richardson et al., 1990; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). This level of complexity provides

researchers with many avenues for study, but makes it challenging to specifically define a grand theory of resilience (Luthar et al., 2000). Scholars suggest that a diversity of definitions for resilience is necessary to encompass a construct with multiple domains and outcomes (Luthar et al., 2000; Rutter, 1999). Evidence from studies using differing definitions of resilience have yielded similar themes and correlations between construct components and outcomes, suggesting good construct validity despite the lack of specific definition (Luthar et al., 2000).

The most basic aspects of the general resilience definition are areas of great debate (Masten, 2001). Definitional disagreements about the resilience construct address four areas: (a) risk factors and adversity, (b) type of adaptive response, (c) timing of adaptive response, and (d) resilient outcomes.

On one side of the definition of resilience is the description of risk factors and the adversity faced. Some researchers insist that the adversity must be exceptionally severe for resilience to be demonstrated (Bonnano, 2004), while others believe that adversity in different forms can result in resilience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015; Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007; Luthar et al., 2000). Still others argue from a constructivist perspective that the experience of adversity is highly personal and contextual, preventing definition of adversity from anyone but the person who experiences it (Ungar, 2004). I discuss the constructivist critique of resilience in more detail later in this chapter.

On the other side of the general definition of resilience lies the adaptive response. It is generally agreed that a variety of responses to adversity are possible, but researchers disagree about what types of responses characterize resilience (Luthar et al., 2000). Some researchers hold that a recovery response, or return to homeostasis and levels of prior functioning, is sufficient to demonstrate resilience (Masten & Wright, 2010; Ong, Bergeman, Bisconti, & Wallace, 2006). Others argue that resilience is only the improvement of function beyond prior levels as a result of adversity (Bonnano, 2004; Richardson et al., 1990). A separate but related field of study on the construct of thriving explores this idea, though not all thriving researchers consider it the only form of resilience (Helgeson & Lopez, 2010; O'Leary, 1998). Constructivist researchers point out that adaptive responses may be resilient for the individual even if they are considered maladaptive in the cultural context in which they occur, and this would likely be missed by prevailing definitions of the construct (Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2004).

Scholars also disagree about whether a resilient adaptive response can include a period of negative adaptation before recovery or thriving, or if resilience is marked only by withstanding adversity to maintain or exceed stability (Bonanno, 2004; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015). Other scholars add the concept of sustainability to the recovery phase, suggesting that truly resilient individuals not only quickly recover from adversity but also intentionally, actively sustain their stabilization or improvement over longer periods of time (Zautra et al., 2010).

Finally, what comprises a resilient outcome is also an area of debate. Some researchers focus on external outcomes such as performance or interpersonal ability, while others focus on internal outcomes related to psychological wellbeing (Masten, 2001). Constructivist scholars argue that socio-culturally situated definitions of ‘positive’ adaptation and ‘wellbeing’ are too narrow to encompass the diversity of resilient outcomes that may arise with adversity, missing important resilient outcomes that may not fit the norm (Ungar, 2004). They have called for a deeper understanding of the lived experience of resilience from the individual’s perspective (Ungar, 2004).

An historical review of the study of resilience is useful for understanding why resilience is difficult to define yet still useful in understanding why some persist or thrive in the face of adversity while others struggle. Masten and Wright frame this history in four overlapping and ongoing waves (Masten & Wright, 2010).

Early Concepts and First Wave Resilience Research

The earliest studies of what scholars today call resilience date back to the 1800s as studies of physiological and psychological responses to stress (Masten & Wright, 2010; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Modern conceptualizations and the use of the term resilience are rooted in human development and psychopathological studies from the 1970s and 1980s (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Luthar et al., 2000). Early, “first-wave” studies focused on understanding why some individuals persisted, or even thrived, in the face of serious risk despite all research and conventional wisdom suggesting they should fail (Masten & Wright, 2010, p. 214; Luthar et al., 2000). Description, definition, and measurement of resilience, as well as a focus on individual traits and characteristics made up much of the first-wave research agenda (Masten & Wright, 2010). Such research was done in hopes of promoting resilience in the greater population (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004).

Norman Garmezy and colleagues' research of developmental outcomes of children of schizophrenic parents yielded some of the foundational concepts of resilience (Garmezy et al., 1984; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Research that started as a study of predicted psychopathological outcomes for these children revealed a surprising finding that many, despite the significant risks associated with having schizophrenic parents, displayed positive developmental adaptation (Garmezy et al., 1984). This shifted the focus of Garmezy's work from a pathogenic to a salutogenic, health-promoting inquiry, looking for factors that contributed to positive adaptation rather than factors that caused negative adaptation (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Garmezy et al., 1984; Strümpfer, 2003).

The development of three models to explain resilience came from these studies, and all centered on personal traits: (a) the compensatory model, (b) the challenge model, and (c) the protective factors model (Garmezy et al., 1984). The compensatory model was used to suggest that an individual's personal traits could counteract stress or adversity (Garmezy et al., 1984). Traits identified and studied include optimism, positive emotions, humor, beliefs, intelligence, creativity, and self-esteem, among others (Ong et al., 2006; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004).

The challenge model was used to describe how stress, when incremental and not too excessive, acted to enhance development by providing just enough challenge to hone competence (Garmezy et al., 1984). In this model, positive adaptation is seen in concert with adversity and relates to the similar concept of thriving (Garmezy et al., 1984; O'Leary, 1998). The protective factors model was used to explore the dichotomy between vulnerability and immunity to risk (Garmezy et al., 1984). Findings suggested that an individual's personal attributes might lend a sort of "immunity" to the individual, protecting the person from experiencing the stress (Garmezy et al., 1984, p. 102). Some of these attributes are emotional intelligence, self-control, planning, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills (Armstrong et al., 2011; Garmezy et al., 1984; Ledesma, 2014).

These different models were not seen as exclusive of one another, and they have served as the foundation for many ongoing inquiries into resilience (Garmezy et al., 1984; Ledesma, 2014; Luthar et al., 2000). Resilience studies grew in a variety of areas at this time, exploring a variety of topics from family therapy (Rutter, 1999), to adults dealing with loss (Bonanno, 2004).

Shifting from Description to Understanding Processes: Second Wave Resilience Research

While resilience was a surprising finding for original researchers, the true surprise is that ongoing research has shown that resilience is actually common (Masten, 2001). Masten calls it “ordinary magic” and describes how resilience is most likely a default human function and ability, impaired when biological and social adaptation systems are compromised (Masten, 2001, p. 227). This has fostered growth in understanding resilience as a process (Masten, 2001; Masten & Wright, 2010, p. 214).

Resilience processes combine individual capabilities, social supports, and religion or culture communities to yield an overall response to adversity (Masten & Wright, 2010). These form the protective systems that promote resilience and protect against the effects of adversity on resilience (Masten & Wright, 2010). Resilient individuals are better at appraising their negative and positive responses to adversity and regulating these (Ong, Bergeman, & Chow, 2010). They moderate responses to adversity prior to a stress response by appraising these situations with more positivity (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015). They draw on capabilities of meaning making and self-efficacy to reframe and approach adversity with more purpose, optimism, and agency (Masten & Wright, 2010). Resilient individuals rely on their social connections for support and perspective, and they find connection to purpose and hope in their communities, sense of culture, and faiths (Masten & Wright, 2010). Researchers have established correlations between such processes and resilient outcomes, but the underlying causal mechanisms are not clearly understood (Ong et al., 2010; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004).

Growing understanding of resilience processes led to the development of a variety of models and measures of resilience (Masten & Powell, 2003; Richardson et al., 1990). Masten & Powell created a framework for resilience consisting of three approaches: (a) risk-focused approaches in which adversity is prevented through risk reduction, (b) asset-focused approaches in which individual resources are developed, and (c) process-focused approaches in which human adaptive systems are leveraged in response to adversity (Masten & Powell, 2003).

Richardson and colleagues developed the “Resiliency Model” that illustrated the path of rebounding, called “reintegration,” after adversity having four possible outcomes: (a) dysfunctional reintegration, (b) maladaptive reintegration, (c) homeostatic reintegration, and (d) resilient reintegration (Richardson et al., 1990, p. 35). Only the fourth of these outcomes is considered resilience in Richardson’s model (Richardson et al., 1990).

Applying Insights to Interventions: Third Wave Resilience Research

Third-wave resilience studies, concerned with applying knowledge in the form of interventions, went hand-in-hand with second-wave studies (Masten & Wright, 2010). This signified a shift in thinking of resilience as a process or a set of traits to thinking of resilience as outcomes (Masten & Wright, 2010). Common areas of resilience research, such as adolescent risky behaviors and family therapy have been areas of attention in intervention studies (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1999); however, much of the third-wave resilience research has focused on an area of study generally referred to as workplace resilience (Ledesma, 2014; Luthar et al., 2007).

Workplace Resilience.

Workplace resilience is a growing field of study that relates most closely to third-wave studies focused on outcomes and interventions designed to improve resilience in employees and organizations (King, Newman, & Luthans, 2016; Winwood et al., 2013; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Workplace adversity is not construed in the same way as adversity in early resilience studies; however, as the nature of work has become more dynamic, uncertain, and stressful, negative outcomes such as burnout, occupational illness and injury, and attrition have become more prevalent (King et al., 2016; Strümpfer, 2003; Winwood et al., 2013). Researchers have acknowledged the pervasive, chronic stress of working environments as legitimate adversities to which individuals may respond with positive, resilient adaptations (Jackson et al., 2007; King et al., 2016). Resilient outcomes, similar to earlier studies, can be described externally, such as work performance measures (Rees et al., 2015), and internally, such as attitude, wellbeing, and positive emotions (Rees et al., 2015; Strümpfer, 2003). A foundational belief in workplace resilience research is that resilience can be developed (Jackson et al., 2007; Winwood et al., 2013). As such, the primary goal of workplace resilience studies is helping employees build resilience (Jackson et al., 2007; Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013).

Workplace resilience studies have focused on a variety of fields including health care (Jackson et al., 2007; Matheson et al., 2016; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004), policing (Williams et al., 2010), business (Coutu, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007; Youssef & Luthans, 2007), and education (Curry & O'Brien, 2012; Day & Hong, 2016; Doney, 2012; Greenfield, 2015; Mansfield et al., 2016; Tait, 2008). Workplace resilience researchers study both individual and organizational resilience (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2010; King et al., 2016; Ledesma, 2014; Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Organizational resilience researchers investigate how organizations rebound from adversity to find continued or enhanced success (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2010; Ledesma, 2014). Organizational resilience and individual workplace resilience are interconnected, as the environmental interaction effect on resilience creates a mutual relationship (Ledesma, 2014). Organizational resilience is not currently widely studied, but it is a growing area of interest (Ledesma, 2014).

Individual workplace resilience is the focus of this study, and it refers to an individual's positive adaptation to workplace adversity (Winwood et al., 2013; Rees et al., 2015). This differs somewhat from traditional definitions of resilience. Threats in workplace settings are typically pervasive and systemic components of an individual's interaction with the culture and structure of the workplace rather than moments of severe trauma, though this is also possible (Winwood et al., 2013). Individual workplace resilience is related to preventing burnout, compassion fatigue, work-related injury, and other negative outcomes, and promoting positive outcomes such as satisfaction and belonging (Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Though interrelated, resilient responses and outcomes are primarily studied as a function of the individual, not the environment, and they are defined more by the context of workplace performance and persistence than by individual aspects of wellbeing (Winwood et al., 2013). Researchers acknowledge that improving individual wellbeing correlates positively to improved performances (Luthans et al., 2007; Winwood et al., 2013).

Workplace adversity is broadly described as workplace stress, incidental or cumulative, that is so significant as to cause serious acute or chronic distress to employees (Jackson et al., 2007; Winwood et al., 2013). This adversity can be generated through things such as organizational culture or significant organizational change (Coutu, 2002; Froman, 2010; Jackson et al., 2007; King et al., 2015). It can also be a result of larger forces within an industry or shifts in a larger economy (Coutu, 2002; Froman, 2010; Winwood et al., 2013). This adversity does not have to be considered negative to be tremendously distressing, as positive workplace conditions may also lead to threatening amounts of stress (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Much workplace resilience research focuses on trait-based protective factors and some active processes that buffer stress and help individuals navigate to positive outcomes (Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013). Winwood and colleagues identified seven factors that correlated to improved resilient outcomes in the workplace: (a) living authentically, (b) finding one's calling,

(c) maintaining perspective, (d) managing stress, (e) interacting cooperatively, (f) staying healthy, and (g) building networks (Winwood et al., 2013). These factors were used to develop a scale to measure individual workplace resilience called the “Resilience at Work,” or “RAW” scale (Winwood et al., 2013). Other factors that have been identified in the literature include neuroticism, coping, self-efficacy, and mindfulness (Rees et al., 2015), and realistic optimism, a sense of purpose, and ingenuity (Coutu, 2002). These factor approaches reflect the positivist paradigm of prevailing resilience research in that context and culture are not major considerations in grounding the research, and they presume that interactions between adversity, traits and processes, and outcomes are predictable (Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013).

Individual workplace resilience outcomes are those that are good for the workplace and good for the individual. Researchers approach these two sets of outcomes as interrelated, generally assume that positive performance outcomes preclude negative individual outcomes, and acknowledge that positive individual outcomes can positively influence performance outcomes (Luthans et al., 2007; Winwood et al.; 2013). Resilient performance outcomes include, among others, engagement, participation, attendance, ability to deal with change, and positive contributions (Coutu, 2002; Winwood et al., 2013). Resilient individual outcomes include, among others, satisfaction, sense of achievement, sense of balance, improved physical and emotional health, and commitment (Coutu, 2002; Jackson et al., 2007; Luthans et al., 2007; Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013).

Similar to the prevailing resilience research upon which it was built, workplace resilience has a limited basis in or development of theoretical models to explain the construct and its underlying mechanisms (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). Researchers have called for greater attention to this shortcoming (King & Rothstein, 2010).

King and Rothstein proposed a model to describe a dynamic process of workplace resilience that included affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to adversity (King & Rothstein, 2010; McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). McLarnon and Rothstein offer a streamlined version of the model that includes six components: (a) workplace adversity, (b) initial responses, (c) external resources providing moderating effects, (d) personal characteristics providing moderating effects, (e) self-regulatory process, and (f) outcomes (King & Rothstein, 2010; McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013, p. 65). This model is displayed in Appendix A. It was used to develop a measure of workplace resilience, the Workplace Resilience Inventory, based in theory

rather than in reviews of the literature (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). This model is helpful in conceptualizing the complex, dynamic interplay between trait, process, and outcome aspects of resilience and the environment (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). It also calls attention to the multi-level affective, behavioral, and cognitive expressions of self-regulation and outcomes (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). The inclusion of the moderating effect of external factors, though not explicitly stated by the authors, also allows the researcher to consider sociocultural context and its influence on additional aspects of the model in ways to which other models do not attend. The ways this model will be helpful in conceptualizing resilience for the purposes of this study will be described at the end of this chapter.

Uncharted Territory: Fourth Wave Resilience Studies and Areas for Future Research

While applied, intervention-focused resilience research continues to grow, a “fourth-wave” of resilience studies emerged in the last decade that focuses on genetic moderators and neurobiology associated with resilience (Masten & Wright, 2010). A better understanding of gene and environment interactions may contribute to better resilience interventions (Luecken & Gress, 2010). These studies employ “multilevel perspectives” that encompass intersections of genetics, neurology, and personality to contribute to a holistic resilience construct that acknowledges “multifinality” in resilient developmental outcomes (Cicchetti, 2010, p. 145). Such fourth-wave studies carry the promise of broadening the definition of resilience by embracing, not reducing, its complexity (Cicchetti, 2010; Ong et al., 2006).

Informing theory is an important next step beyond policy and practice (Masten & Wright, 2010; McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). Resilience researchers have developed multiple conceptual models, but theoretical frameworks have been few, as causal mechanisms for resilience require more study (Luecken & Gress, 2010; Ong et al., 2010; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Discovering underlying causal mechanisms and creating informed theoretical frameworks will advance resilience research and interventions, and potentially improve the use of the construct in broader fields (Luecken & Gress, 2010; Ong et al., 2010).

Finally, a lack of understanding resilience in different cultural contexts and critical examination of its constructs from multiple epistemologies have been cited as enduring weaknesses in prevailing resilience research, and are important areas for future inquiry (Luecken & Gress, 2010; Masten & Wright, 2010). Researchers have questioned how resilience is

culturally defined and whether some cultures promote more resilient behaviors than others based on their values, beliefs, and structures (Mancini & Bonanno, 2010).

Deconstructing and Constructing Resilience: Critiques.

One of the most cited critiques of prevailing resilience research and resultant models and scales is of the limitations underlying positivist assumptions and methodology (Bottrell, 2009; Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014; Ungar, 2004). These assumptions have become normative in resilience studies, and they position Western, primarily white, English-language perspectives on resilience and its component parts in a place of privilege (Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2004). This positioning dismisses alternative cultural and social experiences and linguistic descriptions of risk, threat, and resilient adaptation (Ungar, 2004). For example, Western cultures highly value independence, which relates to the resilience trait of agency, while Eastern cultures highly value collectivist behaviors that might not align with normative resilience concepts (Mancini & Bonanno, 2010). Studies of individual resilience have given much focus to the individual in isolation rather than to the individual as a member of multiple intersecting identity and cultural groups (Bottrell, 2009). Resilience is positioned as a desirable individual goal without acknowledging the transformational perspective of changing the systems and environments from which risks to these individuals arise (Bottrell, 2009).

Resilience is complex and contextual (Luecken & Gress, 2010; Mancini & Bonanno, 2010; Ungar, 2004). The individual and sociocultural complexity of resilience studied primarily from the specific contexts associated with prevailing research diminish researcher insight into the unique experiences of resilience across cultures, contexts, and time and suggest the construct is more static than dynamic (Ungar, 2004). While positivist inquiry into resilience focuses on identifying predictable relationships and patterns between risk, threat, and resilient adaptation, constructivist inquiry finds “nonsystemic, nonhierarchical” relationships that are “characteristically chaotic, complex, relative, and contextual” (Ungar, 2004, p. 341). Constructivist resilience researchers argue against the normative homogeneity of traits, processes, and outcomes that describe resilience, noting that this can lead to mistakenly grouping any outlying components as non-resilient (Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2010).

Despite wide acknowledgment of the contextual and perceptual challenges of prevailing positivist perspectives, few scholars writing in the mainstream call to address them with constructivist or critical methods (Luthar et al., 2000; Ungar, 2004). A growing number of

researchers have taken interest in these alternative constructions of resilience, particularly in the study of marginalized groups such as people with disabilities (Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014) and children of low socioeconomic status (Bottrell, 2009).

The argument for expansion of a constructivist approach to resilience research centers on its power in accounting for the complexity and cultural context of resilience (Ungar, 2004). This approach allows for counter-cultural understandings of resilience through participant “self-stories” created through the resilience and reflective processes (Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2004, p. 206). This engages researchers and participants in creating mutually meaningful findings and avoids the arrival at “pre-determined conclusions” (p. 356) through the use of positivist prior research (Ungar, 2004). These approaches also allow researchers to deconstruct normative resilience concepts to expand focus away from the individual’s responsibility for resilience to that of greater societal structures (Bottrell, 2009). Constructivist approaches that recognize the contextual nature of resilience do not have to be a call for absolute “relativism,” or preclude the findings or use of positivist approaches for informing understanding, but they also do not require them as starting points as so much prior research has (Ungar, 2004, p. 357).

An argument exists in the literature for the expansion of the use of qualitative methods in resilience research (Ungar, 2003). Constructivist inquiry fits well with qualitative methods that position the experiences of individuals at the center of meaning making (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Ungar, 2003). Qualitative methods used in resilience research mitigate concerns about the lack of context in prior research, as context is an important component of these methods (Ungar, 2003). Ungar cites that qualitative methods have been underused in resilience research to date and calls for the use of constructivist paradigm through qualitative methodology in resilience research for five reasons (Ungar, 2003; Ungar, 2004). First, they are suited to discovering new insights through understanding participant perspectives (Ungar, 2003). Second, they yield “thick description of the phenomenon” in context (Ungar, 2003, p. 85). Third, they “elicit and add power to minority voices which account for unique localized definitions of positive outcomes,” allowing for non-normative definitions to emerge (Ungar, 2003, p. 85). Fourth, they encourage identification and exploration of outliers because they are not concerned with generalizability (Ungar, 2003). Finally, they require researchers to explore and discuss their bias (Ungar, 2003). Findings from qualitative resilience studies can complement those of quantitative studies as they give “a finer grain and revealing unique, contextually-specific insights” to concepts that were

generally stripped of these in the absence of context and for the purposes of generalizability (Ungar, 2003, p. 91). Ungar specifically advocates for the use of type of qualitative method, phenomenology, so that resilience as traits, processes, outcomes, and beyond can be explored from the experiences and perspectives of those who live them (Ungar, 2004).

Student Affairs

Student affairs work consists of a variety of functions in a variety of functional areas. The work is interdisciplinary by nature, pulling from many different disciplines to fulfill the many different duties and services provided (Manning & Muñoz, 2011). Types of functions include programming, teaching, assessment, advising, creation and maintenance of environments – both physical and social, administration, supervision, and management, among others (Love, 2003; Manning & Muñoz, 2011, p. 293). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) lists 45 different functional areas for which professional standards have been developed (CAS website, 2017).

Housing and Residence Life

Housing and residence life (HRL) is a specific functional area within student affairs (CAS website, 2017). HRL professionals build, operate, and maintain student residential facilities, manage and develop the staff who work, and in some cases live, in these facilities, and develop, implement, and assess intentional programs and services for their residents (CAS, 2014). HRL entry-level professionals often live in residence halls with students, making themselves available at odd hours to engage with students and respond to needs (Belch, Wilson, & Dunkel, 2009).

Student Affairs Work Stress and Outcomes

Student affairs professionals face different sources of workplace stress that can become adversity (Marshall et al., 2016). These stresses can be internal to the workplace, such as nature of the work, supervisor or team dynamics, or organizational change, or external to the workplace, such as federal and state oversight or budget crunches (Marshall et al. 2016; Dugny & Gordon, 2011).

Internally, the student affairs workplace is demanding, and student affairs professionals often consider their work “a calling,” resulting in high-internalized commitment (Boehman, 2016, p. 308; Kruger, 2015; Marshall et al., 2016). Student affairs professionals work long hours and are not often bounded by the typical eight-to-five, Monday through Friday workweek

(Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005; Kruger, 2015). Their schedules flex to meet the needs of student schedules, and they are always called upon to be ready for unpredictable circumstances and crises that arise (Marshall et al., 2016; Schneck, 2014). Their roles are often ambiguous and broad so that they can serve a variety of functions as needed (Marshall et al., 2016; Ward, 1995). Work-life balance is often considered an unrealistic goal for student affairs professionals (Guthrie et al., 2005). Turnover is a regular occurrence, leading to less stability and experience in teams and in supervision (Marshall et al., 2016).

External pressures also influence the student affairs workplace. Growing pressure has been placed on higher education administrators in the last few decades to demonstrate accountability to both students and taxpayers for the products of higher education (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). This pressure has been felt in student affairs in the form of increased efforts for assessment and academic partnerships to establish co-curricular value (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Pressures to address rising costs of higher education have added pressure to cut costs, become more entrepreneurial, and justify the value of existing programs (Love, 2003; Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Ward, 1995).

The nature of student affairs work and the growing external pressures placed upon higher education have contributed to high levels of stress for student affairs professionals (Marshall et al., 2016). It is believed that up to 50% of new professionals leave the field altogether within the first five years of service, and that number grows to 60% of all professionals leaving the field within the first 10 years (Buchanan & Shupp, 2015; Frank, 2013; Marshall et al., 2016). Stress, burnout, “extreme work obligations,” job satisfaction, and lack of work-life balance are leading factors contributing to this attrition (Buchanan & Shupp, 2015; Marshall et al., 2016, p. 152). Additional factors include non-competitive salaries, limited opportunities, more attractive career options, and loss of passion for the work (Marshall et al., 2016). If these outcomes are prevalent at these rates of attrition, it is reasonable to consider that a number of student affairs professionals who do not leave also experience some of these outcomes; however, most studies of stress in student affairs professionals focus on those who leave (Frank, 2013; Ward, 1995).

Attrition is not always problematic, as turnover can be for positive reasons (Frank, 2013). Attrition due to unhealthy outcomes that may be addressed is concerning. This regular attrition leads to added demands on professionals who stay through the distribution of additional job responsibilities, and it costs employers in wasted investments and in additional recruitment and

training costs (Boehman, 2016; Frank, 2013). Furthermore, one has to wonder how many student affairs professionals suffer the same outcomes related to stress, burnout, and low satisfaction but choose to stay. These outcomes have a negative impact on personal health and professional productivity (Winwood et al., 2013). Another reason for concern is the high level of profession preparation that has become a more standard requirement for student affairs positions. CAS standards call for graduate degrees or an appropriate combination of experience and education to enter the field (CAS, 2014). As individuals invest time and money preparing for these roles, such outcomes and attrition are concerning.

Addressing Student Affairs Work Stress

Although stress is a normal part of any workplace and can be positive, the levels of stress in student affairs work have continued to contribute to negative outcomes (Marhsall et al., 2016). Much literature exists addressing the presence of pervasive stress in student affairs work, and many factors contributing to stress and attrition have been identified. These studies make recommendations to address these factors such as improving supervision and mentoring, providing opportunities for engagement and professional development, promoting self-care, creating new cultural norms that promote work-life balance (Belch et al., 2009; Boehman, 2016; Brown et al., 1986; Buchanan & Shupp, 2015; Guthrie et al., 2005; Marshall et al., 2016).

While resilience is a current topic of study regarding college students (Bonfiglio, 2017), few studies have explored resilience in student affairs administrators (Allee, 2015). Expanding an understanding of resilience in this context can contribute to fostering positive outcomes for student affairs professionals and their organizations.

Resilience Definition and Conceptual Framework

For the purposes of this study, I explored individual workplace resilience. I chose to define resilience broadly to best allow participants to contribute to the definition from their own experiences. Resilience is a contextual, dynamic, multi-level response to adversity that preserves, promotes, or enhances individual wellbeing.

As this study focused on workplace resilience, I defined workplace adversity as any stress in the workplace, whether pervasive or incidental, severe enough to cause acute or chronic distress and risk or disruption to wellbeing (Jackson et al., 2007; Winwood et al., 2013).

Workplaces and professional fields have definitions of positive professional outcomes, and individuals bring their own perceptions to these contexts. I focused on individual

perceptions of workplace resilience and considered how these may or may not complement organizationally derived perceptions. I did this to intentionally center the experience of participants in the study, rather than outwardly expect these to align with organizational expectations. Implications of findings were discussed in regards to this perspective.

This study was conducted to explore participant experiences of workplace resilience. This approach aligned with constructivist research approaches less common in resilience research (Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2004), and, from my own review of the literature, missing in workplace resilience research. As much of the prevailing resilience research results were generalized from positivist approaches and not applicable across all contexts, the selection of an appropriate pre-existing conceptual framework was challenging (Ungar, 2004). Many workplace resilience models were created from reviews of general resilience literature rather than participant experiences or theory (Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013). It was also unlikely, based on the literature, that the specific and unique context to be explored in this study informed the creation of any of these models. To best inform study methodology and analysis without deductively precluding participant descriptions of their experiences, I used McLarnon and Rothstein's adapted conceptual model of resilience to guide this study (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). This conceptual model was viewed through a constructivist theoretical perspective, adding the focus of participant descriptions of their experiences and the priority of considering the greater context in which the participants were situated as a larger frame for the conceptual model (Ungar, 2004).

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore individual employee workplace resilience in the student affairs professional setting. McLarnon and Rothstein's adapted general conceptual model of resilience was used as a conceptual model to guide this study, as viewed through a constructivist theoretical perspective. The use of conceptual models as a lens to inform research design is common in qualitative approaches, and a constructivist perspective aligns the use of this model with qualitative methods (Creswell, 2014).

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of workplace adversity?
2. How do entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of resilient responses (affective, behavioral, and cognitive) to workplace adversity?
3. How do entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe the outcomes of their resilient responses to workplace adversity?
4. What meaning do entry-level, live-in residence life professionals make of their workplace resilience?

To fulfill the purpose of this study, a qualitative, phenomenological approach was selected. Phenomenological designs are used to engage deeply with participants in their natural settings in order to best understand the essence of their lived experience from their points of view (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Seidman, 2013). Phenomenological approaches are useful in exploring phenomenon or specific populations in which limited prior research has been completed (Creswell, 2014). Studies on resilience in the entry-level, live-in housing professional population are limited. Employing a phenomenological approach may be useful in establishing new knowledge of these experiences. Researchers have specifically called for the use of phenomenological studies into resilience (Ungar, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative methods, the researcher is the instrument for data collection and analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is important for the researcher to describe any sources of bias one might bring to the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). I served as a live-in, entry-level housing professional for four years, and I supervised live-in, entry-level professionals for six years

following that experience. Sharing such a personal experience with participants could have helped me understand the technical and contextual nuances they described and had the potential to help me build quick rapport with participants. I was aware that I needed to consider how I separated my personal narrative of my own experiences from my understanding of the unique personal experiences participants share (Seidman, 2013). I understood that my positionality in this study required thoughtful reflection, and I shared strategies for enhancing the quality of the data analysis and interpretation at the end of this chapter (Seidman, 2013).

A motivation for conducting this study came directly from my experiences witnessing low levels of resilience and high levels of distress from pervasive workplace adversity in entry-level, live-in residence life staff members, as well as experiencing my own struggles with workplace adversity throughout my career. I personally believe that resilience is possible for anyone, that it can be developed, and that the environment of the workplace has much to contribute to this development. This was important for readers to know as these beliefs shaped my study purpose and my operational definition of resilience that is also rooted in the literature.

Finally, I brought a constructivist worldview to the design and process of this study, and I intentionally used that worldview as a theoretical perspective through which to view components of this study and in the meaning making process. Through this worldview, I held an epistemological belief that knowledge is contextual and socially created between people (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Ontologically, I believe that reality is a construction that can be better understood through exploring these shared constructions of knowledge (Jones et al., 2014). Methodologically, I aim to search for meaning in participants' own descriptions of their lived experiences so that what results are new understandings of a phenomenon in a specific context (Jones et al., 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). I intentionally share the influence of this worldview on this research so that readers may understand the philosophy behind my choices and the way I approached analysis and made sense of results (Jones et al., 2014).

Sample Selection

Qualitative researchers employ purposeful sampling to ensure that participants are able to provide data that address the questions being researched (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Goals of creating a purposeful sample are sufficiency and saturation (Seidman, 2013). The sample should be of sufficient size and variation so that experiences reported by participants can

create some sort of connection with readers and so that, over time, the data become saturated when no new information emerges (Seidman, 2013).

Identifying the Samples

I identified two samples: an institutional sample and an individual sample. The institutional sample included all four-year colleges and universities in the United States with university-operated student housing facilities. Four-year institutions were selected specifically because they are more heavily residential than two-year institutions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015).

To achieve “maximum variation sampling,” no eligibility limits were created regarding the size of the residential student population where participants worked (Seidman, 2013, p. 56). For the purposes of this study, I had interest in the experiences of participants from a variety of institutional types and residential sizes. The sample was limited to institutions in the United States as the literature reviewed regarding wellbeing and attrition in the live-in housing context studied samples from the United States.

Finally, only institutions with university-operated student housing facilities were considered. This was important, as it would not be possible to study live-in professional housing staff at facilities without student housing facilities. I distinguished university-operated student housing from public-private partnership housing that is not university operated. Professionals working for a private corporation may have different contractual expectations and access to professional benefits than those working for the institution.

The second sample I identified was an individual sample. Individuals were determined to be qualified for inclusion in the potential participant sample based on several criteria. First, qualified individuals were required to be employed full-time in entry-level, live-in residence life positions. Full-time employment was defined as working 38 or more hours in the role each week. Positions in this field can vary between 10-month and 12-month contracts, and individuals serving under either type of contract were considered eligible for this study, as the nature of the work in both is similar.

Entry-level positions were considered those requiring the least amount of experience in the administrative chain, with high student contact, and limited management responsibilities, such as professional staff supervision and oversight of budgets and policy (Mills, 2009).

Live-in residence life positions were considered those in a housing and/or residence life department that included a requirement that employees live in a private space within the university-operated residential facilities for which they were responsible. Live-in university professionals working for departments other than housing and/or residence life were not considered eligible, as the nature of their work may vary greatly from those included in the sample.

Second, qualified individuals were those having more than two full years of experience and less than six full years of experience in entry-level positions. To ask participants to reflect on their experiences of resilience through adversity, at least two years of experience were deemed necessary. The literature on departure from the field indicates a high degree of attrition within the first five years of service, so those persisting through the latter half of this period likely experienced some form of adversity and resilience (Brown et al., 2015; Marshall et al., 2016; Masten, 2001). To capture the experiences of individuals within the first five-year range, I determined that qualified participants would have less than six full years of experience in entry-level positions.

Finally, because the purpose of this study was to examine participants' experiences of resilience associated with their work, eligible participants were those who demonstrated resilience. Identification of resilient potential participants is described below in the section about recruitment.

Identifying Potential Participants

To identify potential participants, I sought referrals from qualified referrers in Housing and Residence Life using a method similar to that of Kuh, Schuh, and Whitt, who contacted 45 experts in the field to identify exemplary programs for further study in their "Involving Colleges project (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991). This approach was similar to a strategy of identifying "key informants" who have knowledge of a specific setting and can refer potential participants to the researcher (Jones et al., 2014, p. 118).

I compiled a list of qualified referrers from my professional network. Qualified referrers were residence life professionals serving in mid-level or higher positions who supervised or had supervised entry-level, live-in residence life professionals from institutions that could be included in the sample. Their supervisory experience gave them qualified professional knowledge of the roles of entry-level, live-in residence life professionals. Appendix B provides

a list of demographics of 12 qualified referrers whom I contacted. The qualified referrers' names and institutions have been removed from this list to protect the identities of the participants.

I contacted qualified referrers via email to explain the purpose of the study and ask them to refer potential participants and their contact information based on eligibility requirements and their perception that the individuals they referred were resilient based on the operational definition for the study. This correspondence is included in Appendix C.

I kept a list of referrals from qualified referrers. I waited a week after receiving the first response before creating an ordered contact list of potential participants to allow time for other qualified referrers to send referrals. I did this to promote maximum variation sampling by avoiding contacting referred potential participants from just one region or institution (Seidman, 2013). I continued to take additional referrals at this time in case any potential participants did not respond or declined to participate. Had I been unable to receive sufficient referrals, I planned to seek referrals of additional qualified referrers from those I had already contacted, similar to snowball sampling in which a qualified individual recommends other qualified individuals for participation (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This strategy was not needed, as I received 39 referrals of potential participants from 12 qualified referrers.

Selecting Participants

Phenomenological studies are conducted to promote deep understanding and description of the essence of specific participants' experiences and the meaning they make of them (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Seidman, 2013). To focus on achieving depth, breadth of participants is not generally as important as the amount of time spent engaging deeply with a limited number of participants (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The number of participants is determined by whether the information yielded is sufficient enough to foster connection to the themes that emerge and whether these themes become saturated, that is, no further unique themes continue to emerge (Charmaz, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Recommendations from the methodological literature vary, suggesting three to ten participants (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). For the purposes of this study, I aimed to interview 10 to 15 participants, keeping an open mind to adding new participants if the emerging themes were not sufficient or reaching saturation.

Potential participants were those identified through qualified referrals. I created a contact list from the referrals to determine in which order I would contact potential participants to create

a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013). I attempted to include participants from different institution types and sizes, and I did not include more than one potential participant from a single institution if possible to achieve maximum variation sampling (Seidman, 2013).

I contacted the initial 10 potential participants via email to describe my study and why they were contacted, and to invite them to participate. This correspondence is included in Appendix C. I included eligibility requirements in the email so that participants could self-screen in the case that an expert made a mistake when making the referral. I also included a link to the study website where potential participants could review additional study information and the IRB approval.

The email also detailed two requirements for participation in the study. The first requirement was that participants must be willing to engage in two 90-minute video interviews using an online platform such as Skype. The second requirement was that participants must be willing to let their interviews be audio recorded for purposes of analysis. Participants were informed that they would be given the opportunity to review the transcript of their interviews should they wish to do so.

Individuals wishing to participate were asked to respond affirmatively to the email with additional contact information. I called each interested potential participant to ask if they had any questions, schedule our first interview, and ask them to electronically complete and submit a participant profile form with demographic and eligibility information (Appendix E) and an informed consent form (Appendix F). I sent these forms via email and requested they be returned to me via email prior to our first interview.

Individuals who notified me they did not wish to participate received an email from me thanking them for their time. I contacted another potential participant from the referral contact list in the same manner I contacted other potential participants. I repeated this process until I obtained 10 initial participants.

I received 39 referrals and sent 26 invitations before reaching 10 participants. Three invitations included participants who engaged in piloting the interview guides. Two potential participants were unable to participate because they did not meet the required years of service in the field. Eleven potential participants responded to the invitation to decline to participate or stopped communicating at some point after accepting the invitation to participate. The

remaining 13 referred potential participants were not contacted as saturation was reached and further data collection unnecessary.

Data Collection

Phenomenological methods are used to understand the meaning participants make of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). Collecting, understanding, and analyzing participants' own words to describe their experiences are the primary method for conducting phenomenological inquiry (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Interviews are the most common way of listening to and gathering participant descriptions (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Seidman, 2013).

I adapted Seidman's three-interview series for phenomenological interviewing from three 90-minute interviews to two 90-minute interviews (Seidman, 2013, pp. 20-22). The three-interview series includes a focused life history interview, a details of the experience interview, and a making meaning interview (Seidman, 2013). I collapsed the focused life history and details of the experience interviews into one, as the life history of working experiences of these participants was likely more limited than the scope covered in the original format (Seidman, 2013). The second interview focused on participant meaning-making of the experiences discussed in the first interview.

I created an interview guide for each interview. I chose a semi-structured approach to address the research questions and ensure the questions asked were open-ended enough to allow for emerging information and new questions as interviews progressed (Creswell, 2014). The interview questions were developed using the four research questions for this study as a guide and the components of McLarnon and Rothstein's adapted general conceptual model of resilience as a framework (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013).

Interview Guides

The first interview guide was designed to collect information about participants' history and experiences of resilience in their professional setting. This interview was intended to explore these experiences in specific detail to develop an understanding from the participants' points of view (Seidman, 2013).

The first part of this interview focused on participants' history of experiences with workplace resilience. Questions were developed to explore participants' work experiences, and their past experiences with workplace stress and resilience. Participant answers provided context

from which to better understand the way participants experienced and made meaning of resilience (Seidman, 2013).

The second part of this interview focused on the details of participants' experiences of workplace adversity and resilience in their current role. This interview guide is included in Appendix G.

The second interview guide was designed to explore the meaning participants made of their resilience experiences (Seidman, 2013). Participants' own perceptions of what their experiences have meant help the researcher define the essence of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). Participants were asked to describe how they developed resilience, how they perceived their resilience, and how their resilience affected them. They were also asked to think about their environment at work, consider how the resilience of others and the nature of their workplace influenced their own experiences. The second interview guide is included in Appendix H.

I asked my doctoral committee to conduct an examination of each guide and provide feedback regarding whether they would elicit data relevant to the purpose and research questions of the study (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). I revised the protocols based on the committee's feedback, removing questions that were redundant, refining language of questions that were difficult to understand, and grouping questions to use for follow-up purposes.

Each protocol was piloted with three entry-level, live-in full-time residence life professionals to determine whether the instruments were clear, if there was enough time to ask all questions, and whether the questions made sense to the participants. The pilot interviews revealed that there were too many follow-up questions in the initial interview protocols that did not need to be asked, and some of the questions were hard for participants to understand. Updated interview protocols were streamlined to reduce the number of follow-up questions, rephrase some questions using more conversational language, and create a more natural flow between questions. These protocols were reviewed by my committee chair and submitted as an amendment to IRB and approved.

Interview Procedures

Prior to collecting data, I obtained IRB approval from my home institution. A copy of the IRB approval was shared with the participant and can be found in Appendix I. The initial approved timeline by IRB was exceeded, so an extension was filed and approved. A copy of the approval can be found in Appendix J.

Phenomenological interviewing using an adaptation of Seidman's three-interview-series format was selected as the primary method of data collection for this study (Seidman, 2013). This method builds rapport between participants and interviewer, and the progression of exploration from providing context to describing experiences to making meaning of experiences progresses in a short period of time to encourage meaningful processing as trust is built (Seidman, 2013).

Prior to the first interview, participants received an email with an explanation of the study and invitation to participate as described in the Sample Selection section previously described. Participants were asked to select a pseudonym to be used for the study. Participants selected their pseudonyms and completed and submitted a Participant Profile form prior to the first interview and gave verbal consent to participate on recording at the beginning of each interview.

Participants were asked to participate via Skype. This online communication platform was chosen to allow for qualified participants from any part of the United States to participate without travel being a prohibitive factor. Skype was also chosen so I could collect observational data of participant demeanor, facial expressions, and body language during each interview to provide richer data (Creswell, 2014). Observational data ended up being very limited and not used for analysis, but the engagement with participants did seem enhanced by the ability to see each other and respond to each other with body language as well as words. Interviews were recorded with participant permission using two audio recording devices.

To maximize the potential for participants to stay in the moment and continue processing their thoughts about their experiences, I attempted to schedule interviews with individual participants no more than 10 days apart (Seidman, 2013). This proved unsuccessful due to the unexpected demands on participants' time. All but two participants had to reschedule their second interviews due to unscheduled work conflicts, with the time between the first and second interviews ranging from three days for one participant to four weeks for another.

The interviews were scheduled for 90 minutes so that ample time was given to allow participants to explore the questions and provide rich, deep information (Seidman, 2013). Whether this was enough time varied between participants. Some answered all questions and follow-up questions before 90 minutes, while I found myself consolidating questions for others to ensure the general ideas I was asking about were covered without requesting more time.

The first interview was scheduled via email, as participants identified that was the most effective way for them to communicate due to their busy schedules. The second interview was scheduled via Skype at the end of the first interview. Each interview started with a greeting, a brief description of the purpose of the interview, and a review of any participant questions or concerns. I followed the interview guides to ask questions, and, when useful, I asked follow-up questions to clarify participants' statements or extend on a point of interest. I wrote very limited observational notes regarding the participants' settings, demeanors, facial expressions, and body language. I created memos of my thoughts that arose during each interview (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

At the end of each interview, I thanked participants for engaging with me. I asked participants if they had any questions or additional thoughts they wanted to share. I let participants know they would receive a typed transcript from me within a few weeks of their interviews to review for correctness and to give feedback, should they choose to do so. I also let participants know how to reach me if need be, and I gave them information for how I would share the results of the study with them in the future. Six participants responded with feedback or edits on their transcripts.

Following each interview, I listened to the recordings. Recordings were then transcribed by hand rather than by software program, and copies of the transcriptions were sent via email to each participant for their review. Observational memos were not included with these transcripts. Participants had one to two weeks to respond with any feedback depending on their schedules at the time.

Data Security

Printed interview transcripts, researcher field notes, and analysis notes were kept in a locked file cabinet. Informed consent and participant information forms with participant actual names and pseudonyms were kept separately from the transcripts. Interview recordings were kept on a password protected desktop computer and digital media drive.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data in phenomenological studies requires an open-minded, inductive exploration, which allows themes to emerge rather than be prescribed (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Data are analyzed in an iterative process between analysis, coding, and discovering of meaning in the words of participants (Charmaz, 2014).

Data analysis was conducted in three phases. First, I prepared the data for analysis. Second, I analyzed the data. Finally, I determined how to report findings.

Preparing the Data

Recorded interviews were transcribed in vivo to reflect participants' exact words in response to the questions (Seidman, 2013). Participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts for correctness, and six participants returned these to me within one week. Four participants included edits for me to make to their transcripts that they thought would remove additional potentially identifying information. These transcripts were printed in hard copy and double-spaced with numbered lines to prepare for analysis (Seidman, 2013).

Analysis

Participant comments served as the units of analysis for this study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Seidman, 2017). I analyzed all participant responses to the first interview prior to those of the second interview. I wanted to understand answers to similar questions across participants rather than understanding one participant in depth before moving on to the next (Seidman, 2013).

I applied the constant comparative method to analysis of the texts (Charmaz, 2014). Constant comparative method encourages ongoing discourse between the researcher and the texts that is iterative and non-linear (Charmaz, 2014). Analysis is ongoing, and checking insights along the way contributes to the final analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Insights and questions can arise at any time in the analysis process, and are noted (Charmaz, 2014). Whether they will have any future value is not necessary to determine as the process continues (Charmaz, 2014).

In applying the constant comparative approach (Charmaz, 2014), I used a three-phase analytic process that generated initial codes, categories, and themes. Analysis of the comments began with initial coding, or grouping of interesting or meaningful passages to be reduced to the most expressive words and phrases (Charmaz, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This "winnowing" process was not guided by predetermined questions or criteria and resulted in data prepared for inductive analysis (Seidman, 2013, p. 121). For example, I coded William's statement, "Use that time. Trust me. This is your first year. Take my advice, and take from experience, because you will experience burnout, and I don't want that for you," as "mentoring." I coded Brooke's statement, "I think that's the role I fill on the team is like, keeping the morale up, and keeping people moving forward, and looking for solutions," as "positive influencer." I

coded Veronica's statement, "I love that, at least for our culture here, like, if I see someone, you know, it's like, 6:00 at night, and maybe I'm just heading out of the office, I'll stop by their office and be like, "go home (laughing)," as "supportive accountability."

Following initial coding, I grouped these coded statements together in categories with other similar statements (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). For example, I grouped the statements coded "mentoring," "positive influencer," and "supportive accountability" into the category "supporting peers." In some instances, statements were assigned multiple categories. Statements that seemed important but did not fit in categories with other statements were placed in a "miscellaneous" category for further consideration during ongoing analysis. Categories were considered tentative throughout the following coding process (Seidman, 2013).

Categorized statements were hand-coded for themes that began to emerge (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). For example, the category "supporting peers" was grouped with another category, "influencing decisions," into the subtheme "influencing culture." I used this process of recoding to generate more abstract conceptual understandings of the participants' statements (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This strategy resulted in themes across the data that were considered tentative, and transcripts were re-coded as new themes emerged (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Seidman, 2013). Throughout the coding process, I kept analytical memos of my thoughts, decisions, and questions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

After initially coding and categorizing two first interview transcripts, I shared my coding scheme with my committee chair for an expert review to gain feedback on my insights (Anfara et al., 2002). Feedback affirmed the initial coding scheme and suggested that I be more explicit in describing how I moved from grouping codes into categories and categories into themes. I changed the description of my coding scheme to better depict these decisions.

The final phase of my analytic process was focused coding, the process of collapsing categories into narrower themes (Charmaz, 2014). During the process of focused coding, some themes stood on their own as unique or unexpected, while other themes were grouped together into a larger theme that better explains the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). With this in mind, the focused coding process revealed both themes and sub-themes related to each research question. In total, my analytic approach generated nine themes and 30 sub-themes (see Table 1).

Throughout the analytic process, I preferred hand-coding to the use of qualitative analysis software, such as NVivo, because it allowed me to continuously interact and converse with the data (Seidman, 2013).

Form of the Narrative

I reported data in narrative form with supporting participant comments displayed *in vivo* (Seidman, 2013). The structure of the narrative was determined based on the themes that emerged from the data, addressing each research question and additional information that emerged.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the description of quality of the methods of a qualitative research study (Anfara et al., 2002). Trustworthiness is a unique and important component of qualitative research. It depends on the researcher's transparency about methods and research decisions because of its emergent design that uses the researcher as the primary tool for data collection and analysis (Anfara et al., 2002). There are multiple ways to enhance trustworthiness of a study. I took steps to enhance four of these in particular: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Anfara et al., 2002).

Credibility describes the extent to which the data authentically represent the experiences and thoughts of the participants (Anfara et al., 2002). I took four steps to enhance credibility. First, I spent prolonged time with participants (Anfara et al., 2002). Engaging in interviews with each participant on two separate occasions allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. Second, I used peer debriefing with the chair of my committee to review my initial codes to see if they seemed to make sense. I incorporated their feedback as I progressed with my coding scheme. Peer debriefing enhances credibility by challenging the researcher to consider multiple points of view rather than one's typical worldview (Anfara et al., 2002). Third, I collected multiple sources of data from each participant over the course of the two interview series, and I compared codes from these sources across participants to establish themes. This process of triangulation enhances credibility by noting themes that occur across participant experiences (Anfara et al., 2002). Finally, I conducted member checks, the process of allowing participants to read prepared transcripts of their spoken words for correctness. Member checks enhance credibility by allowing participants to actually confirm the data (Anfara et al., 2002).

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can transfer beyond the participants studied (Anfara et al., 2002). Transferability is distinctly different from generalizability, a goal of quantitative research, in that it is not used to indicate that findings can be applied to the general population (Anfara et al., 2002). Instead, findings that are transferable are those that may be useful for consideration in similar populations or settings (Anfara et al., 2002). I enhanced transferability of the findings in two ways. First, I provided thick, rich description of findings from the data collection phase. Using actual participant quotes to demonstrate inferences drawn during analysis is an important way to communicate to readers how the information may apply to other groups of people (Anfara et al., 2002). Second, I engaged in purposive sampling, the practice of deliberately selecting participants for inclusion in the study based on criteria that would yield answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Being clear about these criteria and using criteria to purposively select participants communicates an understanding of whom the findings apply to for readers interested in transferring findings to other groups or settings (Anfara et al., 2002).

Dependability is another criterion for quality of qualitative studies (Anfara et al., 2002). Dependability refers to the methodological transparency of the study and the ability to recreate its procedures to answer similar questions (Anfara et al., 2002). I took four steps to enhance dependability of this study. First, I kept an audit trail of decisions made throughout the research process (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). An audit trail helps a researcher keep track of planned and spontaneous decisions about details ranging from the structure of the study to changes to protocols to reasons for collapsing codes (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Second, I engaged the code-recode strategy during the analysis stage (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Recoding initially coded passages as new themes emerge allows for re-examination of initial thinking using new perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This enhanced dependability by incorporating new understanding throughout the process. Third, I used triangulation to weigh the value of insights gained from the perspectives of one participant by examining them in relation to the perspectives of others over different points in time (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Looking for codes emerging across participants' experiences lent to the robustness of the themes that were emerging (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Finally, I employed peer examination of the methodological design, instrumentation, and initial coding to enhance dependability (Anfara et al., 2002). Considering multiple perspectives beyond my own was helpful in understanding how

my own experiences, preferences, and biases shaped my initial work. I considered and incorporated feedback as appropriate and useful.

Confirmability is a fourth measure of quality in a qualitative study (Anfara et al., 2002). Confirmability relates to the researcher's questioning of one's own insights and decisions throughout the research process (Anfara et al., 2002). I enhanced confirmability in two ways. First, in performing inductive research, it is accepted that researcher objectivity is not an aim; however, high value is placed on the researcher practicing and describing reflexivity of one's own worldview, perspectives, biases, and experiences, and how these influence generated insights and decisions (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I practiced reflexivity throughout the research process, and I documented observations in memos and the audit trail. A final way I enhanced confirmability was through triangulation of data (Anfara et al., 2002). Triangulation has the effect of confirming researcher insights across the data, lending more confidence in the emerging themes (Anfara et al., 2002).

Researcher Reflexivity

I kept memos of my thoughts about participant comments and the research process throughout data collection and analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). These memos provided an opportunity to reflect on my own assumptions and biases and how these informed my actions and analysis as a researcher. One notable reflection that arose on multiple occasions was my difficulty in removing my supervisor lens in favor of my researcher lens. This manifested in a desire to give participants feedback or encouragement as someone who had supervised individuals in their role before, as well as in judgment of participants who described workplace behaviors that I would have deemed inappropriate as a supervisor. I refrained from sharing these thoughts with participants, and, being aware of my inability to put aside fully my supervisory lens, I shared this reflection with the chair of my committee in order to ensure I adequately challenged these thoughts throughout the data collection, analysis, and discussion processes.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore individual employee workplace resilience in the residence life professional setting. Four research questions were posed: (a) How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of workplace adversity; (b) how do they describe their responses to workplace adversity; (c) how do they describe the outcomes of their resilient responses to workplace adversity; and (d) what meaning do they make of their workplace resilience.

This chapter shares participant profiles and findings that emerged from interviews with 10 participants about their workplace adversity and resilience. Findings to the research questions are organized by themes and subthemes. The words that participants used to describe their experiences served as the unit of analysis and are used in this chapter to illustrate the themes that emerged from their analysis. A summary of themes and subthemes is displayed in Table 1.

Participant Profiles

Data were collected from interviews conducted with 10 entry-level, live-on residence life professionals working at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Each participant was identified as resilient by a qualified referrer. Profiles for each participant are displayed in Table 2. Included is information regarding institutional type, Carnegie classification by size and residential population (www.carnegieclassifications.iu.edu), and demographic information. Participants were asked to share, if comfortable doing so, their gender and race. They were given the option to disclose other salient identities as well.

Research Question 1

Participants were asked a variety of questions to address Research Question 1: “How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of workplace adversity?” Participants were asked about challenges they face at work, the level of stress they experience at work, and the way their workplace stress affects them. Three primary themes emerged from the analysis of the participants’ words: (a) *sources of adversity*, (b) *buffers of adversity*, and (c) *impact of adversity*. Each theme and their related subthemes are discussed in greater detail in the following sections and are displayed in Table 1.

Sources of Adversity

The theme *sources of adversity* was widely discussed among all participants even before being asked about specific sources of workplace adversity. As participants described the nature of challenges they faced and stress they experienced in their roles, they identified four general sources of challenge and stress: (a) *personal and professional standards*, (b) *stereotypes and bias*, (c) *nature of work*, and (d) *workplace culture and relationships*.

Personal and Professional Standards.

Most participants described explicit and implicit standards as creating workplace adversity. The normalized demands of residence life or student affairs work was described by multiple participants as a source of both challenge and stress. Justin noted about residence life:

It's just this non-stop, ongoing building-up of stress that you kind of take (laughing), and you're kind of expected to. Just like, you know, you signed up for this. And so, that fraternization piece kinda comes into it of like, you signed up for this. This is what res life is...That just constantly builds a stress and kills the morale in the department, which brings up more stress.

Veronica focused on the standards of student affairs:

Something that I've heard talked about in the student affairs sphere is how there's almost like, that pride of like, "oh my god. I'm so busy!" There's kind of also that culture where we all know we're busy, and we kind of accept it, but sometimes it's almost like, a boastful type of stress if you will.

Jim summed up similar feelings regarding the non-stop working standards of the field, saying, "In a field where it's kind of that hyper-professionalism...we always have to be on." Sadie experienced the stress of professional standards related to their personality rather than their workload:

I struggle a lot with the office expectations and like, I guess personal expectations of other people for me because I'm constantly told, "just be yourself." But, then when I'm myself, I'm told, "oh, you're too boisterous. You're too loud. You're too ridiculous. You know, you're a little too edgy. You're kind of out there." And I'm like, wait a second. You...tell me all the time to be myself, but then you're trying to shove me in this cookie-cutter mold. And it's like, I will never fit the mold...So, I get bothered that people wanna spend so much time trying to force me into a mold. I'm like, there are so many other things we can be doing with this time than you worrying about whatever mold you want me to fit into.

Participants also described their own high personal standards as sources of workplace adversity for which they took responsibility. Justin admitted, "It's not just the department all the

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes by Research Question

Research Question	Themes	Subthemes
RQ1. How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of workplace adversity?	1.1.Sources of Adversity	1.1.1. Personal and Professional Standards 1.1.2. Stereotypes and Bias 1.1.3. Nature of Work 1.1.4. Workplace Culture and Relationships
	1.2.Buffers of Adversity	1.2.1. Identity and Traits 1.2.2. Past Experience 1.2.3. Engagement Outside of Work 1.2.4. Workplace Culture and Relationships
	1.3. Impact of Adversity	1.3.1. Beneficial Outcomes 1.3.2. Harmful Outcomes
RQ2. How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their responses to workplace adversity?	2.1. Mindsets	2.1.1. Beliefs about Adversity 2.1.2. Beliefs about Self
	2.2. Behaviors	2.2.1. Self-Aware Strategies 2.2.2. Self-Compassion and Empowerment 2.2.3. Support Seeking 2.2.4. Negotiating Boundaries 2.2.5. Influencing Culture 2.2.6. Unproductive Behaviors
RQ3. How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe the outcomes of their resilient responses to workplace adversity?	3.1. Influence on Self	3.1.1. Higher Stress Threshold 3.1.2. Increased Self-Efficacy 3.1.3. Sense of Wellbeing
	3.2. Perceptions of Others	3.2.1. Benefits of Being Perceived as Resilient 3.2.2. Drawbacks of Being Perceived as Resilient
RQ4. What meaning do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals make of their workplace resilience?	4.1. Nature of Resilience	4.1.1. Learning Process 4.1.2. Effortful 4.1.3. With Limits 4.1.4. Personally Meaningful 4.1.5. Contextual and Interactional
	4.2. Resilience Promotion	4.2.1. Resilience Partnerships 4.2.2. Examining Student Affairs Culture

Table 2

Participant Profiles (N = 10)

Pseudonym	Years in Role	Years Professional Experience	Institution Type	Carnegie Size Classification	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Additional Salient Identities
Brooke	1.5	2.5	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Female	Caucasian	Wife First Gen
Jacob	3.5	3.5	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Male	Caucasian	Heterosexual Christian
Aria	1	4	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Female	Black	Immigrant
Jim	2.5	2.5	Private	Large, Highly Residential	Male	White	Gay ADD
Veronica	3	3	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Female	White	
William	1.5	4.5	Public	Large, Primarily Nonresidential	Male	African American	
Justin	2.5	3.5	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Male	White	ADHD Gay
Jazzy	1.5	2.5	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Female	Black	Depression Anxiety
Ethan	2	2	Public	Large, Primarily Residential	Male	White	ADD/ADHD
Sadie	4	5	Private	Medium, Highly Residential	Non-Binary	White	Single-Parent Queer

time. It's also the personal stress I'm putting on myself." William shared a similar perspective: "I think I've always put the pressure on myself to know certain things and be that person that everyone else comes to."

Stereotypes and Bias.

Participants described *stereotypes and bias* as a source of workplace adversity they experienced. Similar to standards described above, this subtheme emerged as distinct because of how *stereotypes and bias* uniquely and deeply placed external pressures on participants based on their identities. Some participants did not describe this source of workplace adversity, but there was no distinct division based on disclosed identities. *Stereotypes and bias* showed up in various forms in workplace practices, interpersonal communication, internalized standards, and student interactions. Jazzy described two dimensions of how *stereotypes and bias* caused adversity for her. First, she talked about the extra work she took on:

People who are in marginalized groups or people who connect with people who aren't necessarily faces that are seen on campus are expected to do so much more... We're being asked to pick up extra work, and it's not a problem because I want to do that work for the students... If you think I'm the only person that can reach those students, then you need to start hiring other people who can do that work as well.

Jazzy also described her experience of stress related to her intersecting identities.

I experience stress at a couple levels. One is as a Black woman. I am always stressed by the way that I say things, how they're perceived... I also am worried about, you know, when I do need to say something or get things across, even just as a woman that I don't come off as like, this bossy, mean person.

William talked about in-group identity pressures influencing the high standards he placed on himself.

Being an African American man and coming from within the Black community, you're always seen as you have to be strong. You have to be this perfect person, and you're kind of taught that through life... We put pressure on ourselves to be those strong individuals and not have to rely on anyone else.

Jim described dealing with *stereotypes and bias* when he could overhear from his apartment his residents shouting homophobic slurs at each other.

Hearing [residents] scream various homophobic slurs and all that... As someone who has that identity, it-. I was approaching it from the same point of like, I need to be the professional... It took me a semester to realize, I'm human. I need to be okay to feel [upset], and just kinda be like, right now I want to scream at you.

Sadie experienced assumptions about their commitment to work because of the way they balanced single parenthood and work responsibilities:

I still have to finish this project, so here's a picture (on social media) of [my child] sitting in the conference room watching Moana while I'm working. You know, I want to show a real depiction of what my life is, but I think there have been some interpretations of where's it's like, "oh, [Sadie] must not be able to get all of their work done because they're posting this picture." And I'm like, I'm getting my work done. I'm not here until three in the morning. It's just when I'm getting pulled into all these meetings about meetings...when am I gonna get this work done? And so, it's like, as a single parent I'm balancing and I'm prioritizing, and my work is probably winning at this point, but I think my failure has been kind of letting other people's narratives of me kind of color who I am here.

Sadie went on to speak more broadly:

There are very few spaces in my life that I am completely safe or can be completely authentic...At work there's a certain level of authenticity that I have to leave at the door because of politics. There is a certain level of authenticity that I cannot have with my family...So, my house is the only place that I can fully be myself and have somebody who loves me unconditionally.

Participants also added similar perspectives based on aspects of their identities, such as having ADHD, being a first-generation college student, and coming from a lower socioeconomic background.

Nature of Work.

The *nature of work* was a common source of adversity among all participants, unsurprisingly as they all hold similar positions. *Nature of work* was distinguished from another subtheme, *workplace culture and relationships*, because it encompassed broader aspects of challenge and stress typical of the role that participants did not ascribe to their specific workplaces. Most commonly described were the amount of work, live-in nature of the work, and nature of the work. Veronica summed up similar feelings of many participants saying:

It's a lot of work...I'd say at least every other week I have thought how am I actually supposed to get all this work done? The amount of work itself, and also just the variety...Some pieces of the job are just super emotionally draining, so some of the really heavy stuff can sometimes leave you just depleted.

Sadie agreed with Veronica's perspective on the weight they carried in their role in dealing with a student suicide:

I noticed, especially with the passing of the student that happened on campus, we were leaning very heavily on the counseling center and the Chaplin's office to come in and

provide support. After about three days, both offices told us like, “we’re tapped out. We can’t do any more than what we’re already doing. You guys are gonna have to do that.” And I was like, I’ve never been able to say I’m tapped out. I’ve never been able to say like, “nope. Sorry. I’m all out.” I still have to push through and continue to support.

Jacob described the live-in nature of the position in ways shared by many participants:

I don’t feel like I’m 100 percent at work when I’m in my apartment, but you know, at a certain level like, you are still in the building you are working in. It might not be like, I’m checking email all the time, but you know at any given moment someone...can text you or someone might drop by with something that’s going on. I think there’s a little bit of something there in terms of like, almost mental fatigue.

Justin talked about the commonly unanticipated nature of the work:

Things kind of pile up unexpectedly, and I think that’s kinda what feeds a lot of the stress in this field – it’s unexpected. So, I can be prepared for some things, but some things I cannot, and that’s usually where I feel more stress.

Jim shared a similar sentiment saying, “A challenge is being okay with having a to-do list that will never be finished, and that there’s always going to be that next emergency, that next fire, that next incident that is gonna demand your attention.” Sadie specified a source of their never-ending to-do list that was echoed by other participants:

I think because everything touches my role, and because I’m a young, single person who lives on campus, it is very easy for others – either people in the office or community partners – to say, “oh, [Sadie] will take care of that.” You know, and so there are a lot of things I’m volunteered for.

Workplace Culture and Relationships.

Workplace culture and relationships was the last subtheme describing a source of workplace adversity. Participants described these experiences as specific to their workplaces, and these varied across participants. Those that were more common included dealing with organizational change, work-life balance, and the influence of peers and supervisors. William described his department as one in constant transition:

Somebody used the phrase that “we’re building the plane as we fly it.” Sometimes that is what is going on with my job, and it’s like I’m building the plane as I fly it, and we’re just gonna go on with it, and we’re gonna roll with it, and we’re gonna make it happen.

Brooke talked about trying to navigate the culture around balance:

I think it is definitely hard, and this is something that other hall directors [here] have talked about. You know, they tell us to take care of ourselves, but then we get emails from our supervisors all throughout the evening, and we know our supervisors stay in the

office until seven or eight. Not like our supervisors are telling us to do the same, but it's kinda like that role-modeling relationships.

Jacob, Sadie, and Ethan both shared concerns about relationships. Jacob described how his peers responded to a colleague being dismissed from the position:

I feel like a lot of my peers have reacted pretty negatively, and their morale has been pretty bad. They've been really stressed out... To be honest, my peers have stressed me out a lot this year (laughing) with the negativity. I feel like typically I'm reflective of the mood around me, and I hate feeling negative, but if everyone around me is negative, I'll slip into it also.

Sadie shared that peer colleagues rarely understood their experience as a single parent:

My colleagues don't think about the fact that I only have 8:30 to 5:00 to work, and then I go home and I'm with my kid. So, it's like, "I don't understand. You have the same amount of work that I do. How are you not able to manage everything?" And I'm like, "I don't get to go home and work on my laptop or like, stay late. I have to leave."

Ethan focused more on a challenging relationship with his supervisor regarding differences in their identities:

My supervisor...made an off-hand comment that he was only considering people of color for these openings. And I believe in a diverse department. I believe in a diverse university... That said, making a comment like that...makes me feel discounted. I see that tension being built when I see the favoritism that comes from even things as simple as I've noticed that my colleagues of color often know where our supervisor is. I don't get to know because I'm not in the special Group Me text message chain that seems to be a thing in our area.

Sadie shared a similar challenging relationship with a former supervisor that shaped responses they still have today:

A lot of my learning about stress I think has come from a very Machiavellian approach to supervision that I've experienced. Like, "I want my supervisees to fear me instead of love me." I have had several supervisors where I've lived in constant fear of them. That was a big motivator as far as, you know, anything stressful, it was like (*desperately*), "I have to get this done!" Because anytime my supervisor called me...I'd be like (*distressed*), "I'm getting fired!"

Many participants shared frustrations about the negative influence of workplace politics that often revolved around relationships. Sadie said:

The job is no longer the challenging part. It's the political, you know, cloud that kind of hovers over everything. You know, seeing people get rewarded for like, waking up and coming to work, and there are other people who are like me, you know, who are like, blood, sweat, and tears every day completely, selflessly dedicating every moment of our

time to our work and our students and the university and, you know, kind of not being – not even recognized – just appreciated.

Aria had a more unique experience of workplace-specific adversity as the only participant to have been reclassified as a non-exempt, hourly wage employee in anticipation of changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). William worked at an institution that did some reclassifications, but he was not affected. Others noted concerns about how changes could have affected them, had the changes to FLSA passed. As a result, Aria was technically limited to working 40 hours a week and had to request permission to work more for overtime pay. She said:

When we went hourly, from an HR standpoint it's 40 hours a week. Our job is not 40 hours a week. ... Whenever I feel like I have a lot to do at work, I do it on my personal time 'cause I know it has to be done, even if I'm not being compensated for it.

Jim and Sadie shared a more unique workplace adversity associated with working in private institutions that was not as specifically noted by their public institution counterparts. Jim shared the pressure of being at an institution in the spotlight: “Just dealing with the fact of like, I'm at an institution where, if we mess up, it normally doesn't just happen to be in the student newspaper. It starts to go into national and international news.” He went on to describe how the students he serves influence his stress:

You have residents [whose parents are] like, fairly high-up people. It's also then like, the students, if you mess up or they perceive that you messed up, or they just aren't getting their way will sometimes be just very quick to throw people under the bus. It's kind of constantly feeling like you're on edge of like, okay, I need to make sure that, you know, I cover my own tail.

Sadie shared Jim's experience of dealing with challenging parents, and they also described a workplace culture in which the institution's high esteem prevented needed improvement:

There's so much that we need to work on. I always joke that [this institution] is so far behind we think we're first... Like, we don't do best practices. We don't even know what a best practice is... We don't do assessment. We don't look at other schools and what they're doing. We just do what we've always done, and then we wonder why we're not a premiere res life program.

Buffers of Adversity

The second theme that emerged regarding Research Question 1 was *buffers of adversity*. In addition to describing the sources of the adversity, all participants described things that

reduced or prevented negative impact from adversity. Four subthemes contributed to this theme: (a) *identity and traits*, (b) *past experience*, (c) *engagement outside of work*, and (d) *workplace culture and relationships*.

Identity and Traits.

Participants associated their experiences of adversity with aspects of their identities or personal traits that acted to reduce or prevent harm from adversity. Participants spoke about these *identities and traits* matter-of-factly, as if they existed as part of them without any additional effort or intention. Some participants focused on their experiences related to their identities. Brooke described her experience as a first-generation student:

I come from a low-income background. Grew up in [the rural south]. Single-parent household. I didn't think I was gonna be able to afford to go to undergrad, much less anything past that. ...Like, I wasn't afraid to ask questions. I knew I was ignorant. I knew I didn't know what I was doing when I went to college. ...I basically figured out the people who it was safe to go and ask like, how do I do this thing?

Jazzy described the strength her identity as a Black woman gave her:

Even if I didn't have a degree, what you're not gonna do is like, typecast me. Like, no. I have family, I have ancestors that have really fought and have been resilient, and I'm not going to sit here and let a stereotype you might think of me not make me resilient.

Aria talked about how what she called her "Zen" trait showed up at work:

I think when you look at the ... staff, I'm probably one of the most relaxed persons. For example, last year for [a natural disaster] I was on-call. That was my first time being on-call, and someone said something to me that I was like, huh? They said, "you are the best person to be on-call during this time." That "if someone else was on-call they would be panicking.

Past Experiences.

Participants also described a variety of *past experiences* that helped them buffer adversity. Notably, six participants had worked at other institutions in similar full-time roles prior to their current role. Brooke shared:

I think I also have a little bit of a different perspective because I felt so negative about where I was my first year being a hall director that I know how great of a job this is here and how, no, it's not perfect. Yeah, there's a lot of things that can be improved, and yeah, we're just like any other hall director – we're overworked and underpaid. But at the same time, I have something to compare it to, and most of my colleagues don't. So, I'm also kind of the person who's like, you all don't even know how bad it can really be.

Justin's prior experiences gave him this insight:

It was clear [at my last institution] the department cares about us. The institution cares about us and the work we're doing, and so I think that was awesome. ... That was kind of the beginning of my model or my paradigm of how I take care of myself and understand professional stress.

Many participants also talked about the different perspective gained after multiple years in the role. Jacob shared:

I would say me and maybe one or two of my peers that have been here for a few years ... I think we approach our positions differently than [new peers] do, and so I think we are not as – to put it bluntly – negative about a lot of things that they perhaps are.

Participants also shared how other past experiences shaped their perspectives. Ethan described:

I think about, you know, my parents divorced when I was nine years old. I had to grow up pretty quickly as a nine year-old. So, that taught me a lot about resilience at a young age. ... I got through a lot in my time from nine years old to college. There's nothing at this point that I can't handle.

Sadie's past experience with adversity included a stretch of homelessness that gave them a sense of perspective to buffer escalating stress:

For me, resilience is being able to kind of rationalize everything that I have going on. Kinda that pain scale thing like, okay, here's the worst thing I've ever had to deal with, and I survived that. That's the 10. Anything that I come up against it's like, where is this in relation to this one thing. So for me, my 10 was living in my car for six months... It was 2008. The market crashed. Everything was terrible, and all I could afford was my car, and so, I lived in my car with my two dogs. I showered at truck stops. You know, I just kind of lived my life that way, and so, anything that happens to me, I'm like, is it as bad as living in my car for six months? And it's like, no.

Engagement Outside of Work.

The third subtheme for *buffers of adversity* was *engagement outside of work*. All participants engaged in meaningful relationships and activities outside of work. They made commitments to people and opportunities that had nothing to do with their work. Participants described these relationships and commitments as choices they made for themselves, rather than active strategies in response to adversity (strategies will be discussed in a later section). Some participants described partners, friends, and family, like Brooke:

I have a live-in partner, and I have the entire time I've been in housing. I think that helps because like, if I'm not in the apartment at 5:07 (laughing), my husband calls me and is like, "where are you?" And sometimes it's like, I just need to finish this one thing up and I'll be there. And then sometimes it's like, "you're right. I'm just sitting here doing stuff that can be done tomorrow." So, I think it's like, an accountability system.

Sadie described the joy and respite from work in single-parenting their toddler:

So, trying to find things that give me joy. My daughter is definitely one of those things. You know, one of my coworkers saw me playing with her and she was like, “how, after a whole day, do you have the energy to do this?” And I’m like, “it reenergizes me because she’s just wanting to run around and laugh.” And I’m like, oh, you don’t need anything from me except funny faces? Cool. We’re great.

Veronica talked about a commitment she made that tapped into her personal passions:

One of my favorite things to do during the week – besides working full-time for residence life – is I also work for our recreation department. I teach some group fitness classes, which is really fun. ...What I love is if I am up in front of a class ... I put my phone on airplane mode. I’m not on-call. ...I’m going to exercise and completely forget about everything and just focus on this.

Ethan shared this advice based on his involvement in a local young professionals’ organization:

I recommend this to every new professional that we hire, is to find some ... outlet that takes you away from people that you work with. ...The people I work with are great, the students that I work with are great, but getting away from them (laughing) is also really awesome. Just being able to do the things that I love and connect with people that are in, you know, other avenues of service and education. ...Having that outlet has been really good.

Jim framed the importance of engaging beyond work saying, “It’s keeping hobbies so that it’s not just always feeling like ... Jim, Residence Coordinator. It’s Jim that likes to bake and cook. Just having those hobbies and making time for them.”

Workplace Culture and Relationships.

Workplace culture and relationships was the fourth subtheme under *buffers of adversity*. Participants’ descriptions of their workplace culture and relationships at work made it clear that they contributed to and defended from adversity depending on the context. *Workplace culture and relationships* were more positive for some participants than others for a variety of reasons. A common reason amongst participants was resources and benefits. Brooke shared: “It’s nice because they are good about like, if you have leave and you don’t have to be here, then use it. They’re totally fine with us using leave. We don’t get guilt-tripped.” Jacob also talked about opportunities afforded by his department:

The professional development benefits they give us here ...that was something really important to me – being able to have the opportunity to kind of figure out essentially what I’m passionate about. ... [There’s] almost this promise of, you know, learn what you

want to learn. Get better at what you want to get better at. There is a lot of opportunity and resource here for you to be able to do that.

Others felt a positive influence of relationships at work. Jazzy frequently described her positive and supportive relationship with her supervisor:

Seriously, my supervisor is phenomenal, and so was [my referrer]. ... They have both been such good supports for me to a place where I didn't even think that was possible. ... They've opened my eyes to – and it has been a blessing – that there are actual allies out there who understand and aren't just saying things.

Veronica shared about her peer colleagues:

I love the people I work with, and I feel that ... they're in this field. They understand. ... We see each other often enough that we can have really good senses on if the other person's stressed. Also, us being very helping, we're like, what do you need? How can I help you? Like, what's wrong (laughing)? I love that, at least for our culture here.

Jim focused on the influence of the overall departmental culture as a *buffer to adversity*:

It's working with a department that, you know, occasionally gets some stuff wrong, but a lot of times is looking at how can we do better? How can we, you know, better serve our students? How can we approach this conversation better? What are we doing as professional staff members to better educate ourselves in terms of understanding what's going on in our country today?

Impact of Adversity

The third theme that emerged in response to Research Question 1 was *impact of adversity*. Participants described their experiences of adversity and related stress in two general ways that serve as subthemes for this theme: (a) ways that were *beneficial* and (b) ways that were *harmful*.

Beneficial Outcomes.

Most participants described ways in which the adversity they experienced benefitted them or improved their work. Jazzy said: "Some stress is really positive for me ... Stress is still a good motivator for the things I gotta get done (laughing)." Jacob described how he views the benefits of adversity: "Usually when I'm stressed out or trying to figure out all the stuff I've got going on, I feel like I'm growing and getting better at what I'm doing." Sadie added:

I always felt like, you know, I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I wasn't stressed in some way because it's a really good motivator for me. Otherwise I'd probably just lay in bed all day (laughing)...In undergrad, I was always the student that constantly added to my plate because I would much rather have the stress to motivate me than to have one or two commitments and then I would get sloppy with my work.

Harmful Outcomes.

All participants shared some of the *harmful outcomes* of adversity in their workplace experiences as well. These included physical symptoms, sleep issues, demeanor changes, and cognitive-emotional issues. Veronica shared:

Every now and then ... if it's really chronic and really stressful I will physically have chest pains. ... That's not fun. That's when I, you know, that's definitely a physical trigger to be like, okay, you need to calm down. ... If I'm really stressed, it's harder for me to sleep. ... Not being able to turn my brain off and actually be able to fall asleep.

Justin also experienced physical symptoms saying:

I used to just put my body through hell, and I'd be fine, but this year I had like, hay fever pop up during RA training... I was like, breaking out in hives... It's made me rethink how I approach stress.

Jacob talked about how stress impacted his demeanor, along with other issues:

If I'm stressed out you can like, see that I'm starting to shut down sometimes. I'm better at masking that (laughing), and not making it so obvious than I used to be. But, you know, I get short with people. I start to give more directions rather than make requests. I can be more irritated. Physically I know that I carry it in my shoulders and upper back.

Sadie shared how the negative outcomes of their stress compounded over time:

When I'm stressed in those ways I do feel it physically. I either overeat, or I don't eat. I will have trouble sleeping, and so I actually take sleep medication... Then because I'm tired I have trouble focusing during the day, so I drink part of a 5-Hour Energy just to get myself through the day. So, I'm like, hyper-caffeinated and hyper-sleep-drugged all the time... It's harder for me to manage my emotions when I'm under stress like that. I'm usually really good about controlling how I say things, or, you know, just trying to approach things at a rational level, but if I'm really stressed out... I'm more likely to snap or be sarcastic and snarky.

Several participants described how the stress of so much adversity led to anxiety. Jim shared:

It can show up as anxiety of like, just sitting there and kind of mulling over everything in your head, and never being able to reach a decision because every which way leads to a mistake, failure, or something bad happening.

While all participants experienced some kind of harmful or negative outcome of adversity, they all also described strategies they used to address these issues. These will be described in another section of findings.

To summarize, three themes emerged for Research Question 1. *Sources of adversity*, the first theme, was comprised of four subthemes described by participants: (a) *personal and*

professional standards, (b) *stereotypes and bias*, (c) *nature of work*, and (d) *workplace culture and relationships*. *Buffers of adversity*, the second theme, was comprised of four subthemes: (a) *identity and traits*, (b) *past experience*, (c) *engagement outside of work*, and (d) *workplace culture and relationships*. The third theme, *impact of adversity*, was comprised of two subthemes: (a) *beneficial outcomes* and (b) *harmful outcomes*. Participants described experiences in these three main themes that related to their workplace adversity.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked “How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their responses to workplace adversity?” Participants’ descriptions of their experiences of workplace adversity made clear they did not just move through the workplace without stress or challenge. Two primary themes emerged from their descriptions of how they responded to such adversity: (a) *mindsets* and (b) *behaviors*. *Mindsets* encompassed the way participants described their beliefs about adversity and about themselves. They were more about their approach than their actions, or their *behaviors*. Themes and subthemes are displayed in Table 1.

Mindsets

Two subthemes contributed to the theme *mindsets: beliefs about adversity* and *beliefs about self*. Participants all described beliefs they had about adversity that influenced the way they responded to such events in the workplace. Similarly, the beliefs they held about themselves often played a role in their subsequent responses.

Beliefs about Adversity.

Most participants held *beliefs about adversity* that acknowledged or even accepted its role in their experiences. Justin said, “I’m always gonna have stress, so I’d rather embrace it than not.” Veronica shared a similar sentiment saying:

I think I will accept it...I mean, one thing about August training – it’s a known fact. You know like, okay, this is stressful. This is coming...I would say it’s definitely more stressful when something more spontaneous comes up.

Jazzy shared how her background shaped her beliefs saying, “Growing up in a Christian household we had been taught that challenges are something to be embraced and not necessarily frustrated or scared by, and just asking God for help with those things.” Brooke summed up

what many participants said, saying, “I’ve just come to accept that it’ll be there tomorrow, and not to worry about it.”

Many participants, as described earlier, believed adversity could be motivating and lead to beneficial outcomes. Veronica reflected on the fine line that exists on a continuum of positive and negative stress:

I think there’s like, a sweet spot of positive stress where it’s like, I’m feeling no stress at all to like, (*foreboding tone*) ooo. That sweet spot where I’m like, okay, enough stress to get me moving...and then it’s like, the point past that where I’m like, okay, I’m really stressed, and I’m getting cranky about it.

She went on to add:

I just wonder what it’s like in like, a super-boring job like, where maybe you’re never really stressed. I just feel it would be kind of boring and not super-fulfilling because maybe you’d never hit that positive stress...I’d rather have the ups and downs than nothing at all.

A couple participants resisted or avoided stressful adversity. Aria shared the following, noting that it’s a matter of perspective: “The word stress, I would say it’s not in my vocabulary...I also consider it be like, a weakness in a sense, but I definitely acknowledge when I feel tired or overwhelmed or have a lot going on.”

Participants also shared some of the ways their *beliefs about adversity* encourage them. William said: “I think knowing that it’s only temporary, you know ...it’s not going to be an ongoing thing or an ongoing issue. It gives me hope, I guess.” Ethan described telling himself, “This is just one more of those experiences that is going to help you grow as a professional. I think that’s probably what helps me find the positive.”

Beliefs about Self.

Beliefs about self were *mindsets* participants shared that influenced their responses to workplace adversity. Participants were not directly asked what they thought of themselves in relation to their responses. Most described at least one belief about themselves, including their sense of agency, positivity, and self-awareness, among other things. Brooke shared: “I’m pretty good at ... letting things go. I don’t let things bother me. I don’t hold grudges. ... If something happens that knocks me down, I’m really quick to just like, get back up and keep going.” She described her sense of agency:

I don’t feel like I’m put-off by that kind of stuff (adversity). I think it’s more like, take a deep breath and wear my best comfortable shoes. Like, get ready for it. ... I don’t dread

those things. I just wear my best comfortable tennis shoes, even if they don't look great with dress pants, and just do it, right? I mean, I don't think that those things intimidate me. I think I just like, wear appropriate shoes and do it (laughing).

William talked about his approach to life and to himself saying, "I think I look at life like ... I see everything as a lesson," and "One thing I had to realize early on in my career is just don't take yourself too seriously." Jazzy talked about how learning about herself and building her confidence has had an influence:

I feel a lot of times stress comes from your thought of being unable to handle what's coming. I think that's where a lot of my stress comes from – like I don't have the tools to make me capable to handle or overcome something. But, now I'm starting to feel more confident in my ability to do that, so I don't let stress run how this process is gonna go. I tell stress how this process is gonna go, so it's been a lot better.

Sadie shared meaningful advice they received that helped them adopt a mindset to approach adversity in their current role:

The most valuable piece of advice I ever got was when I was in grad school...I was crying about something that had happened, and [my major professor] took my hands and was like, "[Sadie], you are the captain of your ship...You, your ship, your life. You are the captain of that. It doesn't matter who else is on board or what kind of weather there is. You are the one in control of your ship, so you need to get behind that helm, and you need to steer that thing onto a course that's gonna work for you." It really changed a lot. It changed the whole experience that I had in grad school...I was like, okay, I am in control of my life. I am in control of whether I go to work, whether I work here, whether I live here.

Behaviors

Participants were asked how they responded to workplace adversity they faced, and all participants described a wide array of behaviors they engaged in to manage themselves and address the issue. All participants engaged in multiple behaviors described as six subthemes: (a) *self-aware strategies*, (b) *self-compassion and empowerment*, (c) *support seeking*, (d) *negotiating boundaries*, (e) *influencing culture*, and (f) *unproductive behaviors*.

Self-Aware Strategies.

Participants described numerous strategies they engaged in based on awareness of self and of the contexts in which they worked. These *self-aware strategies* were the most prevalently described *behaviors* participants engaged in as responses to adversity. Some of these strategies were used to manage aspects of work. Veronica shared:

One thing I have found that works is if I keep like, pen and paper next to my bed. If I just write everything down it's like, a brain dump onto paper. That really helps...if I'm so stressed I can't even fall asleep because I'm thinking of all the things I have to do.

Jacob prioritized organization as a management strategy:

I'm pretty well organized between my Outlook calendar...my to-do lists...all the other stuff I use to keep myself organized. So, I see what's coming up pretty well, and I get it done basically (laughing) before it stresses me out.

Justin created a way to manage unanticipated tasks that worked for him in the context of his workplace environment:

This is a fast-paced department here, and they're very young. There are a lot of last-minute things that can come up. I think that's something else I've taught myself is to like, clear my schedule off so that I can be prepared for those last-minute things...So, I think in managing stress it looks good when, or it feels good when I can like, that last-minute thing can come to me, and I'm like, oh, I can get that done.

Other strategies focused on communication. Brooke said:

Being honest with my supervisor and saying this isn't realistic, and I'm not gonna get this done. I need more time because of x, y, and z happening...Luckily my supervisor's really great and supportive, so he's always willing to listen to that. So, just being willing to speak up for myself.

Jazzy shared a similar approach:

Stress has made me advocate for myself more. I've asked my supervisor like, can I get a little bit more time to work on this because I know I can give you something better that represents who I am. So, it's taught me self-efficacy, just to be able to be like, I need this. Like, work with me or get what you get (laughing).

Many participants described perspective-taking to get a new view on the challenges they faced.

William said:

For me, it's being positive about that situation and finding the positivity within, finding the solution. But not only thinking about the positive but understanding how the negative impact of the situation – what you have control over and what you don't have control over, you know, and being able to move on with that.

Brooke shared:

Reminding myself like, eh, it'll be there tomorrow. Like, not everything's a 9-1-1. I think just like, telling myself those things that I've told you that I've learned throughout doing this for a couple years now, and being like, being okay with leaving something unfinished when appropriate.

Mindfulness and self-monitoring of stress was practiced by several participants. Jim noted:

It has helped me to kind of understand and see when I'm reacting from a place of – is this me being logical and it warranting this level of response, or is this because I'm catastrophizing in my head? ... Is this really the end of the world? Being able to, in that moment, just kind of quickly check in and see why I'm stressed out, and then give myself grace has helped me become a little bit better of a professional.

Veronica also practiced mindful self-monitoring: "It's just constantly monitoring my stress, you know, helping to maybe keep it a little bit lower than it could be I think just overall helps me function better as a professional."

Participants also described a variety of ways to manage themselves. Strategies such as exercise, getting off campus, and using leave or sick time were common. Veronica shared: "If I go like, three days without exercising I feel like crap. Like, I need to go home ... Knowing that about myself motivates me to continuously upkeep that part of my life." Justin talked about getting away from campus:

I'm a nature person, and so if I feel myself getting super stressed out, I'm gonna try to find a cabin or something like that in the mountains for just a weekend. Just to get away. If I can't do that then – because of pay or whatever (laughing) – I will try to find like, a lake that's close by and just go hiking. I'm very existential, and I believe in being connected to nature. That's part of my spirituality.

Aria focused on using time: "I take mental sick days ... The work we're doing, the conduct cases, the unfortunate incidents that occur in our building like, we need that time to recharge and rejuvenate ourselves."

Self-Compassion and Empowerment

Self-compassion and empowerment was another subtheme that comprised the theme of *behaviors* that participants engaged in response to workplace adversity. All participants described their limitations, mistakes they made, or failures they endured with a tone of compassion toward themselves. They shared high expectations for themselves while acknowledging things such as learning, growing, and what many called being human. In considering making mistakes, William said:

Take your job seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously because it is just life (laughing). ... You know, you make mistakes. Okay, you made a mistake. It's not the end of the world... It is okay to make mistakes.

Jim gave himself grace in addressing imperfections saying:

Just kind of taking time to kind of get a little bit back to center and realizing everything that I had been doing [well], and kind of giving myself permission to be okay with the fact of like, yeah, everything wasn't perfect, but I'm also human.

Jacob described the way he learned from adversity following an issue with morale on his staff:

Sometimes in the moment it doesn't feel like I'm growing (laughing) and getting better at what I'm doing. Like, with that situation that happened...it certainly didn't feel like that then. Now I can reflect and see it for what it was and see how I'm taking lessons from that and implementing them into my work now.

Brooke and Justin both spoke directly about coping with the self-doubt of "imposter syndrome," and Jazzy expanded on that idea, saying:

It's still like, a work in progress, but when I tell you that everything else in my life has been affected by the fact that I don't have to be that person who that negative self-talk is always looping my mind...Like, I don't think like that anymore. [My supervisor] has shown me...you don't have to doubt your abilities in what you do, and so I lead from more now a place of confidence and not from fear...I stopped using energy to judge and be mean to myself and instead like, reach out and to build up others...Don't take on failures as part of your identity.

Ethan shared a motivation for his self-compassion that others shared:

I'm not stranger to saying, well, I was stressed today. Came home and relaxed a bit, and now I'm back at it. And so, I think it's helped me navigate relationships with students that say, "wow, he gets to be human. That's good." 'Cause a lot of times I think students put us on this pedestal of "there's no way that they never have problems, and there's no way that they never have stress." That helps people see that I'm a real person, so I think that builds relationships with students in a lot of ways.

Seeking Support.

Another common subtheme of *behaviors* that participants used to respond to workplace adversity was *seeking support*. Participants all described seeking support from others. Some found more support with colleagues in their workplace, while others specifically sought out others not associated with work. In general, they were willing to ask for help with work or personal issues. Brooke shared, "I'm not afraid to ask for help. I'm not afraid to admit when I'm not given what I need, or when it is too much for me by myself I'm not afraid to reach out. Justin talked about involving his supervisor in his efforts to get better at asking for help:

Making sure that I'm asking for help, and that's really hard for me to do. [My supervisor] knows that. She'll kinda say to me like, "What do you need help with?" And I'm like, "ehh." And she's like, "No, seriously. What do you need help with? If you don't tell me right now (*humorously threatening*)!" Okay, okay, okay (laughing). So, I

think asking for help, and saying I'm not perfect in this, or just saying like, "am I on track"... It's just like, having an accountability buddy.

Jacob found value in confiding in a few trusted friends:

I have my people that I talk to. If something is like, stressing me out, I have a couple people that I'll go to and basically say, "should this be stressing me out (laughing)?" If the answer's no, then it's just kinda like, okay, I'll relax a little bit. Sometimes they're kind alike, "yeah, that kinda sucks (laughing)," and so, talking through whatever's going on with a couple people that I'm close to has been really helpful. That's usually what I do first that's proactive and it's reactive.

Veronica found comfort in work friends saying, "Sometimes just talking with colleagues can definitely be validating when you are feeling stressed out about something... You're like, oh, you're stressed and upset about this, too? Okay, good. It's not just me. We're in this together." William shared a similar feeling saying, "I think it's good to have accountability partners. As far as my team, as far as support, I think they do a really good job helping with that... They recognize when others are stressed."

Sadie talked about the importance of a close relationship with a trusted colleague that helped them navigate mistakes, such as one they had made earlier that day:

I have a person in my office that I go and process stuff with, and she's good at tough love, but she knows when I'm already beating myself up... So, today she was like, "do you need a hug," and I was like, "no. If I get a hug I'll cry. And she was like, "wow. You never say no to a hug." And I was like, "I just need to get this work done." And so, then she called me... and she was like, "I just need you to know that if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here. Like, I would've left a long time ago"... And so it was kind of combatting-. It was like, well, I might not be good at some of the administrative stuff, but... I have created a positive impact.

Jazzy found it was most helpful for her to connect with individuals who would understand her experiences as related to her identities:

I think the biggest helpful thing for me has been talking with other Black women. Black professionals in general. My goodness, the strength that I've received from them, just knowing that you are fine with who you are. Everyone else is gonna be who they are. You need to be who you are. It's amazing.

Ethan, William, Jim, Veronica, and Sadie all talked about the importance of seeing a mental health counselor for support. Jim put it this way: "Working on myself. Going back to counseling to make sure I have what I can – that I have enough for myself so that I can give it to others, and not kind of just giving to others and giving to myself last." William added: "You

know, we always talk about telling our students to go see our counseling services and things of that nature, but I think it's very important for us in this field to seek that."

Negotiating Boundaries.

The fourth subtheme under *behaviors* that participants described as responses to workplace adversity was *negotiating boundaries*. While participants did not agree on one way to manage boundaries or balance between their professional and personal lives, they all spoke about how they recognized and navigated the tension between them. Some participants described a philosophical approach to boundaries. Jazzy said:

It's hard for me to set boundaries 'cause I want to help people...But I also realize that no one is going to say "no" unless you do. You know what I mean? Like...people will continue to use up all the resources that you have until you say, "no." Like, these resources are mine. The time is mine. You'll figure it out...The correlation between setting boundaries and finding peace has been a very real and practical thing for me.

Brooke agreed that *negotiating boundaries* could be difficult, but said:

I'm trying to be really good about, "I'll do it tomorrow." Like, I'm leaving, kind of thing. And you have to, and it sucks, and it kind of feels weird, and you have this internal conflict about it. But, like, if I don't do that, then I'm not gonna have the energy to do anything.

Some participants described very clear boundaries they set to protect their time. Ethan imposed boundaries on himself:

I don't believe in bringing work home with me. If I'm gonna bring work home with me – I live where I work. If I'm gonna bring work home with me, I'm just gonna pop right back over to the office because I'm very big about once I'm in my apartment, I'm in my space. And that space is my space. This is when I'm in my space. I've gotta get some quiet time, some TV time, some Netflix time, those kind of things.

Jazzy set clear boundaries for her staff:

This year I implemented a rule where I said for no reason should anyone ever knock on my [apartment] door, and that has actually dramatically cut my stress down when it comes to being in my house. I told them if an RA cannot help you...contact the person on duty...I've had to start drawing really thick lines of this when I'm off...I think I'm learning if I put down good boundaries, then the stress will lesson itself.

Sadie set clear boundaries in order to prioritize their time with their child and keep their home separate from the office:

I've gotten very good through years and years of experience...being able to put my work stress like, leave it at the door...I connect a lot of my stress to my [work] laptop, and so I

try not to leave work with [it] unless I'm on-call...I try very hard not to check my email on my phone because there's so many windows where my work can kinda sneak into my personal life...If I have work to do at night, I do not do it in my house. I will either bring [my daughter] to the office...or I find somebody to watch her.

Brooke described learning from mistakes in setting boundaries and trying something different:

I think it depends on what type of boundaries you set. My first year being a hall director...I was trying to be that cool supervisor, and like, made myself available more after-hours through text and calls and people coming by, that kind of thing. I very quickly figured out that got tiring very quick...When we moved here I was adamant like, this is a fresh start for me, and we're not being loose boundaries...So, that's really worked for me. I'm still available enough that they (staff) trust me and feel like I'm there for them.

While most participants noted the importance of knowing when to say "no," Aria truly embraced the concept:

Some people are very like, "yes, yes, yes, yes, yes," and they take on a lot; whereas me, I'm like, "no, I don't have time," or "no, I'd rather be on my couch. No, I'm okay. No, thank you." So my student comes in, and they're like, "Oh my gosh. I have this, this, and that." Like, okay, let's say this word: "Noooooooooooo. No thank you." I think it's just something we have to learn and take time for ourselves. Some may think of it as selfish, but at the end of the day you're looking out for your best interests when no one else is.

A few participants described a preference for looser boundaries and flowed in and out of work and personal life in ways that suited them. Sadie described how their daughter is also a part of their residential community:

For the most part she goes where I go. I get invited to eat in the dining hall a lot with students, and she'll just come with me, and she just runs around. Everybody on campus knows here at this point, and they just know that she'll be hiding under their table or whatever she's doing. It's a good way to connect with students, and it's good for her because she's interacting with a lot of different people in a lot of different capacities.

Justin described his focus on intentionally blurring the typical boundaries in his approach:

I hate the conversation when people start talking about work-life balance because everyone looks at me. They know like, I'll go program shopping at like, 8:00 at night or those kind of things, and they're like, "Justin, you don't have work-life balance." I'm like, but I'm resilient because I'm able to integrate...Work-life balance looks different for everyone.

Influencing Culture.

The fifth subtheme under *behaviors* participants engaged in response to workplace adversity was *influencing culture*. Beyond managing themselves, most participants described

ways they were actively involved in promoting positive cultures and combatting negativity in their workplaces. Jacob said: “As someone who’s in my fourth year, I should be modeling to our first and second years what [support] looks like.” Brooke talked about her role on the team:

I think that’s the role I fill on the team is like, keeping the morale up and like, keeping people moving forward and looking for solutions. I’m the one who’s always gonna have a smile kind of things...My role on the team is just being like, the positive person and the person who’s always looking for the bright side of things. And like, I’m not afraid to tell people, you know, “are you sure that’s something the department’s doing or is that the perspective you’re taking on it? Is it your mindset going into it?” Like, how can we reframe that in a better way?

William talked about helping newer staff find perspective:

The first part of my career was a struggle. I will say now that I have been in it – year four going on five – it’s much easier...I was having a conversation with [my direct reports] yesterday, and I was like, “make sure you take your time,” and they were looking at me like, “how am I supposed to do that?” And I was like, “the work is still going to be there when you get back. Even if you don’t leave, the work is still gonna be there (laughing), so use that time. Trust me. This is your first year. Take my advice, and take from experience, because you will experience burnout, and I don’t want that for you all. I did experience burnout my first year.”

Ethan made efforts to address potentially harmful attitudes:

I have to remind people that it’s not a competition. Just because I have a student that interacts with me doesn’t mean you don’t have a student that loves you, too. I think that’s where we get into the sticky part of it is that once we start competing, we’re competing against ourselves...I just have to tell them it’s not a competition. Instead it’s me trying to interact with students and the way I’m hoping you’re interacting with students as well.

Unproductive Behaviors.

Finally, participants described engaging in *unproductive behaviors* from time to time as a subtheme of the way they behaved in response to workplace adversity. As with their demonstration of self-compassion, participants were clear that they were not perfect and sometimes engaged in behaviors that were unhealthy or just unproductive in truly addressing the adversity they faced. Veronica said, humorously:

Stress eating is important to talk about (laughing). ‘Cause that’s something definitely, you know – so, so bad...When I’m stress I will take a handful and just binge-eat candy, which, it’s not good for you (laughing)...And I don’t know if it actually helps with the stress. It doesn’t, really.

Jim shared, “Some of the not-so-productives (responses to stress) are the avoidance of like, okay, this is freaking me out so I’m not gonna think or talk about this because it triggers so much of a response.” Jazzy shared that she used to use similar “avoidance” tactics, but over time shifted to another potentially negative behavior:

If I’m feeling stressed about something then I will like, get right to it and get it done. I used to procrastinate a lot, and I realized that work still has to get done. So, I take the unhealthy route. Instead of procrastinating all the time, I will not create limits for myself until the thing I feel is stressing me is done...And so, I would just stay up ‘til 2:00, 2:30 [in the morning].

Sadie struggled with another unproductive behavior, describing receiving critical feedback after making a mistake:

If there was a sport for this I would have a gold medal, but negative self-talk is one of my talents unfortunately. So, what she was saying to me was not wrong, and so I just took it, and of course absorbed it, and immediately fed it into the negative self-talker, and so it was like, “you’ve let your colleagues down. You’ve failed at this.

Others shared Sadie’s sentiment through their own descriptions of high personal standards and grappling with imposter syndrome.

In summary, participants described their experiences of responding to workplace adversity, Research Question 2, in two themes. *Mindsets*, the first theme that emerged, encompassed participants’ beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about two subthemes: *beliefs about adversity* and *beliefs about self*. *Behaviors*, the second theme that emerged, encompassed participants’ active responses to workplace adversity. Six subthemes emerged: (a) *conscious strategies*, (b) *self-compassion and empowerment*, (c) *support seeking*, (d) *negotiating strategies*, (e) *influencing culture*, and (f) *unproductive behaviors*.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked: “How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe the outcomes of their resilient responses to workplace adversity?” Participants were asked questions focused on their resilient responses. While participants described some responses to workplace adversity that were not necessarily productive, most of the responses they described yielded positive results and management of the situation or themselves. Two themes emerged from participants answers to these questions: (a) *influence on self* and (b) *perceptions of others*. The *influence on self* was described by participants as the way responding resiliently to adversity made them think or feel about themselves. *Perceptions of*

others included the ways participants noticed others thinking about or responding to their demonstrated resilience. Themes and subthemes are displayed in Table 1.

Influence on Self

Three subthemes made up the theme *influence on self*: (a) *higher stress threshold*, (b) *increased self-efficacy*, and (c) *sense of wellbeing*.

Higher Stress Threshold.

Nearly all participants described feeling like they were able to take on more stressful challenges due to their experiences with workplace adversity. Veronica described this *higher stress threshold*:

You're...stronger than you were before...Maybe you're able to handle a lot of stress because you came from a low point, and you've still risen above anything that you've had to fight or combat. Yeah, I think just overall, you know, just a sense of strength that people want to learn from.

Justin echoed a similar sentiment, connecting the outcome directly to his behaviors saying, "I think definitely taking care of myself has allowed me to kinda face stress in a way that's like, I got this, as opposed to being like (*whining*) I don't got it (*laughing*)!"

Increased Self-Efficacy.

Increased self-efficacy was related to the subtheme *higher stress threshold*, but differed in that participants described the specific beliefs or behaviors they developed from being resilient through adversity. Participants all described a greater sense that they could successfully meet specific goals and overcome specific challenges. They talked about having a clear understanding of what was and was not in their control. In terms of beliefs, Brooke said:

I mean, I know this is probably gonna sound cliché, but I know I can do it. Like, when I set my mind to something I know I can do it. And like, when I want something, I know I can do it...I'm not holding myself back...I have confidence in my abilities, and I know that I do a good job.

Justin added a similar thought: "I don't think I can handle anything (*laughing*). I just know my capacity to be able to handle something. I know when I need to say no so that I can be successful, and...I guard my time."

Jim talked about gaining confidence in his control over himself through adversity:

You are kind of able to calm the inner emotional storm that you may be feeling, and find that steady bit of water that you can then kind of sail on and go, everything else around me is churning, and there are waves that seem insurmountable right now, but right now,

this little patch of ocean that I'm on, I can make it through. And then that next little patch.

Jazzy also shared about the way her responses helped her remain resilient:

I think resiliency is like, a cycle. If you tell yourself that you are, and then you make it through, it's like, okay, I can do it again, and I can do it again. And that gives me a lot of strength because it's like, I think resiliency is an inward thing. You can be helped by people on the outside, but at the end of the day it's you that need to make a decision and go through whatever you need to go through to get out on the other side.

Sense of Wellbeing.

The third subtheme comprising the theme *perceptions of self* is *sense of wellbeing*. Most participants described the way their wellbeing was positively influenced by their resilient responses to adversity and their ability to perform their jobs well. Jacob shared the impact on his relationships:

The more I've learned to, you know, actually speak about what's going on in my life, and actually like, communicate to people what I'm having a hard time with, the more my relationships, I would say, have benefitted from that...So, they (friends) were pretty patient with me, but once I kinda started practicing it and like, actually sharing what's going on, I think they really responded well to the more type of reciprocal relationship...They appreciated the vulnerability. I think it only served to strengthen our relationships.

Justin talked about how the happiness he gained from his responses to adversity influenced his perspective:

If you're happy doing what you're doing, remain happy in it and be sustainable with that happiness, and make sure you put things in place that keep you happy. If you're not happy, figure out what you can do about it. Be solution-oriented.

Perceptions of Others

The second theme that emerged regarding Research Question 3 was *perceptions of others*. Participants described the way their resilient responses to adversity were noticed, perceived, and responded to by colleagues and supervisors at work. Two subthemes comprised this theme: (a) *benefits of being perceived as resilient* and (b) *drawbacks of being perceived as resilient*. Some of the experiences participants described encompassed both *benefits* and *drawbacks*.

Benefits of Being Perceived as Resilient.

All participants described benefits of being perceived as resilient by others at work. Some of the benefits included positive professional reputation, increased opportunities, and increased autonomy to do work of interest. Justin shared:

People see you as a legitimate professional if you're resilient and you're able to manage it, and so it makes you look like you're ready for the next level up...I think it definitely allows me to feel or let people see me as reliable.

Brooke said:

If there were certain things I wanted to get more experience in, I think that if they saw me as resilient they would be more willing to let me take on more responsibilities or be on committee or whatever...I think that would be beneficial for my professional development because they would trust me to take care of my job and whatever extra stuff was going on.

Jazzy highlighted the balance between benefits and drawbacks saying:

This is a benefit as much as it is a curse but like...people will give you more and more to do, regardless of the season that you're in. So, August and September is a very busy time for us as residence life people, but because they see me as someone who is resilient, they'll continue to add more to my plate. And, in a way, I love that because that means you trust me to get the job done, and you know I'm gonna do it and do it well.

Drawbacks of Being Perceived as Resilient

The *drawbacks of being perceived as resilient* were described by participants as being over-tapped for extra work, feeling raised expectations with less support, and having their struggles go unnoticed when they could use help. Ethan described it as:

Uh, you become the person everybody needs (laughing). And I love being needed, [but] there are times when I say, "please stop needing me (laughing)." So, I think that's a drawback is that you take on a lot of other people's stress.

Jazzy shared a similar perspective:

Other people thinking that you don't need help, or they'll put more stuff on your plate, and it's like, hello, no. I have the same 116 hours that you do a week, and I cannot make that expand because you keep giving me more things to do.

Jacob talked about colleagues not believing he ever struggled as a result of his resilience:

We have a lot of first and second year [staff] that are really struggling. They didn't know me when I was struggling. They came in where I basically kinda got it all figured out. So, you know, I try to communicate that like, I've been there, but they haven't seen me there, so they probably don't really understand that fact that I'm not like, blowing smoke. Like, I do get it.

Aria described how her resilience and her struggles were equally unnoticed because of her strong performance:

I think people don't take notice as much. Like, "oh, she'll be fine. We don't have to worry about her." I'm like, um, you still need to think about me (laughing)! I think sometimes not being remembered, if that's the word. Or, maybe they overlook because they think I got it they don't have to worry about me. I still want to know that I'm being considered. Like, you're still thinking about like, my wellbeing.

Sadie had a somewhat different experience, acknowledging that their supervisor likely could not see their resilience:

I had a good conversation with my supervisor about this. I was like, "you know, I am a really resilient person," and she was like, "I haven't experience you in that way." I was like, "well, it's because you came in when I was at my breaking point..." If I'm at the breaking point for an entire year, it might look like I'm not resilient, but it's like, you know – yes, I have dealt with much worse than this, but this is a lot. I'm not the kind of person that's like, here's a list of everything that I do all the time... I've had people that are like, "I didn't realize you were involved in so much." I'm not here to get a gold star. In summary, Research Question 3 addressed participant outcomes of resilient responses

to workplace adversity. Two themes emerged from participant descriptions of the experiences. *Influence on self*, the first theme, encompassed three subthemes about the way participants' resilient responses affected their thoughts and feelings about themselves: (a) *higher stress threshold*, (b) *increased self-efficacy*, and (c) *sense of wellbeing*.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 addressed: "What meaning do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals make of their workplace resilience?" Participants reflected on their answers about their experiences with adversity and resilience in the workplace to describe what meaning their experiences had for them. Two themes emerged from their descriptions: (a) *nature of resilience* and (b) *resilience promotion*. The *nature of resilience* was described as participants reflected on how and why they became and maintained resilience. *Resilience promotion* became the focus of the conversation as participants described the contextual nature of resilience in their experiences. These themes and subthemes are displayed in Table 1.

Nature of Resilience

The theme *nature of resilience* was comprised of five subthemes: (a) *learning process*, (b) *effortful*, (c) *with limits*, (d) *personally meaningful*, and (e) *contextual and interactional*.

Learning Process.

The most prevalent of these subthemes, *learning process*, was described by all participants. For most participants, this included sharing examples of times they were not resilient and how they learned from these experiences. Jacob shared:

For a while there I would just not handle it (adversity) well at all. I would just kinda like, try to power through. Sometimes that's okay, and other times, it's just a really bad idea... You end up being even more stressed like, other stuff comes up and it just adds to the list and you start having that sorta drowned feeling. How I guess I learned to start managing it in a healthy way?... I have a few really supportive people in my life who've kind of helped me figure out how to communicate what's going on, and they've helped me get a lot better at that than I used to be... It took encouragement for me to kinda be open and be like, vulnerable with what I'm struggling with or having a hard time with in the position.

Justin also reflected on his learning process and how his self-awareness contributed:

I would say that I haven't always been (resilient), that's for sure. [This institution] has tempered me a lot (laughing) in being able to handle stress... I think it was a lot of how I approached it... When I try... to approach stress in a way that's unnatural to me, then of course I'm going to fail because I'm putting so much energy into trying to approach it as opposed to just managing it... When I started to think about it in a different way to connect it to things that I get passion from, and integrating stress into my passions and understanding the need for it in some way [it improved].

Brooke, who had prior full-time experience in a similar role, shared:

I also think there's nothing quite like that first professional experience... You know, they talk so much about like, figuring out what you want before you go into that first job and like, all that. I think when you're coming out of grad school you don't know heads from tails... And I think that's okay. Also, being okay with that, but just being sure to learn when you get there. I think that's more important. Learning resiliency. Learning about how to advocate for yourself. It's okay to have a bad first job out of grad school. It happened to half my cohort... We needed a job, so we took it. Like, it happens, but then like, building on that experience and getting to where you want after that I think is the most important part.

Effortful.

Many participants described developing and maintaining resilience as *effortful*. In speaking of creating relationships and finding opportunities beyond work, Justin said, "I had to find those. It was really hard. It took time to find those." He went on to describe his continued efforts to think and behave in ways that supported resilience:

Often the one thing that gets put on the backburner is myself... so it requires a lot of effort for me to say like, I need to go to the gym. I need to take care of myself... A lot of it has come over time to realize I do need to take effort to do those things... It has required me

to take effort out of my time of day and reflect on myself and what I need in order to get to a place where I understand that I need this specific thing to happen in order for me to feel relaxed and manage my stress...Overtime [they've] become habits.

Jacob shared a similar sentiment:

Those things all take time. You have to really commit a lot of time to that. I'm a planner, so I gotta schedule when I'm going to the gym. I gotta make plans to go see my friends, whether it's just we're hanging out and seeing a movie or we're actually gonna get dinner and talk about how life's going. That stuff, that all takes time, but it's really important just for your overall morale.

With Limits.

The third subtheme of the *nature of resilience* was *with limits*. I selected this descriptor rather than "limited," which suggested a fixed amount. *With limits* referred to participants' descriptions of the balance they maintained between adversity and resilience and the resulting limits that were unique to individuals, contexts, and incidents. Sadie described reaching their limit when adversity became overwhelming and the needed support to maintain resilience was absent:

By the end of that I was just like, "I have nothing else to give," because I was mourning the passing of this wonderful student that I was getting to know...I was having to emotionally support so many people, and as a giving person who's also very empathetic, it was just like, you know, my heart was breaking. My heart was breaking like, a thousand times over. And then, feeling guilty about not being able to be around my kid as much, and trying to balance all the work stuff, all the projects, all that other stuff. It was just compounded so much that I wasn't able to manage my emotions at work.

Veronica described her limit being reached when the stress of transition was compounded by feeling undervalued at work:

I think the piece with the apartment, still needing to set it up because we got it so late. The fact that it was super-small and just feeling, you know, upset and under-valued because of that. Also now working with a lot of new staff members. It was kind of like a chaotic mess. Yeah, definitely reached some breaking points (laughing) of just needing to leave my office, walk down the hall, and just sit on the floor crying and petting my cat...So, I'd probably say out of...the moments so far as a coordinator here, those first two months being in that building my first year were probably the lowest points. Especially since I love, love, love my job. I love working at this school...During those two months there were a couple times when I was like, "I don't like this. I don't love my job right now," and that was really, deeply unsettling...Definitely my lowest point, but then it got better.

Ethan noted that his resilience fluctuated based on the circumstances:

I think resilience is a process. I don't think you can just say, "okay. I'm resilient today." 'Cause there are some days – I'll tell ya Kelley – I'm not resilient. Instead I'm reclusive and saying if I think this problem doesn't exist it'll go away.

Justin illustrated the way he viewed the limits of his resilience, describing them as elastic:

Finding that fine line of when [stress] is too much has...allowed me to kind of see where the lake's edge is, and I know how much of the water I can take in...Like, I measured my resiliency to say, be able to take on many projects at one time...So, that was kind of my test to myself...Of course there have been SNAFUs along the way. It hasn't been perfect...but each year growing the edge or trying to fill my lake a little bit more so I can expand the boundaries...Test my resiliency, and see how far I can actually go. And of course there's gonna be a point where I'm like, okay, this is too much, but it hasn't hit that yet.

Personally Meaningful.

The fourth subtheme of *nature of resilience* was *personally meaningful*. Participants described resilience as individual and unique based on different experiences, backgrounds, identities, and contexts. They noted that what worked for them might be different for others based on these differences. Jim said, "The goal is making sure that the individual has what they need, and sometimes goes completely in the face of what you as a supervisor need, what you as an institution need." Justin echoed the sentiment saying, "Individually I can focus on what self-care means for me." When participants were asked the question, "who do you do resilience for," most responded for themselves, noting that prioritizing themselves was essential to their impact on others. Jacob said, "Much more than I used to, I see the value of taking care of myself so you can take care of others." Jazzy expanded on this idea:

A hundred percent of it is for me as a person. I am not going to allow myself to be defeated when there have been so many generations before me of women who have had hell to go through and have made it. There's no way that I'm going to allow myself to not also be able to push through and be as successful as I can be. So, I do a lot for the people who have come before me, and I do it for the people who will come after me...I'm talking about the people, particularly my Black students, my Black female students, my students of color.

Contextual and Interactional.

The fifth subtheme comprising *nature of resilience* was *contextual and interactional*. Participants described their experiences of resilience as context-bound, as well as an interaction between themselves and their contexts of colleagues, supervisors, friends, and so on. While participants described a deep personal responsibility for their own resilience, they also all noted

the influence of their contexts on their resilience. Jacob shared about the context of past experiences:

You're responsible at a certain level for your own success, but you still – everybody needs a support network, however that comes about. It's just hard because a lot of those things like, you can't control. I don't have my thoughts about resiliency based on anything I did, and like, that's a privilege discussion. It's just the way I was raised. A lot of people that I work with maybe didn't get raised the same way I did, so that's a benefit I have that I didn't work for.

Justin talked about the context of the workplace:

When problems arise, making sure that the environment – that the employee feels comfortable and empowered enough to come forward and say, “this is an issue.” I think so much of what happens in our field is...the resiliency is put on the employee to build themselves up...As a field we need self-care. We need professional development. But nobody – like, we're all talking about it, but nobody's doing it. There are some places that do it well, but that's not everywhere, and that's sad.

Sadie shared how their workplace claimed to promote self-care but failed to allow employees to engage it:

As long as I know it's going to be stressful...You know, just tell me that it's gonna suck, and that I just need to suck it up. I can handle that. I can't handle when somebody's like, “we care about your wellbeing and your self-care”...and I get none of that. Just tell me how it is to my face so I can prepare...It's like, the out of the blue stuff that's a little bit hard to adjust to, but then...at the same time I'm also being told, “oh, we care about you, and you need to take time for yourself,” and then I'm given no opportunity or actually extra work to do. That's when I'm like, this is not computing...Then I start thinking did I just misinterpret?...Did I just make this up in my head? Am I crazy?

These thoughts provide a transition to the second theme that emerged related to Research Question 4, *resilience promotion*.

Resilience Promotion

Participants all described believing in the importance of developing and maintaining resilience. Two subthemes made up the *resilience promotion* theme: (a) *resilience partnerships* and (b) *examining student affairs culture*.

Resilience Partnerships.

Participants described the *contextual and interactional* nature of resilience, and many drew connections between the relationship between employees and employers in fostering workplace resilience. These *resilience partnerships* they described accounted for the *nature of resilience* and their own personal experiences. Justin shared:

I think it belongs to everyone. I think it belongs to the employer in the sense of creating the environment that is conducive to building resilience. So, enough challenge to challenge your employees so they're not complacent. Keeping them at the edge of their growth-zone, if you would say. Making sure that it's a culture of support that meets that challenge...I think it's the employee's responsibility to know yourself. Know how you fit...Know what you need and be able to ask for that.

Jacob described how he saw this done in his department:

We have this major initiative in our department, and the analogy that we use a lot is like, the oxygen mask when you're on the airplanes. They always tell you to put yours on before you help other people. Essentially, you're making sure you're good before (laughing), before helping everybody else. So, if you don't do that, then you're really not gonna be a lot of help to other people.

Ethan talked about the essential function an employer could play in helping employees develop their own resilience:

I think it's clearing the roadblocks. Listening to your employees. I think one of the biggest benefits will be to say where are we in creating your resilience, and if we're in the way, tell us how. I think that's a gutsy move for employers to make, but I also think it will make an employer stand out.

Jazzy shared why she believed the power employers held played a critical role in their influence on employee resilience:

Well, the government tried to give it (wellbeing) to us through FLSA, but that didn't work out. And what's crazy to me...we should have still kept those principles...We want you just working those 40 hours a week, and we want you to make sure that you're not burning out...Like, I need these institutions, most of which talk about work-life balance and being supported and well-rounded, to actually start living out their missions so it can be something that's part of their actual culture...I need them to actually consider how it's treating and how it's hard for us to sustain and continue to work at a place when they're just treating us like another like, a machine...Like, once you run out and you need a repair or you need to leave, that's fine...We'll find the next willing person that's able to do that.

Sadie clarified that the effort must be shared throughout a workplace, rather than being viewed as an employer/employee division of responsibility:

We've been talking about morale in our office for like, the last three years. All we do is talk about morale, but we don't do anything to fix it...Nobody wants to name the hurt and the harm, because nobody wants to hurt anybody's feelings...I care about people's feelings, but this is about work performance, and the way my job is being impacted, and the way that I'm personally being impacted by the things that people say and do. But nobody wants to name it – out in the open, at least. They'll name it behind closed doors,

and I'm the person that I'm just like, "I'll bring it up." Then people are like, "oh, [Sadie's] the disrupter." I'm like, "well, nope. Not meant to disrupt anything. I just wanted to name it so we could move past it."

Most participants also agreed that responsibility for resilience belonged to individuals, ideally in partnership with their employers. Brooke said:

It's shared, but I think it's more on the individual, and especially for the individual to advocate for what they need...and maybe that's something they should teach in grad school – like teach incoming new professionals how to advocate for their needs.

Jazzy agreed that individuals have agency in developing resilience:

I think that at the end of the day, each person is responsible for their own resiliency, so it's like, what can you get involved in in your community that feeds into you? What can you do in your own apartment that feeds into you?

Jim described it this way:

It's largely on the person to kind of continue their own individual journey of exploring who they are, what they stand for, and how they interact with the world and come to understand those aspects about themselves...But it is also equally on the side of supervisors or employers to really look at the environments they create, the way they respond to people voicing criticism or asking for help.

He also went on to add a note about the focus of such efforts:

The benefits (of resilience) are incredibly needed, but it's also with a caveat, as with everything in life, that it is approached with the manner and style of true and actual care, and not just a caring for the outcome, the end-goal that is not in the best interest of everyone...There's a possibility of...having it be a tool of capitalism. Basically saying like, oh, if we have resilient workers, they're going to do more for us, rather than the standpoint of, if our workers are resilient, we can reach our goals because we're doing this as a collective team.

Sadie issued an important condition of *resilience partnerships*, reiterating the need for such efforts to go beyond word to deed:

I think it's the responsibility of every supervisor (to promote resilience), but it really comes down from the top. All of our stuff comes down from the top, whatever that attitude is, whatever the expectations are...I've learned very slowly that there's what our higher-up management says and what's actually in place.

Examining Student Affairs Culture.

More than half of the participants expanded the connection between individual workplace resilience and their environments from the culture of their workplaces to the culture of student

affairs as a field, resulting in the second subtheme of *resilience promotion, examining student affairs culture*. William described the way being busy is positively perceived:

For student affairs...there's this culture of we talk about self-care, but then there's also the caveat – there's this culture about always being oh, you know, "I'm really productive. I'm really busy. I'm in a lot of committees." You know, "I'm doing a lot of different things." Um, maybe "I don't get much sleep because I'm so productive. You know, we talk about self-care, but we also kind of push ourselves a lot to make sure we're also achieving and excelling.

Jazzy shared similar sentiments, along with concerns that these messages are reinforced by leaders who serve as role models in the field:

I think it's a problem, 'cause we are expected to work the 50 hours, 55 hours depending on if it's move-in like, so much more than that and be okay with that. And (*emotionally*) oh, my goodness! So, in the Student Affairs Professionals Facebook space, this woman [said]!...Like, we are expected to play this marionette, almost to be this person that's like, "I'm always happy. I can't wait to work another 60 hours!" Like, I can't, you know, that's not real. That's not true. And, I think when we feel as student affairs professionals that we have to live up to that, that only causes more stress 'cause were not being authentic. That in itself should cause stress within someone. Like, there's this dissonance, and you shouldn't be okay with that. Yeah, there's stress in this job, and I don't think that we all manage it well...People make jokes like, "you know we're not gonna make any money in student affairs," or "you gotta just work through it," and "what's a weekend?" Like, LOL, but actually that's not really funny. It's causing us all to burn out, and I'm really not crazy about it. So, yeah. That's how I feel about that one (laughing)!

Many participants referred to the highly connected nature of student affairs culture and the importance of reputation. Brooke talked about her concerns with the way judgment can influence reputations and discourage more positive behaviors:

I think we need to get rid of the "you have to stay [in a job] for two years."...I felt like, for me to leave my job after one year, I felt like I had to have a really good reason...I felt like that was gonna be looked down upon. Like, get rid of that. Like, you get in the job, and you don't like it. So, kudos to that person for wanting to look somewhere they'll be happy. Shame on our field for looking down on someone who wants to leave a place where they're unhappy...I think if we change that to you need to be where you're happy and like, understand that someone doing a hall director position at one institution can be miserable, but do the exact same job at another institution and be in job bliss...Don't look down on them...People think they're stuck when they get to that place.

To summarize, Research Question 4 asked about the meaning participants made of their resilient experiences in the workplace. Two themes emerged from participants' descriptions of their experiences. *Nature of resilience*, the first theme, dealt with what participants believed about the

ways resilience worked. This theme included four subthemes: (a) *learning process*, (b) *effortful*, (c) *personally meaningful*, (d) *contextual and interactional*. The second theme, *resilience promotion*, came from participant descriptions of the importance of resilience in the workplace and how it may be developed. Two subthemes emerged: *partnerships for resilience* and *examining student affairs culture*.

The findings shared addressed the research questions, revealed similarities and differences between participants' experiences of resilience and those detailed in existing studies, and provided insights into how resilience in this setting can be further explored. The findings are discussed in further detail in these ways in the next section.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals' experiences of workplace adversity and resilience. Four research questions guided this inquiry: (a) How do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their experiences of workplace adversity; (b) how do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe their responses to workplace adversity; (c) how do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals describe the outcomes of their resilient responses to workplace adversity; and (d) what meaning do resilient, entry-level, live-in residence life professionals make of their workplace resilience?

This chapter provides a discussion of the results presented in Chapter 4. The chapter is organized in four parts: (a) a discussion organized around research questions and additional observations; (b) limitations of the study; (c) implications for future policy, practice, and research; and (d) conclusions.

Discussion

Analysis of participant interviews yielded themes regarding participant experiences of workplace adversity and resilience. These themes addressed the research questions, as well as observations in relation to existing resilience research. The following discussion is organized around the research questions and includes a section for the additional insights.

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed participants' experiences of workplace adversity. Unsurprisingly, all participants experienced adversity in the workplace. They also all believed that adversity, in reasonable amounts and durations for purposeful reasons, could be beneficial for their performance and for their personal growth. Some, more than others, even welcomed adversity. All participants accepted its presence as a normal part of work and of life, and they saw both its positive and negative potential. This perception was notable, as it seemed to have formed a foundation for participants to address or engage with adversity rather than ignore, run, or hide from it.

Participants described sources of their workplace adversity without being asked directly to do so. They were asked to broadly describe the stress they experienced in their jobs. Participants all described working in demanding organizations, and they also had very high

expectations of themselves. These descriptions demonstrated participants' awareness of the relationships between themselves and their workplaces, as well as a sense of shared ownership for processes and outcomes. They noted both how they were influenced by and how they influenced these contexts. This awareness seemed critical to participants' sense of agency and responsibility in addressing or managing adversity.

Similarly, participants all described buffers that shielded them from or lessened the impact of workplace adversity without being asked directly about this. Some participants described personal traits, while others described past experiences that buffered adversity. Notably, six of the participants had already worked professionally in similar roles prior to their current role, so while they were still entry-level professionals, their current positions were not their first positions in the field. All of these participants described their prior work experience as being pivotal in giving them perspective and strategies to buffer adversity. Participants also described life experience that helped them buffer adversity. This was especially common among participants with marginalized identities who described early experiences of resilience related to racism, homophobia, financial struggle, family issues, and learning disabilities. These experiences lent perspective to these participants that buffered workplace adversity they faced.

One buffer described by all participants was *engagement outside of work*. Rather than an action participants engaged in to respond to adversity, this engagement began prior to adverse experiences and had a buffering effect for participants. This engagement varied among participants and included friends, significant others, family, pets, second jobs, and involvement in non-work organizations. All participants described being as committed or more committed to these engagements compared with work, giving them meaningful places of contribution and sources of support. They took their commitments to these people and activities seriously, and they did not sacrifice time or energy given to them unless absolutely necessary. This experience seemed important as it was shared among all participants and described as something that they committed to despite knowing that doing so was hard in their field. Participants felt the value of these engagements was worth the effort personally and professionally.

Notably, participants described aspects of *workplace culture and relationships* as both sources of and buffers to adversity. In most cases, the workplace context could be both depending on the circumstances. This theme supported the idea that partnerships between

employees and employers have the potential to promote resilience and wellbeing by managing sources and providing support to respond to adversity effectively.

Finally, all participants described experiencing beneficial and harmful outcomes of the adversity they experienced at work. These experiences aligned with their perception of adversity as potentially both positive and negative. What is notable is that they did experience negative impact from time to time. Participants described negative physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal outcomes of unmanageable adversity. Thus, being resilient did not mean participants never experienced harmful outcomes from adversity. Rather, this finding suggests that workplace resilience was temporal, with limits and different magnitudes. Resilience did not ensure that these participants perfectly buffered or addressed adversity every time, but they described being able to acknowledge these negative outcomes and responded with active strategies to recover.

Research Question 2

The second research question addressed participants' responses to workplace adversity. Participants described these responses in two ways: as mindsets and behaviors. Mindsets included participant beliefs about adversity and about themselves, some intentionally adopted and others more inherent to participants' sense of self and the world. On the other hand, participant behaviors – with the exception of some unproductive behaviors – were intentionally determined and applied. This suggested – and participants agreed – that resilient responses to adversity could be learned. Supporting this observation, all participants described instances in their personal lives and careers when they were not resilient. Participants described their resilience as effortful, learned, and with limits. They all agreed that with practice and experience their ability to remain resilient improved. This suggested that both individual and organizational efforts to promote resilience could be successful.

Participant descriptions of their mindsets and behaviors revealed interesting commonalities across the two dimensions, including (a) self-awareness, (b) awareness of context, (c) growth mindset (Dweck, 2010), and (d) agency. Participants articulated clear self-awareness. They knew and understood their strengths and weaknesses, their preferences and biases, and their purposes for their vocation and their choices. Importantly, they understood these in context of larger systems. They described how these systems, such as their workplace or family, influenced their mindsets, behaviors, and outcomes for their resilience. Participants were aware

that these systems influenced each other and were influenced by larger forces such as student affairs culture and systematic oppression in our society. When participants described the way they thought about adversity or behaviors they engaged in to respond to adversity, they talked about why these things made sense for them in their specific contexts and their personal identities for producing their most positive outcomes.

Participants were clear that they held themselves to high standards of performance, sometimes being their own source of adversity; however, all participants accepted that they had imperfections, made mistakes, or failed at times. Participants saw these as opportunities for learning and growth and embraced a growth mindset that they could learn and improve (Dweck, 2010). Indeed, many participants described the mindsets and behaviors that helped them be resilient as learned from mistakes. They were able to acknowledge unproductive behaviors in which they sometimes engaged, and they noted that they strived for improvement rather than perfection. Importantly, participants also noted that their understanding of their workplace cultures played a role in their ability to openly make and learn from mistakes. In workplace cultures where this was not encouraged, participants tended to feel more pressure to hide their mistakes and not share their learning.

Related to growth mindsets was a sense of agency. Participants repeatedly described their responses to adversity with an overarching sense of agency. They described understanding their locus of control and what was out of their control in their workplaces while maintaining investment in both. Participants' agency to address adversity within their control was complemented in many cases with a sense of agency to influence what they did not control. They saw beyond their individual responsibilities by understanding that all parts of the workplace influenced each other. From helping negative colleagues be more positive to lobbying leadership for changes to improve quality of life for themselves and their colleagues, participants described engaging in behaviors that went beyond self-regulation to influencing their contexts. They applied their agency to a collective responsibility for promoting positive workplace cultures, even if they could not control the outcome. Participants knew and accepted they would not always succeed while still believing that they could.

Common to all of these aspects of participants' mindsets and behaviors was their responsiveness to feedback loops. As participants became more aware of themselves and their contexts, they adjusted their thinking and actions to better suit their circumstances. As they

learned from mistakes they figured out what to do and not do in future situations. As they attempted to improve their workplace cultures, they paid attention to where they had the most opportunity for influence. Participants' ability to pay attention to the lessons of their experiences and respond in constructive ways seemed to be very important to their ability and sense of agency to respond to adversity and maintain resilience.

The mindsets and behaviors participants described were also supported by a strong sense of self-worth. Some participants experienced self-worth easily, while others described it as an ongoing learning process. In all cases, participants believed they were worthy of wellbeing, respect, and care, and of the basic resources these demanded such as time, support, and understanding from those at and outside of work. This sense of self-worth emerged in participant beliefs about themselves and their capabilities, as well as in their motivations for and commitment to their behaviors. While many participants described their willingness to sometimes make sacrifices for their work and, in particular, their students, they all noted they did so with caution and intentionality. Notably, all participants described protecting time, resources, and energy to develop and maintain commitments to relationships and activities outside of work. They found value and reward in these commitments to loved ones, friends, organizations, and personal hobbies, and they did not compromise them for work without cause. A few participants described leaving past positions that threatened their wellbeing as an act of resilience. Participants' self-worth seemed to undergird their ability to seek positive outcomes and give effort to maintaining resilience.

Research Question 3

The third research question explored the outcomes of participants' resilient responses to adversity. These outcomes included many benefits and also a few drawbacks. Participants described the impact of their resilience as reaching beyond themselves to those around them. Their increased sense of self-efficacy and stress threshold helped them maintain resilience and motivated them to positively influence those around them. These experiences suggested resilience may be reciprocal and positive for the individual and for the context.

Participants also described how resilient responses positively influenced their wellbeing. They felt more able to attend to various dimensions of their wellbeing, with particular emphasis on taking time for themselves and spending time engaged with people and in activities they valued beyond work. These positive wellbeing outcomes in turn motivated participants to

continue developing resilient responses to workplace adversity, another instance where positive feedback loops promoted ongoing resilience. Their improved wellbeing also allowed them the energy to fully engage with their students, which led to better performance of their responsibilities and greater satisfaction for fulfilling their purposes for the work.

One interesting finding about outcomes of participants' workplace resilience concerned how others in the workplace perceived their resilience. Some participants felt others could readily see their resilience, while others described their resilience as more invisible. The difference was often the degree to which others knew of the adversity participants faced. Participants who were more open about these concerns felt their resilience was more noticeable. Participants who only shared their struggles with a select few or who did not share them openly at work described being seen as not struggling at all. Participants generally agreed, whether their resilience was noted or not, that others at work perceived them as successful, high-achievers who could handle anything without distress. This perception became a double-edged sword for participants, all who endured struggles and varying degrees of distress while also achieving success. Participants attributed these perceptions to boosting their professional reputations, trustworthiness, and access to additional opportunities. They noted that these perceptions also made it less likely for others to offer them help, show consideration for how they were doing or feeling, or take them seriously if they shared their struggles. The combination of these perceptions led to many participants feeling like they were over-tapped for opportunities or overloaded with responsibilities that eventually wore on their resilience. Participants of marginalized social identities described unique experiences of these perceptions and their outcomes. William described an in-group standard as an African-American man that caused him to mask some of his struggle and always appear strong to those around him. Veronica described that she felt pressure as a woman to disguise her emotional responses to workplace adversity she faced so that she would not be stereotypically labeled as dramatic or weak. She liked that she was an emotional person, but she felt showing her emotions at work would compromise her high-achieving reputation. Jazzy described the added work she took on as a Black woman in a predominantly White workplace. She noted that the absence of diversity led students to seek her out as well as provided an excuse for her colleagues to add duties for recruiting and retaining students of color to her workload. Jazzy expressed that while she could handle the extra work and even enjoyed it in some ways, her abilities were no excuse for such discrimination. She was

expected to do more and face more challenges in her role than her white counterparts, and she was given no additional compensation, resources, or support.

Participants' experience of their resilience sometimes being invisible to others at work was an important consideration in how employers perceive their employees. Sadie's case serves as an example of an employer believing an employee not to be resilient because they were not getting all the information needed to understand what was going on. These findings suggest the value of learning more before assuming an absence of resilience.

The way participants were perceived in the workplace was important to consider for resilience promotion. By definition and by participants' own experiences, adversity and resilience were a package-deal that nearly everyone experienced to some degree. Rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive, as participants' colleagues seemed to, focusing on appropriate levels of, as Justin, citing Sanford, said, "challenge and support (Sanford, 1962)," may lead to more resilient outcomes.

Such external perceptions must also be explored with an understanding that they are not only generated by employee performance, but are also entangled with perceptions stemming from personal biases about social identities. Jazzy knew she received additional work because she was seen as capable while also having doubts that she was taken seriously as young, Black woman by her predominantly white, middle-aged colleagues and leadership. It is not enough to understand that adversity and resilience exist in a carefully maintained balance without also examining how biased perceptions perpetuate oppression in the workplace and acknowledging the additional layer of adversity faced by individuals with marginalized identities that their colleagues with more privileged identities do not manage. This additional adversity will always exist to some extent because the workplace does not exist in a vacuum separate from society; however, a commitment to promoting more resilient outcomes in the workplace must take into account the ways adversity and resilience are experienced differently by employees of marginalized identities, as well as the way the workplace adds to such adversity.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question focused on the meaning participants made of their workplace resilience. Participants answered questions regarding the sources and development of their beliefs, behaviors, and understanding of adversity and resilience, and in doing so began to describe what they thought to be the *nature of resilience*. Most notably, all participants

described resilience as personally meaningful, acknowledging that this meant different individuals experienced resilience differently. When asked who they “did resilience for,” nearly all said they did it for themselves, with a few noting their loved ones. No participants said they did resilience for their employers. If work was mentioned at all, it was in recognition that their resilience mattered to their ability to serve students and set a positive example. Most participants noted that guarding and nurturing their wellbeing by practicing resilience had a positive influence on those around them. Identity, and more specifically marginalized social identities, also played a role in the meaning resilience held for participants. Some participants who identified as Black or African American, low-income, or first-generation noted a deeper responsibility to caring for themselves through their resilience because of the struggle and resilience of those who came before them. They were driven not to be held back by adversity. The personally meaningful nature of resilience may be critical to understanding how workplace resilience is motivated, developed, and maintained. Centering the person rather than their performance in efforts to promote resilience would complement this aspect, as well as suit individual differences in how resilience is experienced.

Participants all agreed that resilience was a learning process. It required effort. They employed reflection, trial and error, and the support of others to improve their ability to be resilient over time. Many participants spoke of practicing behaviors they found to promote resilience until they became habits, reducing the effort that needed to be made over time. As Jazzy said of herself, they did not “take on failures as part of [their identities].” Rather, they used these as learning experiences to boost their belief that they could succeed. The idea that resilience can be learned holds with discussion of findings from the first and second research questions regarding buffers of adversity and responses to adversity. In learning from past experiences, resilience became both a buffer preventing impact from adversity and a guide informing responses to adversity. This suggests that resilience may become self-sustaining over time and that individuals can continue to learn from their experiences to respond to new adversities or new contexts. Even if they failed to respond resiliently to adversity from time to time, as participant descriptions suggested, they could draw on these past experiences to move forward.

Finally, participants described the nature of resilience as contextual and interactional. This was touched on earlier as participants described strong awareness of themselves, their

contexts, and the relationship between them that influenced their experiences of and responses to adversity. Participants believed that their experiences did not occur in a vacuum separate from their workplace environments. They also noted their own influence on these environments. The importance of this aspect of the *nature of resilience* became clear as participants described another meaning they made of their workplace resilience – *resilience promotion*.

Resilience promotion was described by participants as they answered questions about whether resilience mattered in the workplace and who was responsible for resilience. Participants described the individual employee as being primarily responsible for wanting to develop resilience and thinking and behaving in positive, resilience-promoting ways. All participants agreed that employers' influence on culture and nature of work influenced the adversity employees experienced and their ability to respond resiliently. Most believed it was necessary for employers to act as partners in resilience promotion with employees, sharing the responsibility for employee workplace resilience by using their power to shape positive workplace cultures, reduce unnecessary or unproductive adversity, create support systems, dedicate resources to resilience and wellbeing promotion, and provide opportunities for learning and growth. No participants believed that employers should erase adversity from work. They valued the challenges that they faced at work, particularly when they had agency and resources to address them and found them purposeful toward their shared goals. Participants saw resilience promotion as a shared responsibility that centered individual motivation and effort supported by the influence of the context in which they worked. Participants' perspectives shifted the commonly held notion about resilience as individualistic, framing it as a more collaborative, communal process (Bonfiglio, 2017). This is important for employers to consider when concerns arise about the resilience of their employees. Framing employees as deficient without considering the influence employers have on their employees is unfair and shortsighted. Conversely, taking responsibility away from employees for resilience by taking the challenge away from work or not holding employees accountable would not be any more successful at promoting resilience.

Many participants expanded their descriptions of this idea of partnership to the field of student affairs despite not being asked about the field in general. They recognized the influence of the culture of student affairs on their workplaces and the individuals within, thereby including the field in sharing the responsibility for resilience promotion. These participants described

student affairs as falling short of this commitment or worse, actively promoting and normalizing unhealthy narratives that led to harmful outcomes. These narratives were described as coming from a range of sources including the behavior and comments of highly visible leaders, conduct and decisions of hiring committees, and recognition and rewards for those conforming to such narratives. Some participants noted concerns that focusing on their resilience and wellbeing could compromise their advancement in the field but hoped these would turn out to be assets despite their counter-cultural nature. Participants expressed how these student affairs norms were disproportionately harmful to individuals with marginalized identities, as they added another dimension of dominant standards to which to conform and failed to take into account the additional dimensions of adversity these individuals faced. It is notable that participants felt the influence of negative student affairs cultural norms even if their workplaces were highly supportive and engaged in resilience promotion. This further suggests that student affairs as a field has an important role to play in partnerships for resilience.

These partnerships for resilience must be undertaken with a clear understanding of the motivations of all parties. One of the most notable observations of the findings was that resilience does not equal retention. Of the 10 participants interviewed, one left the field to pursue a terminal degree outside of higher education and three were actively searching for new jobs within the field during the course of this study. A fifth participant believed a career change was possible in his future. In all cases these changes were related to participants' interests and goals – not burnout. Brooke and Sadie both noted that they wanted to always be headed toward something they were passionate about rather than running away from something that troubled them. As many of the studies on attrition from the field have noted, people sometimes leave residence life for other functional areas or leave student affairs altogether for healthy reasons such as seeking advanced leadership, higher wages, or newfound passions (Frank, 2013). This speaks to the personally meaningful nature of resilience and should reiterate that workplace efforts to promote resilience should not be undertaken as a way of stemming attrition, but with a desire to reduce burnout and promote wellbeing. This perspective is especially useful in residence life settings where entry-level, live-in professionals are often encouraged to seek new opportunities after a certain period of time. Rather than withholding investment in resilience because retention is not a concern, partnering with employees for resilience could provide a foundational skill set to help them pursue wellbeing throughout their careers.

Observations in Relation to Current Literature

The findings and discussion revealed similarities and differences between participants' experiences of workplace resilience and current literature on resilience. The purpose of this study was not to compare, but consideration of commonalities and unique aspects of experiences may suggest directions for future applications or research.

There were many similarities between the ways participants described their experiences of resilience and the discussion of classic resilience in the literature. These included the nature of resilience as contextual and temporal (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015), building upon itself (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004), and buffering of future adversity (Luthar et al., 2000). Though not common in the literature, constructivist calls for more understanding of resilience shared participants' perspectives that resilience was deeply personal to each individual, resisting generalized definition (Ungar, 2004). Similarities to workplace resilience literature included the notion that pervasive workplace adversity could be distressing enough to require resilient responses (King et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2007). Aligned with the idea of context, workplace resilience studies also shared participants' experiences of the influence of organizational culture on adversity and resilience (Coutu, 2002), and the nature of positive stress (Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Findings of this study highlighted how identity influences the way individuals experience resilience, particularly those from marginalized or minoritized groups. Resilience researchers have criticized the current body of knowledge for lacking full understanding of the different ways resilience is constructed in different cultural contexts (Luecken & Gress, 2010; Masten & Wright, 2010). Participants' experiences support the call of some resilience researchers to employ more constructivist approaches to illuminate the different experiences individuals from diverse, non-dominant identities that current research is rooted in (Bottrell, 2009; Hutcheon & Lashewicz, 2014; Ungar, 2004).

While similar to existing research in many ways, participants' experiences differed in a few notable areas. While most workplace resilience models focus on traits (Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013), participants described more interpersonal, intrapersonal, and behavioral buffers and responses to adversity. Traits were described in a few cases, but relationships, behaviors, mindsets, and self-concept seemed to hold greater influence for participants than for those upon which current models are based. This could be partly due to the use of the General Conceptual Model of Workplace Resiliency (see Figure 1) to guide the research questions for

this study, as this model does include processes and outcomes in its examination of workplace resilience (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). However, participants were asked broad questions that consistently yielded descriptions of actions, while only sometimes generating descriptions of traits.

The General Conceptual Model of Workplace Resiliency (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013) shared the process and outcome components of participants' experiences, but these differed in a few interesting ways. First, participants described buffers of adversity as both internal and external, reflective and active, and based in experience. The model focuses on personal characteristics – traits – as buffers of adversity. This aspect of the model neglects to highlight another important finding from participants' experiences – that of the additive nature of resilience building upon past experiences along with personal characteristics, choices, and actions. One of the most significant aspects of how participants experienced adversity and resilience was the context in which it occurred. Context is represented in the model as an external factor that influences how employees respond to adversity, but such a limited description does not account for the influence of context through all aspects of participants' experiences.

Perhaps the most important difference between participants' understanding of their resilience experiences and what exists in the literature on workplace resilience is in how participants envisioned the purpose of studying and promoting resilience. Most workplace resilience studies focus on the individual need to develop resilience rather than on the environmental influence, and they tend to focus more on performance outcomes as measures of resilience than individual wellbeing outcomes (Winwood et al., 2013). In contrast, participants clearly described their own personal ownership of their resilience along with the critical importance of partnerships between employees, employers, and their professional fields in successful promoting resilience for wellbeing.

Summary of Findings

The commonalities between participant experiences and existing literature suggest that prior studies can serve as a useful starting point for ongoing research in residence life and student affairs settings. Taking a person-centered approach to understanding how individuals experience workplace resilience shifts the view of existing models to allow for the nuanced differences described by participants to be more clearly understood. This person-centered approach also

prompts the researcher to consider the influence of larger social contexts that shape different experiences of adversity and resilience for marginalized or minoritized individuals. These differences – (a) focus on prior experience, mindsets, and behaviors as well as traits, (b) influence of social identities, particularly for marginalized groups (c) emphasis of the influence of context on resilience, (d) the role of learning in adversity buffering and resilience promotion, and (e) a shift in focus from workplace outcomes to outcomes for the employee – are integrated into an adaptation of existing models in Figure 1 (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013). The figure also suggests the opportunity for contextual factors to act in partnership with individual employees to promote resilience.

I designed the diagram to place the employee at the center of their experience of resilience, embedded within the context of their workplace, both of which are influenced by external contexts. The way an employee experiences adversity and responds to it is shaped by their wellbeing, beliefs, experiences, identities, and traits, shown in the circles around the employee in the diagram. The “traits” circle is deliberately smaller than the others because participants described traits much less frequently than they did wellbeing, beliefs, experiences, and identities as influencers of their resilience experiences. The “intersecting identities” circle is deliberately transparent to represent the different magnitude of influence these identities have on the resilience experience for different individuals, as those from marginalized or minoritized groups experience adversity and respond in ways more influenced by their identities than those from privileged groups. Those from privileged groups certainly experience and respond to adversity in ways related to their intersecting identities as well. However, participants from privileged groups generally described their privilege in their experiences of adversity and resilience or did not describe their identities as influencing their adversity in the same ways and with the same magnitude that participants from marginalized or minoritized groups did.

The diagram specifically depicts an employee’s reflection and learning from their experiences, responses, and outcomes in ways that inform their future experiences of adversity and resilience. They incorporate this feedback into their beliefs and experiences, how their wellbeing is affected by their responses, and how they see the outcomes in relation to their identities into their way of experiencing and addressing adversity in the future. Learning from resilience strengthens resilience for the future.

The diagram differs from the General Conceptual Model of Workplace Resilience (McLarnon & Rothstein, 2013), found in Appendix A, in ways derived from participants' experiences. Notably, the employee's experience is centered, and employee learning, self-awareness, and wellbeing are part of a loop that becomes both the outcome and driver of resilience. This outcome is more personal to the individual rather than centered on productivity to the employer. The employee's experience is also shown in context of the workplace and the greater external context that influences both the employee and the workplace. This external context can account, for example, for influences such as family or commitments made by the employee, the culture of student affairs shaping workplace and employee expectations, and systems of oppression existing in the larger society that influence the way marginalized groups experience the workplace context. Prior models could account for these contexts, but do not specifically depict them and their notable influence on employee experiences of resilience.

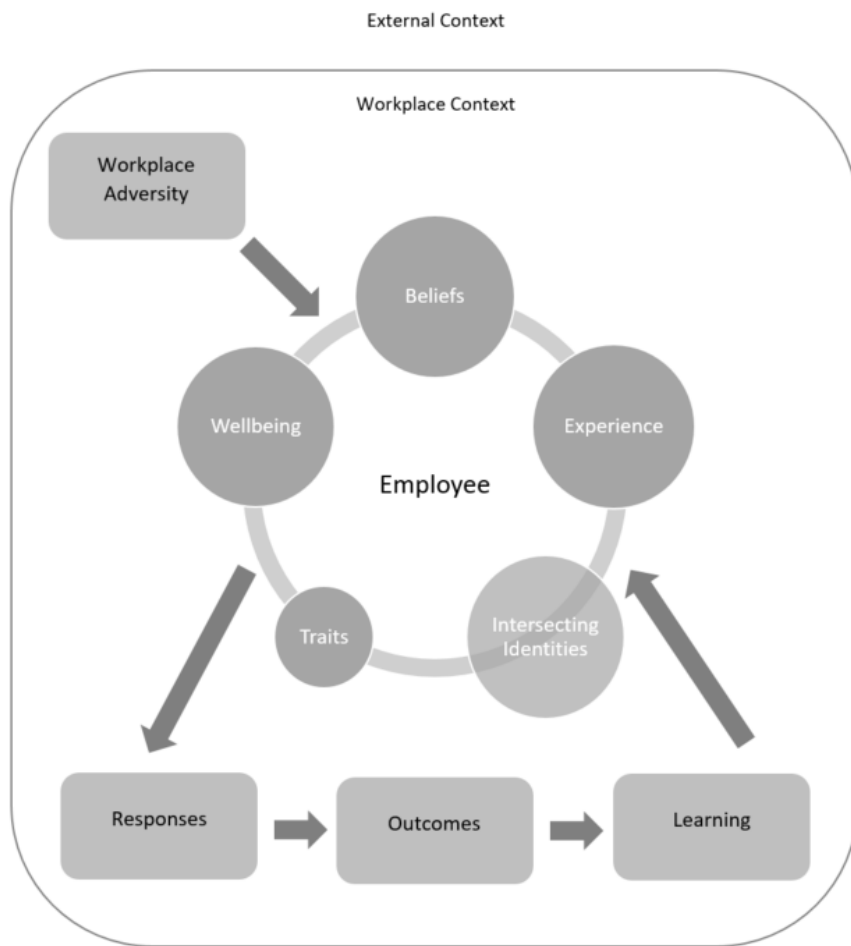


Figure 1. Employee-Centered Diagram of Workplace Resilience.

Limitations

Readers should interpret and apply implications of this study with several limitations in mind. First, as a qualitative study with phenomenological design, the results are not intended to be generalizable. Yet, when attempting to transfer findings and implications (Rossman & Rallis, 2017), readers should note that while participants describe the culture of student affairs as a field and the discussion explores these experiences, this study focused specifically on the experiences of entry-level, live-in residence life professionals. The diversity of functional areas within the field is important to remember when considering transferability of the results of this study or future research.

Second, resilience is a complex construct that has escaped precise definition by scholars (Luthar et al., 2000). Tools have been developed to indicate an individual's resilience, but these tools were too prescriptive and deductive to be appropriate given exploratory nature of this study. The sampling method used, while guided by the operational definition of resilience for the study, laid the expert referrers' own assumptions about resilience upon the potential participants they referred. This is both interesting and potentially limiting given that both prior literature and this study's findings suggest that environmental or organizational perceptions of resilience influence and can conflict with an individual's perception of one's own resilience. Still, all participants agreed to some degree that they perceived themselves as resilient.

Finally, time was a limitation of this study. Phenomenology requires a lot of time of participants and the interviewer to gain the most detailed understanding of the experience of the phenomenon in question. Knowing that residence life professionals may find it difficult to commit to three different interviews as a typical phenomenology employs, the method was adjusted to two 90-minute interviews. In most cases, this time limit was not enough to explore all follow-up questions that arose from participant descriptions. Additionally, participants were rarely able to schedule their second interview within two weeks of their first interview as suggested by traditional approaches and the methods outlined in the study for keeping the ideas fresh in their minds. Scheduling issues were a common concern, as the unpredictable nature of residence life work caused almost every participant to have to reschedule at least once, with as much as a month between interviews for one participant who also was dealing with some personal issues. As the interviewer, I tried to weave in connections back to the first interview when participants had not spoken with me in a few weeks, but it is likely that some of the

thoughts they had left unfinished in the first interview were not expanded upon in the second as intended by the method.

Implications

The findings of this study contributed to the understanding of the experiences of resilience in the residence life professional setting for entry-level, live-in professional staff. Discussion of the findings and study limitations highlighted implications for policy and practice as well as for future research. The implications for policy and practice are broken into three sections: (a) for departments and institutions, (b) for the field of student affairs, and (c) for individuals and employers in general.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The discussion of the findings revealed implications for policy and practice for employing departments and institutions to consider. First, employers must understand their workplace cultures and examine their role in creating or shaping these cultures. While most participants acknowledged that it is not solely the responsibility of the employer to create positive cultures, they also noted that employers hold power to do so by creating and promoting policies and practices that reinforce positive, healthy behaviors and outcomes. Examples include reviewing mission statements to see how espoused values align with actual practice, consulting with human resources to understand existing policy and address shortcomings, and examination of policies meant to promote performance and wellbeing such as leave, flex time and scheduling, and EAP/mental health benefits. Review of the intent and outcome of policies regarding exempt and non-exempt status under FLSA is especially important for departments with positions at both designations. Creating and promoting formal and informal support structures, such as positive supervision and peer relationships are ways that practice can enhance resilience and wellbeing outcomes. Employers should also critically consider how policies and practices meant to promote wellbeing are encouraged or discouraged for use by the unofficial norms of the workplace to make sure that the intent of these efforts is not undermined. Understanding what behaviors are rewarded and punished, intentionally or unintentionally and formally or informally, can help make these aspects of culture clear. Finally, taking a hard look at the work that is being done, how it is being done, and with what resources can guide employers in reducing unnecessary adversity to relieve undue stress faced by employees. Doing these things through a culture of collaboration that involves employees in the process in order to develop

ownership and give voice to employees' experiences may promote more positive workplace cultures that support resilience.

The influence of student affairs culture was widely described by participants as a challenge for resilience that affects both individuals and employers. Entry-level employees inherit much of this culture as it is shaped by those who came before them. As such, they are positioned to give insights into concerns about the culture that older generations in the field may have come to accept without question. As a field, student affairs can start with creating space that's safe for critical dialogue and self-reflection. Such analysis can lead to engagement in practices that could promote resilience and wellbeing for practitioners. Practices begin with an acknowledgment of unhealthy or harmful norms of the field, their purpose for existing, their impact, and their added harm or disadvantage to individuals with marginalized identities. Examining the groups and behaviors that are rewarded, intentionally and unintentionally, and those that are punished, shamed, or silenced can give clues to these often unspoken rules of engagement. Such a review of these norms could identify the "truths" about the field many participants spoke of as limiting prioritization of wellbeing for fear of irreparable damage to their professional reputations. Without a deepened understanding and desire for improvement, cultural change could not be achieved. Such conceptual shifts could inform a review of standards by professional organizations (e.g., Council for the Advancement of Standards, Association of College and University Housing Officers – International) to place value on healthy work environments and define partnerships for resilience and wellbeing between employers and employees. Graduate programs and other preparatory programs, such as professional institutes and internships, could also foster conversation and competence in these areas.

One finding that resonated across experiences of all participants was that of making commitments to people and activities outside the workplace. These commitments served as buffers of workplace adversity. It is well-documented that student affairs professionals in general find a strong sense of purpose, value, and reward from their work (Boehman, 2016). This was echoed in the descriptions all participants gave about their work. Despite common challenges such as limited time away from work, living in a new area, and limited financial resources, all participants prioritized finding, investing in, and protecting meaningful relationships and activities outside of work, distributing what was rewarding and valuable to

them rather than concentrating it in the workplace. Messaging that this is normal, positive, and accepted behavior may improve employees' agency in creating their own resilience.

Departments and institutions can promote such messaging, as well as remove barriers they have created that prevent such engagement. Graduate programs and student affairs as a field can consider messaging around value, commitment, and rewards of the work to reinforce the idea that student affairs professionals can and should find valuable ways to enrich their lives outside of work. This would align with efforts to understand the negative norms that are messaged by the field described earlier.

Individuals, departments and institutions, and student affairs as a field can practice viewing issues of burnout, attrition, resilience, and wellbeing through different lenses to best understand the complexity of these issues. Most studies to date have focused on attrition, burnout, failure, and other negative outcomes rather than examining resilience, wellbeing, and positive outcomes. Using an anti-deficit lens could foster understanding of opportunities for success rather than risk factors for failure, burnout, or attrition. Anti-deficit approaches not only highlight the potential and agency of individuals, but importantly examine the structural and contextual factors of an individual's environment to avoid situating responsibility for outcomes – often the negative outcomes – on the individual alone (Valencia, 1997). Such approaches could hold even greater potential when considering the positive outcomes for individuals of marginalized identities or from groups commonly identified at higher risk of attrition by challenging consciously or unconsciously held beliefs about their potential (Harper, 2010; Valencia, 1997). Utilizing a human resources organizational framework could help employers work with employees for mutually beneficial, reciprocal outcomes (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This framework could be specifically helpful in examining workplace culture for resilience promotion as it focuses on the relationships between people in the workplace, something strongly referenced by all participants. A growth mindset lens would be applicable for viewing these issues, as participants described their own growth mindsets that promoted their resilience (Dweck, 2010). If employees are viewed, by themselves and others, as capable of improvement rather than resilience being beyond their control the resilience partnerships suggested by the findings may be enhanced.

One critical implication for policy and practice is addressing mindsets of those who take a transactional perspective of work, where pay is traded for labor, and see no reason for

employers to partner for resilience. It is this very perspective that participants challenged in their reflections. They expected and wanted to work hard in their jobs, and they acknowledged benefits they received such as housing, leave, and access to mental health care. They did not hold false notions about the adversity and time demands inherent in their work. However, they did draw attention to the influence of their employers to shape their workplace cultures for better or worse. Their experiences shift the narrative of work from transactional to interactional, describing how their workplace success was influenced by their employers and the context of their workplace. The literature supports their insights. Investing in employee wellbeing and resilience has shown positive performance and morale gains (Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013). A focus on building resilience capacity overtime also promotes thriving, or performance at the highest level (O'Leary, 1998). Participants described wanting employers to make good on espoused promises regarding value for self-care and diversity and promote the use of institutional benefits in which they had already invested by encouraging use of vacation time and allowing employees to disconnect when not on-call or at work. Some participants described an expectation that a field that holds care and development as core values should model that in how they treat their employees. Participants described ways their employers could promote positive workplace cultures through better role modeling, recognizing positive behaviors, and addressing negative behaviors. Resilience building may not guarantee employee retention, but can promote positivity, self-efficacy, and wellbeing among those who are retained (Luthans et al., 2007; Rees et al., 2015; Winwood et al., 2013) and positively influence preventable attrition (Marshall et al., 2016; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). These actions carry little costs compared to the potential costs of underperformance, illness, negative morale, and pressure on the system that permeates the culture of the organization (Frank, 2013; Gillespie et al., 2001; Rosch, 2001; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Jazzy and Aria both noted the ethical concerns of the intent of the Fair Labor Standards Act and the actions of institutions who continue to add work demands and time without added pay or who unofficially encourage unpaid service to manage the amount of work to be done.

Findings suggest the benefits of promoting resilience extend beyond the individual employee to others in the workplace, including the students that are served. Participants described being able to positively influence others, raising the morale of the organization and promoting better performance as a result. They were able to see the bigger organizational picture

when difficulty occurred, helping colleagues whose narrow perspectives caused negativity. Most importantly, participants described how much more care, attention, and engagement they were able to give their students when their wellbeing was supported. As they grew more resilient, they experienced enhanced wellbeing and felt able to go above and beyond for their students they served. It becomes an even greater responsibility of employers in student affairs to partner with employees for resilience and wellbeing when doing so is critical to the core function of working with students. Fortunately, findings also suggest that investing in resilience pays dividends over time as resilient individuals grow their capacity for resilience within supportive workplace cultures.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study, potential contributions to the field, and limitations create a variety of opportunities for future research. The methods of this study were designed to explore the phenomenon of resilience as it was not well understood in this population or setting. Future research may employ other methodologies to build upon what was learned in this study. A grounded theory inquiry could lead to uncovering the underlying mechanism of resilience in this setting and population, as well as yield a working theory to guide practice and research. A study employing existing inventories for determining individual resilience could aid researchers in producing results that answer allow them to determine significance of different factors or make comparisons between groups.

Future research could explore the different experiences of workplace resilience of individuals from marginalized or minoritized groups. While participants in this study all shared common experiences, some participants faced unique challenges and developed resilience in different ways related to their identities. Further research could illuminate important differences in the way these individuals experience and develop resilience and utilize anti-deficit frameworks to explore the assets they bring to their workplace resilience.

Similarly, future research could focus on student affairs functional areas beyond residence life. While all functional areas will share some similar demands, opportunities, and cultures within the field, their nuances may prove to be a factor in how resilience is developed and maintained.

Future research could also explore the experiences of resilience among individuals at different levels of experience in the field. At least one such study exists about the experiences of

mid-level professionals (Allee, 2015), and other studies could focus on the experiences of graduate students, directors, assistant and associate vice presidents and chancellors, and senior student affairs officers. Understanding the experience of resilience at these various levels could also enhance the overall understanding of how workplace resilience is developed and maintained, as these individual experiences influence the experiences of others.

Finally, future research could include the workplace environment in sample selection. Participants in this study highlighted some potentially important distinctions in their experiences depending on how supportive they found their workplaces to be. As the relationship between individuals and their workplaces was described as critically important by participants, designing a study that includes the workplace in the sample selection could provide a more complete understanding of this relationship.

Conclusions

The discussion and implications of the findings of this study can be summarized in a few important conclusions that will be discussed further in this section: (a) adversity and resilience coexist, (b) resilience can be learned, (c) resilience is a systems issue, and (d) resilience is personal and individual.

Adversity and Resilience Coexist

Participants echoed existing research that without adversity there is no resilience (Masten, 2001). They shared a belief that adversity could be motivating, improve performance, and promote learning. Veronica called it the “sweet-spot of stress” that existed in tenuous balance with many competing demands. Opportunities to face these challenges and be successful helped participants develop awareness of and strategies for resilience that they learned to apply to future situations. This cycle of learning from and overcoming adversity suggests that employers hoping to promote resilience focus on finding and maintaining that “sweet spot” of challenge and give employees the support they need to manage.

Resilience Can be Learned, Lost, and Learned Again

Departing from some existing constructs of resilience that focus on traits for resilience, participants shared a broad array of mindsets, behaviors, relationships, and experiences that informed their ability to improve and maintain their resilience. Participants were also reflective about their growth over time, noting how failure, challenge, and guidance helped them to develop perspectives and buffers to promote their resilience. This suggests that investing in

building and learning from resilience promotes future resilience, and it serves as a reminder that learning often includes failure. Participants noted that they did have occasions in which adversity was too great to respond resiliently, but they took intentional measures to protect themselves and bounce back as well as possible. Employers can play an important role in regulating the degree, duration, and purpose of adversity within their control, making sure not to needlessly increase adversity or ignore it because employees have become more resilient. They can also create workplace cultures where employees are not afraid of asking for help and making and learning from mistakes. Employers can also support employees in maintaining their own resilience by encouraging them to take advantage of their benefits and employee wellness programs that help them commit time and effort to caring for themselves and finding valuable engagement outside of work. Effort must be given to maintain a balance, as well as provide ongoing support even when employees seem not to struggle. This is particularly important for marginalized or minoritized professionals feel increased scrutiny and pressure to succeed and may be less likely to share their struggles.

Resilience is Personal and Individual

Participants described their resilience as personally meaningful to them, as well as unique to their own experiences and identities. They did resilience for themselves, for their own wellbeing, and for the impact they had on others. They valued the positive outcomes resilience produced, and they maintained and protected their resilience. Participants recognized that their own experiences of resilience likely differed from that of others, particularly around marginalized identities. They shared how their own marginalized identities shaped their motivations for and experiences of resilience in unique ways, often due to the ways that society produced another layer of adversity for them to navigate in relation to their identities. Participants suggested that employers trying to promote resilience understand the personal, contextual nature of resilience, avoid one-size-fits-all approaches, and involve employees in conversations to address issues and create solutions. Most importantly, their experiences stressed the importance for person-centered approaches rather than performance-centered approaches to building resilience. While resilience was personal and individual for participants, all acknowledged that they, and thus their resilience, were influenced by the systems they inhabited. Understanding resilience requires viewing it as both a personal and systems issue.

Resilience is a Systems Issue

While participants agreed that they needed to be personally motivated to behave in ways that promoted resilience, they acknowledged that their workplace cultures, the nature of their work, and the norms of student affairs culture had considerable influence on the adversity they experienced, their ability to respond resiliently, and the nature of the outcomes they experienced. Many studies have focused on burnout and attrition in student affairs, often examining the individual (Buchanan & Schupp, 2015; Frank, 2013; Marshall et al., 2016). Many have found systems-related issues for these concerns, making recommendations for practice and policy; however, the system is rarely the focus of inquiry. The findings of this study suggest that while individuals may be resilient to some degree despite negative or unsupportive contexts, resilience is more successfully promoted when the system acts as a contributing partner in the ways it can positively influence adversity, support, and culture. Rather than focusing on why employees are not resilient, employers and scholars might investigate how workplace cultures, nature of work, and student affairs norms influence employee resilience and burnout. Attention could be given to the way concerns for professional reputation in the field shape behaviors that run contrary to resilience-building and wellbeing. It is critically important that the findings of this study not come to serve as a comparison against which employees who are perceived as not resilient are judged. Rather, findings could be used to inform a systems review to benefit overall resilience.

These central conclusions from the experiences and perspectives participants shared about their resilience may serve as a helpful guide for future practice, policy, and research regarding managing adversity and promoting resilience. The residence life setting seemed to share much in common with other settings in which resilience has been studied, but differed importantly in the nature of adversity, potential for support, and desired outcomes of resilience building. Although resilience was no guarantee of retention, the improved individual and contextual outcomes may be worthwhile pursuits to combat burnout and other harmful outcomes for entry-level, live-in residence life professionals so widely discussed in the current literature.

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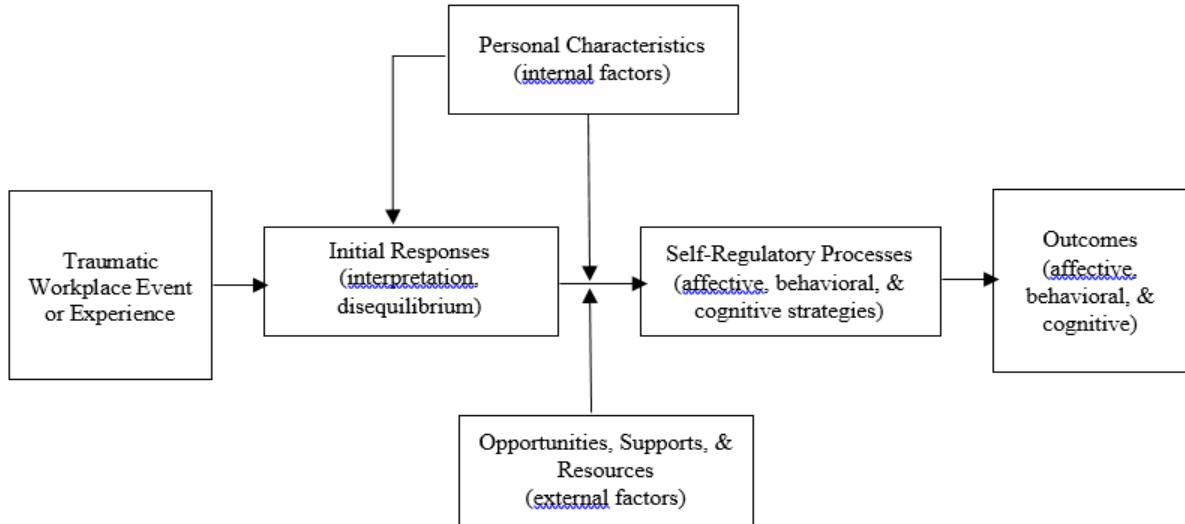
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Appendix A

General Conceptual Model of Workplace Resiliency



Adapted from McLarnon & Rothstein (2013, p. 65)

Appendix B
Qualified Referrer Profiles

General Title	Level in the Department	Institution Type	Number of Potential Participants Referred
Area Director	Mid-Level	Public	2
Assistant Director	Mid-Level	Public	2
Assistant Director	Mid-Level	Public	3
Assistant Director	Mid-Level	Private	3
Assistant Director	Mid-Level	Private	3
Assistant Director	Mid-Level	Public	4
Assistant Director	Mid-Level	Public	5
Associate Director	Mid-Level	Public	2
Associate Director	Mid-Level	Public	2
Senior Associate Director	Senior Level	Public	2
Director	Senior Level	Private	6
Dean	Senior Level	Private	5

Appendix C

Email Template for Qualified Referral Contact

SUBJECT: Response Requested: Seeking your assistance to identify potential research participants in a study on resilience in residence life professionals

Dear [name],

I am writing to request your assistance in identifying potential participants for my dissertation research study. I am researching resilience in entry-level, live-in residence life professional staff. For the purposes of this study, resilience is defined as the ability of a person to consistently improve or maintain function (personal and/or professional), or quickly recover from severe or pervasive workplace stress or adversity with few to no negative outcomes. My hope is that findings of this study can benefit housing and residence life professionals individually and the field in general through a better understanding of how resilience is experienced and developed in this context.

To identify potential participants, I am asking qualified professionals in the field to make referrals of individuals who fit the criteria of the study listed below. You have been identified as a qualified professional through your direct, current experience supervising entry-level, live-in residence life professional staff.

To refer an individual for an invitation to participate in the study, please send me the name, institution, and, if possible, the email address of any person you believe meets the following criteria. You do not need to work directly with the individuals you refer.

Individuals that may be invited to participate in this study:

- Demonstrate high levels of resilience in the face of workplace adversity or serious stress.
- Serve in an entry-level, live-in role in a 4-year public or private university or college Housing and Residence Life department (or equivalent).
- Serve in a role managed by the Housing and Residence Life department, and report to a university official (who do not work in a public-private partnership).
- Have served in the role for at least 2 years and no more than 5 years.
- Live in a residence hall that is part of the their area of oversight

Individuals you refer may be contacted, notified of your referral, and asked to participate in the study.

Thank you for your consideration. Your assistance will be of great value as I conduct this study. Not all potential participants you refer will be invited to participate, and I will not be able to inform you of the identity of participants who choose to participate. Out of respect for those you refer, please refrain from sharing their names in potential relation to this study. Please let me know if you have any questions. You can also refer to the study website [address will go here] for additional information and Institutional Review Board approval for the study.

Sincerely,
Kelley Woods-Johnson
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech

Appendix D

Email Template for Potential Participant Invitations

TO:

FROM:

SUBJECT: Response Requested: You have been referred by [name] as a potential participant in a research study on resilience in HRL professionals

Dear [name],

I am writing to request your participation in my dissertation research study. You were referred to me by [name, position, institution] as an excellent person to speak with about my topic. I am researching workplace stress and resilience in entry-level, live-in residence life professional staff. My hope is that findings of this study can benefit housing and residence life professionals individually, the field in general, and the students you serve through a better understanding of how resilience is experienced and developed in this context.

Individuals who can help me develop my understanding of their experiences of resilience in their work fit the following criteria:

- Serve in an entry-level, live-in role in a 4-year public or private university or college Housing and Residence Life department (or equivalent).
- Live in a residence hall for which they have oversight.
- Serve in a role managed by the Housing and Residence Life department, and report to a university official (do not work in a public-private partnership).
- Have served in the role for at least 2 years and no more than 5 years.
- Able to speak about experiences of resilience in response to stressful work and/or work environments.

If you fit these criteria, please let me know if you are willing to participate. I will ask of your time for two 90-minute interviews to be conducted over Skype and audio recorded.

Thank you for your consideration. Your assistance will be of great value as I conduct this study, and I am glad to share the results of the study with you when available. Please let me know if you have any questions. You can also refer to the study website [address will go here] for additional information and Institutional Review Board approval for the study.

I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Kelley Woods-Johnson
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Tech

Appendix E
Participant Profile

Participant Name:

Preferred Pseudonym:

Email Address (primary contact):

Phone Number:

Skype Name:

Name of Current Institution (will not be named in data reporting and discussion):

Type of Current Institution (circle one): 4-year public 4 year-private

Name of Current Position:

Tenure in Current Position:

Location of Residence:

Highest Degree Held:

Gender:

Preferred Pronouns:

Race/Ethnicity:

Accommodations:

Please describe any identities that are particularly salient for you in your personal life or work role that are not asked about above:

After each interview, you will be invited to read a typed transcript of the audio recording and provide comments.

Appendix F

Informed Consent to Participate

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Reframing Responses to Workplace Stress: Exploring Entry-Level Residence Life Professionals' Experiences of Workplace Resilience

Investigator(s): Claire Robbins robbinsc@vt.edu/540-231-2004
Name E-mail / Phone number

Co-Investigator(s): Kelley Woods-Johnson kjwoods@vt.edu/540-231-1872
Name E-mail / Phone number

Steve Janosik sjanosik@vt.edu
Name E-mail / Phone number

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways entry-level, live-in residence life professionals experience workplace stress and resilience. The stressful nature of such work and related negative outcomes are well-documented; however, little is known about experiences of resilience in response to workplace stress in this context. It is anticipated that findings of this study will provide insight into resilient processes and outcomes and the residence life workplace that may inform theory, policy, and practice in order to promote employee wellbeing in stressful student affairs work environments.

This study is being conducted for Kelley Woods-Johnson's dissertation research at Virginia Tech. Results from this study may be published in journal articles and/or presented at professional/scholarly conferences.

All participants (referred to in this document as "subjects") in this study will be serving in entry-level, live-in residence life professional positions at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Participants will have more than 2 and less than 6 years of full-time experience in residence life. It is anticipated that 10-15 participants will be included in this study.

II. Procedures

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to share brief

demographic information and participate in two 90-minute interviews with Kelley Woods-Johnson. The interviews will be conducted at your convenience and occur via Skype (or other video conferencing program you prefer) within approximately 10 days of each other, as scheduling will allow. The interviews will be audio recorded using two recording devices, and no video data will be recorded. These recordings will be used by Kelley Woods-Johnson to produce typed transcripts of the interviews. After transcriptions are complete, you will receive a copy via email to provide feedback regarding accuracy should you choose.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are encouraged to be open and honest about your experiences.

III. Risks

Minimal risks are associated with this study. As you will be asked to discuss stressful events or conditions in the workplace, it is possible you may experience emotional distress. If this occurs and you would like support, you may contact your institution's counseling center or employee assistance plan provider. Any cost rendered for these services is the responsibility of the participant.

You may also decline to answer any question at any time during the interview or withdraw from participation completely without penalty.

IV. Benefits

As a participant, you may only benefit indirectly from participating in this study. You will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences in the workplace in ways that may potentially inform the development of theory to better explain workplace resilience and improvement of individual and organizational policies and practices associated with addressing workplace stress.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Potential participants were identified for this study through professional referral. The professional(s) who referred you will not be notified of your choice to participate in the study. Professional referrers will be asked not to share information about who they referred and will be informed that not all individuals they refer will be invited to participate in the study.

All data collected in this study will be done so in a way to ensure your anonymity. You will be asked to select a pseudonym that will be used to refer to you in writing and in discussion of research data and results. Your identity will be divulged to no one;

however, I am required by Virginia State law to notify appropriate authorities if you disclose to me that you may post a threat of harm of self or others. Potentially identifying information will be removed from reported data, and only I and my advisors will have access to the original data transcripts. At no time will I release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than my advisors without your written consent. All correspondence, forms, transcripts, and audio recordings will be saved securely on my password protected laptop, password protected desktop, and password protected cloud-based storage.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

Data will be destroyed one year after the conclusion of the study.

VI. Compensation

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a participant should not continue as a participant.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact the investigator and/or faculty advisors whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Responsibilities

I (the subject) voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- Participate in two 90-minute interviews via Skype or similar platform of my choosing
- Allow audio recording of all interviews

- May provide feedback regarding accuracy of typed interview transcripts, if I choose

X. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____
Subject signature

Subject printed name

Appendix G
Focused Life History & Details of the Experience Interview Guide

Pseudonym: _____ Skype Name: _____

Date/Time: _____ Institution: _____ Title: _____

Note: The numbered questions were read directly, and the lettered follow-up questions were only read if not covered in the participant's responses. The purpose of each question is indicated in bold and in brackets at the end of each numbered question.

Thank you so much for joining me today. Before we begin, I see that you have submitted your participant profile and informed consent to me via email. Thank you for those. Do you have any questions I can answer about those forms?

Today we're going to talk about your experiences with work, stress, and resilience. This interview will last about 90 minutes, and feel free to ask questions throughout as they come to you. There are no right or wrong answers. I just encourage you to be as honest and open as you can be, and if there's a question you don't want to answer that's okay. Just let me know.

As a reminder, I will be using your pseudonym in this conversation and in all transcripts and reported data. I am recording this conversation with two devices to preserve your words. Is this still okay?

Can I answer any questions before we begin?

1. Tell me briefly about the jobs have you held prior to the one you're current doing.
(Include GA/TA positions in school). **[Context]**
2. Describe the most stressful job you've ever held. *(If it's the current job, select one before this one).* **[Context]**
 - a. *What made it so stressful?*
 - b. *Describe how you typically handled job stress in the past.*
3. How has job stress had an impact on your wellbeing, positively or negatively? **[Context]**
4. How has job stress ever had an impact on your work performance, positively or negatively? **[Context]**
5. Tell me why you chose your current position. **[Context]**

6. How have your expectations of the position be met or not? **[Context]**
7. Give me a brief description of your current position. **[Context]**
 - a. *What is its purpose?*
 - b. *What are its functions (what do you do)?*
 - c. *What are the hours like?*
8. Describe the stress you experience in your job. **[RQ1]**
 - a. *How stressful is it?*
 - b. *What causes the stress (role, peers, organization, personal life, etc.)?*
 - c. *Is it acute or chronic (incidental and severe or persistent at varying levels)?*
 - d. *How are other people in your department similarly (or not) stressed?*
 - i. *How does that affect you?*
9. What is your initial reaction to stress or adversity at work? **[RQ1, RQ2]**
 - a. *Can you give me a specific example to help me understand?*
10. How does this stress typically affect you? **[RQ1, RQ2, RQ3]**
 - a. *Emotionally (Affectively)*
 - b. *Mentally (Cognitively)*
 - c. *Behaviorally (Habits, Relationships, Performance, etc)*
11. What do you do to deal with this stress? **[RQ2]**
 - a. *What personal traits or abilities do you use?*
 - b. *What resources or supports do you use?*
 - c. *What strategies do you use?*
 - d. *Is it easy/hard? Does it change?*
 - e. *Does it take effort or is it automatic?*
 - f. *Are there certain things that make it harder to deal?*
12. How does your work environment influence how you're able to respond to stress? **[RQ2, RQ3]**
13. What are the typical results of the way you respond to stress? **[RQ3]**
 - a. *How do you feel?*
 - b. *What do you think?*
 - c. *How do you behave/interact with others?*
 - d. *Are these different from when you don't positively respond to stress?*

14. Is there anything you would like to share more about or that I didn't ask about?

(Pseudonym), thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today. I really appreciate your willingness to share openly about your experiences.

I will send you a copy via email of the typed transcript of this interview within a week so you can read it and provide feedback as desired. For example, you could let me know if I misheard something you said on the recording and typed it incorrectly in the transcript. I will give you a week to review the transcript and let me know if you have any feedback for me.

While we're talking, is it okay if we go ahead and schedule our next interview?

If yes, schedule within the next 14 days.

If no, offer to schedule via email in the next couple days.

Appendix H
Reflection on Meaning Interview Guide

Pseudonym: _____ Skype Name: _____

Date/Time: _____ Institution: _____ Title: _____

Note: The numbered questions were read directly, and the lettered follow-up questions were only read if not covered in the participant's responses. The purpose of each question is indicated in bold and in brackets at the end of each numbered question.

Thank you so much for joining me again. Today we'll be talking specifically about your reflections on the experiences you've shared with me.

This interview will last about 90 minutes, and feel free to ask questions throughout as they come to you. This will be similar to our other interview, and feel free to be as honest and open as you can be. Remember, if you don't want to answer a question, just let me know.

As with last time, I will continue to use your pseudonym, and I will be recording our conversation. Is this still okay?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Have your thoughts about stress and how you respond to it changed since we last talked, or is there anything you thought of that you would like to add? **[RQ2, RQ4]**
2. Where does your ability to handle stress come from? **[RQ2, RQ4]**
3. How did you learn to notice stress and respond to it? (*may not need to ask based on answer to Q2*) **[RQ2, RQ3, RQ4]**
 - a. *Can this be taught?*
 - b. *Can anyone do this?*
4. How has your ability to handle stress affected you personally? **[RQ2, RQ3, RQ4]**
5. How has your ability to handle stress affected you professionally? **[RQ2, RQ3, RQ4]**
 - a. *How has work been different when you've been able to handle stress than when you have not?*
6. Describe how your ability to handle stress has applied differently in different settings or situations. **[RQ2, RQ3, RQ4]**

7. Describe how life stress has had an impact on work. **[RQ2, RQ3, RQ4]**
 - a. *How has it made it harder or easier to handle work stress?*
8. How do you define resilience?
9. Would you describe yourself as resilient?

{For the following questions, use “handle stress” if participants don’t think they are resilient and use “resilient” if they do}
10. Are there any drawbacks to handling stress/being resilient? Talk a little more about this. **[RQ4]**
11. Do you think people can generally perceive your ability to handle stress/resilience?
 - a. *Does it matter?*
 - b. *Has it changed the way you “show up?”*
12. How is your approach to handling stress/being resilient more about you or more about your job? **[RQ4]**
 - a. *Have you ever behaved in a way that was managing stress/resilient for you but perceived differently by others? Tell me more.*
13. How much of an issue do you think handling stress/resilience is in your workplace? **[RQ3, RQ4]**
 - a. *To what do you attribute it?*
 - b. *Describe how this has an impact on your ability to manage stress/be resilient?*
14. How should employers work to promote employee resilience? **[RQ4]**
15. Is there anything you would like to share more about or that I didn’t ask about?

(Pseudonym), thank you again for taking the time to speak with me. I really appreciate your willingness to share openly about your experiences.

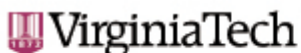
As with last time, I will send you a copy via email of the typed transcript of this interview within a week so you can read it and provide feedback as desired. I will give you a week to review the transcript and let me know if you have any feedback for me.

This is our final interview. I will share my study with you once it is complete. I truly believe your participation will help promote a better understanding of workplace resilience in our field that I hope will contribute to more positive experiences.

Do you have any final questions or feedback? Please feel free to contact me at any time as these come up for you.


Appendix I

Institutional Review Board Initial Approval



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0969
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 31, 2017 

TO: Claire Kathleen Robbins, Kelley J Woods-Johnson

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Reframing Responses to Workplace Stress: Exploring Entry-Level Residence Life Professionals' Experiences of Workplace Resilience

IRB NUMBER: 17-545

Effective October 30, 2017, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Amendment request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7
Protocol Approval Date: June 1, 2017
Protocol Expiration Date: May 31, 2018
Continuing Review Due Date*: May 17, 2018

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

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Appendix J
Institutional Review Board Continuing Review Approval



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 17, 2018
TO: Claire Kathleen Robbins, Kelley J Woods-Johnson
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Reframing Responses to Workplace Stress: Exploring Entry-Level Residence Life Professionals' Experiences of Workplace Resilience
IRB NUMBER: 17-545

Effective May 17, 2018, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the Continuing Review request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7
Protocol Approval Date: May 17, 2018
Protocol Expiration Date: May 16, 2019
Continuing Review Due Date*: May 2, 2019

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

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