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The Impact of Student Gang/Gun-related Homicide on Urban High School Teachers

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Leora Ya'Acova Wolf-Prusan

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Impact of Student Gang/Gun-related Homicide on Urban High School Teachers

by

Leora Ya'Acova Wolf-Prusan

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Christina Christie, Co-Chair

Professor Diane Durkin, Co-Chair

While many studies unveil family and community response to violence, no study yet has explored in-depth urban high school teachers' cognitive appraisal process of and meaning-making response to the violent death of current and former students. This study defines the factors that contribute to educators' coping and resilience after an experience of a student violent death. I investigate how teachers make sense of the student death, how they are or are not resilient after a violent loss, and what supports teachers report to need in order to self-sustain. Through surveys (n= 146) and in-depth interviews (n=16), this sequential transformative mixed methods study depicts the cognitive appraisal process and the meaning-making response of educators who work in urban high school contexts with specific attention to student violent death. My findings show that teachers' cognitive appraisal process is impacted by whether or not they understand a student death to be threatening or challenging. Teachers' cognitive appraisal is highly impacted by how they construct what is in and out of their personal or professional control. Second, teachers' meaning making is interrelated with how they perceive or understand

their students' environments, their own personal narrative or experience with violent death, and or latent beliefs about their students. Third, teachers exhibit resilience by reconstructing the traumatic event (student violent death) as one that offers opportunity to grow professionally and personally, to regain agency in their role at the school. Fourth, teachers report that they need support services similar to those provided for students, administrative support in time allowed to go to the students' funeral, or healing events such as meeting with the family and creating opportunities for connection. This study sheds light on strategies and support mechanisms that may better support teachers who experience this phenomenon.

The dissertation of Leora Ya'Acova Wolf-Prusan is approved.

Howard Adelman

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Christina Christie, Co-Chair

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University of California, Los Angeles

2014

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first and foremost to all the teachers who grapple daily with the profound challenges that emerge when supporting youth who live in communities marked by persistent violence and trauma. This work is dedicated to all educators who have had students killed and are marked by their deaths. Three specific educators inspired this study: Fatima Ghatala, Kateri Dodds Simpson, and Leslie Kawamoto Hsu. Each one of these women stood by me, by one another, and by their communities as young people were and continued to be killed. Through their courage, tenacity, and deep love for youth and justice, I was inspired to give academic voice to teachers who experience their students' deaths, and to nurture my dedication to advocate for educator wellness.

I am also dedicating this work of love to my family, the Wolf-Prusans. To my brother, Noah, and my sister, Avital, this is dedicated to your endless love and to your own pursuits for passionate learning. To my father, Peretz: you inspire me to study, to do works of *gimilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness), and to find Torah in unexpected, holy places and people. To my mother Becki: you inspire me to *sim lev*, to pay attention with mind and heart to the disenfranchised, and to embrace life with deep sensitivity and rigorous care for others.

Lastly, this is dedicated to Angelina Rose Malfitano, a woman who believed in the power of my impact. Even though you are not here on earth, your spirit continues to support and steward my work to this day. I am because you were.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend deep gratitude to my committee co-chairs, Dr. Christina Christie and Dr. Diane Durkin, for their steadfast support during the planning, research, and writing to complete this study. Without their guidance, this paper would truly lack the depth, clarity, and foundation upon which this work rests. I would also like to thank committee members Dr. Howard Adelman, Dr. Tyrone Howard, and Dr. Jorja Leap for their unwavering encouragement, thoughtfulness, and reinforcement throughout the past year. I am additionally indebted to Dr. Cindy Kratzer for her teaching and coaching throughout the three years in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA. I am also extremely grateful for Alejandra Priede's tutelage, partnership, and aid in the statistical analysis portions of this study.

I could not have completed this program or this study without the camaraderie and collegiality of my fellow ELP Cohort 19 classmates. There is a reason I chose a program that was based upon a cohort model, and all of you reinforced my belief in the power of collective learning. Specifically, without Jenny Vazquez-Akim, Joanna Gerber, and Devon Smith, this process would have been bereft of joy, validation, and motivation to finish.

I am grateful for the countless friends and colleagues who continued to support me through this process, either by celebrating the successes or by processing the tribulations of this journey. To those of you who connected me with schools and teachers and personally advocated for my study, I thank you.

A special thank you to the teachers who took the time to complete a survey and to those who sat with me out of their own time to share their stories. I will carry your narratives as well as the memories of your students with me always.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background

While many studies unveil family and community response to violence, no study has explored in-depth high school teachers' cognitive appraisal process of and resiliency response to the death of existing and former students, particularly when that student death is due to community/gang related gun violence. This study investigates that experience: how teachers make sense of the student death, how they are or are not resilient after a violent loss, and what supports teachers need in order to self-sustain. Through surveys and in-depth interviews, this study explores urban high school teachers' responses to students' deaths in a high-crime region, Los Angeles, California.

The gang related homicide rates of young people in urban communities such as Philadelphia, Oakland, Chicago and Los Angeles continue to receive attention of researchers and practitioners. Gang violence is strongly connected to gun violence and low-income, gang-involved young men of color over represent the victims and perpetrators of gun violence (Singh, 2010). The CDC reports that nationally, on average, 16 persons between the ages of 10 and 24 are murdered each day in the United States (CDC, 2010); the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the homicide rate for youth ages 15-24 was 13% in 2011. Again, Black and Latino youth from low-income communities are overrepresented in these homicide rates (Violence Prevention Center Report 2009; Singh, 2010). Exposure to and experience with violence in urban educational settings is a reality for many youth.

While youth homicide rates are rising, urban teacher retention is deteriorating. The United States faces a teacher retention and recruitment crisis with high teacher turnover exacting

social, emotional, and fiscal cost; teacher burnout is a main cause of teacher attrition (Eklund, 2009). Typically, high quality teaching expertise requires a minimum of three to five years, yet teachers leave the profession in that exact time frame because of emotional wear and tear (Ingersoll, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis & Parker, 2000; NCTAF, 2003). Economist Steven Levitt and the University of Chicago's Crime Lab recently found that every homicide reduces that urban city's population by 70 people. This reduction is not due to deaths but due to the push out affect homicide has on residents. In Chicago alone in 2008, for example, the researchers estimated that the city's homicides pushed out almost 5,000 people (Cullen & Levitt, 1999). Such studies are focusing on the greater population, yet there is little examination of micro reflective behaviors in schools: how many teachers are pushed out for every student's death? Current research investigates why teachers leave the profession yet little research targets how gang-related gun violence on, between, and by their students may affect teacher retention and attrition.

While millions of federal and private dollars aim to reduce and prevent gun violence, the educators of these young people being killed are ignored or overlooked. Youth death may in fact affect teacher retention: if teachers in urban education contexts may experience emotional exhaustion due to unmet grief or bereavement, then they might distance themselves from other students as a coping mechanism, or they might try to make meaning of the student's death in other ways. Research as it stands lacks focus on the issue. To understand such an impact, we need to know how these youths' teachers react to their deaths.

After a violent death, research finds that people try to establish reason and cause for what happened, searching for purpose in the death event (Armour, 2013). In the aftermath of a traumatic, violent loss, people look to reestablish control and reorder priorities. This behavior is

known as cognitive appraisal, how we make meaning. Meaning making is a form of adaptive coping, how a person adjusts or survives in light of a violent loss (ibid, 2013). However, people either survive after an event and cope or they thrive, arriving at new worldviews with an enhanced sense of self; in other words, they become resilient.

A death may or may not change a teacher's personal feelings about his/her profession. Teachers may experience emotional burnout and leave the profession. Alternatively, teachers could "cop[e] effectively with traumatic events [resulting] in closer relationships, new coping skills, and enhanced personal resources " (Armour, 2013, p.119). This study aims to capture this potential spectrum of impact.

As aforementioned, neither research nor popular literature unveils much about the cognitive appraisal process and response behavior of teachers whose students are violently killed. Researchers have investigated ancillary issues such as teacher compassion fatigue and secondary stress (Cerney 1995; Figley 1995, Valent 1995; Selby 2007; Klassen 2010); the teacher-student relationship in urban education (Duncan-Andrade, 2004); teacher experience of school violence (Astor, Pitner & Duncan 1996; Meyer, Astor, and Behre 2002; and Donnelly & Rowling 2007); and the impact of community violence on the school community (Horowitz, McKay, & Marshall 2005; Openshaw 2011; and Thomas et al 2012). While one study examined teacher preparation for potential student death (Pratt, Hare, & Wright 1987), it targeted early childhood education, a population very different than urban secondary education. Reid and Dixon's study (1999) focused on public school teachers' attitudes regarding addressing death and dying in the classroom, a helpful contribution but one that again does not examine the teachers' own experience of student death, not to mention gang-related deaths caused by gun violence.

Those who teach these young people (or have taught them previously) may be impacted by the student's death as frequently teachers are asked to mitigate the experience of violence and death for their school community. The intersection between these two phenomena (youth violence and death of young people and the teacher-student relationship) leads to the question of what happens to that teacher when the student dies. For example, The National Association of School Psychologists website addresses student, parent, and wider community grief experiences but does not explicitly include teachers. This exclusion is an example of how educators' experience is disenfranchised (Reid & Dixon, 1999; Doka, 1989, 2002; Rowling 2008; Jenkins & Contreras-Bloomdahl, 2011).

The Project

This sequential transformative mixed methods study explores the cognitive appraisal process and the resiliency of educators who work in urban school contexts with specific attention to student gang/gun-related deaths. To address this purpose, the following questions guided this study:

1. According to urban high school teachers, how does student violent death impact their professional sense of self and teaching practice?
2. What factors influence urban high school teachers' cognitive appraisal process and becoming resilient following the violent death of a student?
3. According to urban high school teachers, what kind of support do they need after a student's violent death?

Research Design and Methods

This study employed a sequential mixed-methods design because it seeks to capture the whole-school site response and process spectrums and to uncover the phenomenon of teachers'

cognitive appraisal process and resiliency response to student gun-related deaths. By using phenomenological research strategies in which "the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell 2009, p.13), teachers' cognitive appraisal processes and resiliency responses due to student gang-related death were optimally captured and illustrated. As such, the study combined surveys and interviews based in narrative analysis. Surveys were administered across a school site to capture the continuum of experiences that teachers report. Surveying whole school sites also ensured universal precaution by assuming that any teacher at the site may have a narrative to explore.

The surveys were structured as questionnaires that gathered demographic, background data from the teachers as well as capture baseline appraisal and response data. From the surveys, I administered interviews to extrapolate participant narratives. Narrative analysis, otherwise known as life or oral histories, uses first-person accounts of experiences as data; the text of the interview is analyzed contextually. The goal of narrative analysis is interpretive, "to understand the phenomenon and the meaning it has for participants" (Merriam 2009, p.34). Because of the sensitive and personal nature of a person's violent loss experience, this methodology aligned the context and subject matter of the project.

A strict quantitative approach serves to test and verify theories or explanations (Creswell 2009, p.17); this approach alone does not align with this study's problem as the explanation or theory tested did not exist. We cannot observe or measure relationships between variables if we do not know what the variables are in the first place. As such, adding qualitative methods so that the study becomes the mixed-methods provided the opportunity to examine emerging or unconsidered trends, such as the phenomenon at hand. Importantly, a sequential mixed methods approach is gaining traction particularly in research examining complex issues involving

violence. As Geddes (2003) argues, the methodological combinations allow the identification of both causal factors and explanations of big questions that studies of violence like the one at hand aim to surface.

I employed two methods to capture teachers' stories in order to answer the research questions: the survey data told me the extent of the faculty impacted by student gun-related death at a site and the nature of the impact. I attempted to survey whole faculties of schools in select regions when able in order to find out the extent of the phenomena at the school site and the comparative and contrasting natures of teachers' experiences in the same community. I used surveys to garner interviews; the surveys provided the respondent the opportunity to self-select to be interviewed.

The interviews generated individual accounts of the violent death experience. Because of the nature of the project, I focused more on depth rather than on breadth data, meaning that I constrained my sample size to be a small number of participants with longer interviews than larger samples sizes with shorter time to hear their narratives. Each of the sixteen interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minute interviews, modeled after life history methodology collection. Thereafter, I coded interview responses by relevance to my research questions and subsequently identified sub-codes from themes that formed conclusions.

Sample Populations and Site Selection

I targeted a large, urban school district in Southern California with a history of youth homicide to locate secondary teachers for my study. The particular region had a distinct history with gang/gun violence. Gang violence's impact on young people in Los Angeles has long sparked media attention ("South L.A. Gang Violence Claims Young Victims," del Barco, 2008; National Public Radio 3.10.2008; "Caught in the Crossfire," Los Angeles Times, 2010).

Moreover, the prevalence of gang related crime and homicide and its impact on youth prompted the Office of the Mayor in the City of Los Angeles to form the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Program, implemented in 2008 to define 12 geographic zones in which intervention and prevention programs would concentrate (GRYD Y1 Evaluation Report, 2010). Watts/Southeast and Boyle Heights/Hollenbeck are two of the twelve zones with the highest youth homicide rates. The Advancement Project reports that regarding gang crime and violent crime, "almost 43% of the victims of violent crimes, in which the age of the victim was available, were age 24 or younger. In 2007, six of the nine homicide victims were under 25 years of age. Of the nine homicides that occurred in the GRYD in 2007, eight were gang related" in this area (2010, p.24).

I concentrated on five geographic regions within the urban school district: East, West, South, Central, and the Valley, and recruited high school communities in each region situated in communities that are low-income and high-crime areas.

Significance of the Research and Public Engagement

Findings from this research contribute to the emerging tools and practices aimed to help educators to cope with and grow through their primary experiences with student death and community violence. I captured the stories of educators and their loss experience, catalyzing voices historically unconsidered into the academic and practioner discourse.

Importantly, understanding what supports teachers need after a student's violent loss provides school support administration and larger policy entities with vitally important information impacting the teacher him/herself, the classroom, and larger school culture and achievement dynamics. This study defines the protective and non-protective factors that contribute to educator coping and resilience in light of student violent death. To that end, the

district might provide services for their educators when students die due to gang violence as a result of this work.

Moreover, school districts do not collect data regarding student homicides unless the homicide occurs on campus. If a student is shot over the weekend or afterschool, for example, there is no record of that young person's death. His or her student number becomes recorded simply as "absent." As such, there are no existing records to analyze which school communities are serving populations with disproportionate violent death experiences. It is my hope with the collection of baseline data of teacher experiences regarding student gang-related death to advocate for teacher supports to become targeted and intentional.

In sum, this research unearthed previously silenced experiences of teachers considering a future or reflecting on a past experience with student gang/run-related death. Educators, by sharing their stories of violent student death, had a chance to feel some element of control, an element absent when death, especially homicide, causes so many feelings of lack of control. In this way, educators in this study may construct or regain agency and recognition of their resilience.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Young people are disproportionately exposed to and are victims of violence in urban communities. The direct and indirect effects of community violence and subsequent trauma impact public high schools that serve these youth. While urban secondary teachers are not explicitly defined as care providers, they are implicated in the call to provide such supports to their students. Urban secondary teachers frequently interact with youth exposed to violence, potentially experiencing secondary trauma through that interaction. Youth exposed to traumatic violence and student death present additional stressors to existing stressors that teachers face in the classroom. While much research targets urban teacher burnout, attrition, or persistence, no studies identify student death as a potential trauma for teachers influencing their decision to leave or stay in the profession.

Teachers themselves facilitate the welfare of their students who experience the death of a classmate, sibling, or friend. Balk, Zaengle, and Corr note that teachers are in "the unique position to model expressions of grief, encouraging and assuring students that adults and students alike are struggling to understand the unexpected death" (2011, p.154). Other research argues a lack of clarity exists as to whom specifically is responsible for caring for students experiencing loss and trauma creates, resulting in the constant care provider typically defaulting to the teacher (Mahon, Goldberg, and Washington, 1999). To support students and model positive coping, teachers must make sense of and then cope with the death event for themselves first. Research is needed that examines the mutually informing cognitive appraisal and response process and behavior of the teacher.

While trauma and bereavement literature has begun to focus on violent loss, few studies focus on the emotional response of teachers whose students died violently; the process and meaning-making of urban secondary teachers whose students were killed via gang-related violence is not well understood.

The present study contributes to the existing gap in the literature by focusing on the cognitive appraisal processes and resilience building of teachers in urban high schools following the death of their students to gun and/or gang-related violence. Chronic gun violence impacts young people in many urban cities across the country, whether that impact manifests as a bullet wound or a loss of life. What remains unknown is the impact on teachers, if any, of chronic violence to their students. Even less is known regarding how urban secondary high school teachers appraise and respond to a student's death when due to gang-related violence. If a teacher's affective response may impact their practice, we need to support teachers in ways that target their needs.

This chapter addresses existing research that informed my study. First, I set the context by discussing the phenomenon of gun violence and gang-related homicide in the United States. Second, I provide working definitions for key terminology such as "urban," "grief" and "trauma." Third, I explore existing research on violent loss generally, followed by an examination on what we know about exposure to violence's impact on youth specifically. Fourth, I examine how existing research on first and secondary responders in other professions can inform this particular context of teaching, particularly concentrating on secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. Fifth, I look at preexisting conditions that set the stage for a teacher's appraisal response and coping behavior after a student's death in two ways: urban teachers' preparation, retention, and attrition issues and teachers' conceptions of their students. I close by articulating three theories,

secondary trauma theory, cognitive appraisal theory and constructivist self-development theory that framed this study.

The context for urban youth violent death

Data on the quantity and frequency with which schools experience student violent death would have provided groundwork for this study. However, currently public schools are not required to keep record of a student who has died due to any cause, not to mention homicide. As I will discuss in the definitions section, crime inherent to a community being defined as urban typically occurs outside of school geographical boundaries; schools have to keep records of incidents on campus but not off campus. Therefore we do not know exactly which high schools experience disproportionate rates of youth homicide.

While data are missing on which schools lose students due to violent deaths and how many deaths a school site experiences over a period of time, research exists on how many youth report witnessing or being exposed to violent death in their community. One report finds that from the urban youth surveyed nationally, the percentage of youth witnessing a shooting in their life ranged from between four and seventy percent, with the average at twenty percent (Buka et al, 2001). Another study found that out of 2,248 urban 6^{th}, 8^{th}, and 10^{th} grade students, 41.3% had seen at least one shooting or stabbing in the past year (Schwab-Stone, 1995). In a survey sample size of 310 youth, Howard et al (2002) found that 23% of respondents had witnessed violence and 69% reported not only witnessing violence but being victims themselves.

Government agencies are paying more attention to homicide rates. On a national level, the Center for Disease Control reports that in 2010, 4,828 youth ages 10 to 24 were victims of homicide, a notable average of 13 young people a day; homicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 24.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention released a report on violence-related firearm deaths per resident of metropolitan areas in the United States during 2006-2007. In that year alone, 187 youth ages 10 to 19 were victims of firearm homicides in the city of Los Angeles, a rate of 17.3 percent. In comparison, New York City, a much larger region, had a rate of 4.9 percent. Chicago, a much smaller region, had a rate of 20 percent; 150 youth were killed during that year (Center for Disease Control Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2011).

These statistics of youth violent death fall on race, class and gender lines: young men of color—predominately black and Latino—from low income communities are overrepresented in homicide figures (Kiernet 2009; Costello et al. 2002; Westby 2007; Rheingold et al 2010; Anderson & Smith 2005). One report shows that youth homicide rates were 13.9 times higher for non-Hispanic blacks, 5.0 times higher for Hispanics, 2.7 times higher for American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 1.28 times higher for Asian/Pacific Islanders than for non -Hispanic whites (Singh 2010). A family's income is tied to family members' experience with loss. A family's low socio-economic status, in concert with living in high crime neighborhoods and exposure to violence, has been found to be "related to the likelihood of reporting past-year death of a family member, with African American adolescents being more likely than any other race-ethnicity group to report a loss." The same study continues with the finding that, "adolescents of minority backgrounds and low socio-economic status are at greater risk of experiencing a traumatic event and or death" (Rheingold et al 2010, p.14). The Uniform Crime Reports agree, stating that, "African American youth are disproportionately exposed to higher rates of violence compared to any other adolescent population. These youth are ten times more likely to be victims of homicide compared to their white peers, with homicide being the leading cause of death among African American youths aged 15–24" (Anderson & Smith, 2005 in Uniform Crime

Reports, 2002 p.51). Violence exposure in urban educational settings is a reality for many youth, a stinging factor in the makeup of many young people's development this development can and often permeates into the school setting.

Thus, while we do not know which schools have a disproportionate rate of student death, data both on national and local levels demonstrate that youth homicide is a pervasive and frequent phenomenon in urban areas. Local public schools serve some of these youth, and there is potential for teachers to know of a student indirectly, teach a student directly, or have had a student in the past that is killed due to gang-related violence.

Terminology underpinning this study

What is Gang-Related Gun Violence?

As aforementioned, community violence, gang violence, and gun violence are interconnected and often mutually inform one another. The National Institute of Justice reports that in 2008, 92% of all gang-related homicides involved guns (Cooper & Smith, 2011). For the purposes of this paper, I employ the term "gang-related gun violence" or just "gun violence" specifically regarding youth homicides in the community context. I am also referring to compounded, complex and ongoing gun violence, which does not include one-time, episodic events (such as Columbine, Newtown, etc).

What is Trauma & Violent Loss?

For the purpose of this study, I use "trauma" to refer to the impact of episodic or environmental violence on community members. Trauma is defined as "experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope" (The California Endowment's Report, 2009). Trauma is the event or series of events. Most significant, Horowitz, Weiner, and Jekel (1995) introduced the concept "compounded

community trauma" to suggest that youth who, for example, live in urban areas and war zones, and who experience frequent and repetitive traumatic events are uniquely primed to experience post traumatic stress disorder (Krucek & Salsman, 2006). Thus the concept of trauma is not only episodic but also environmental, and directly connected to an individual's coping capacity setting the context for examination.

"Traumatic loss" is often used within trauma and bereavement literature to denote "sudden and violent mode of death that is characterized by one of three causes: suicide, homicide, or fatal accident" (Currier, Holland, and Neimeyer, 2007, p.405). Therefore while "violent loss" is used to describe the objective mode of death, "traumatic loss" is used to illustrate the subjective nature of the griever's experience. A related term, "traumatic grief" means that due to the nature of the death event which is violent and sudden, the grief experience is much more context specific (Jacobs, 1999; Range, 2002 in Kastenbaum, 2009). For example, a teacher experiencing traumatic loss could be responding to continual, ongoing stress related to how he or she is feeling or thinking about the student who died. A teacher would be experiencing traumatic grief when reacting or responding to how the student died, which for my study is violent homicide. While the understanding of traumatic grief is still new, the counseling field recognizes is that any type of help for those experiencing traumatic grief has to address the death event as well as the person's response to the trauma from the event. Research notes that a person's interpretation of the death event informs this response (Kastenbaum, 2009). This reference is critical for this study because I examined teachers' appraisal and response—the degree to which they are coping; an individual's appraisal is directly connected to his or her own process of the death event.

What is urban education?

I use the term "urban education" to refer to the school systems and communities experiencing three factors: high crime, low teacher quality, and low job stability. Practitioners utilize the term "urban education" as a euphemism to speak about youth of color, youth who are first-generation college going, and youth who come from low-income families. Yet Jacob (2007) finds rural and urban education settings have the same rates of poverty, unemployment, student mobility, immigrants and English Language Learners that urban education settings do. There are only two factors that distinguish urban from suburban or rural schools: in urban school environments, crime is higher and schools experience higher rates of staffing difficulties (Jacob, 2007). However, the study did not correlate high crime with high teacher attrition rates. My study explored possible links regarding a specific crime (youth homicide) and its prospective influence on teachers leaving the school.

What does it mean to be gang affiliated/related/involved?

Recently, scholarship and national media alike are exploring the question of what it means to be in a gang. The definition of "gang membership" is nebulous. Because this study examined teachers' perceptions of their students, which may impact a teacher's appraisal of the death event, I need to discuss what it means for a young person to be gang affiliated, related, or involved. Research suggests disconnect between academia's definition of gang involvement and how young people understand the same concept. As Leap (2012) describes, researchers, criminal justice experts, and policy-makers "agree that a gang consists of any group that gathers on an ongoing basis to 'engage in antisocial or criminal activities.' When determining the minimum size for gang activity, the magic number is usually set at three…[gangster traits are listed as] someone who is violent, someone who is antisocial, someone who intimidates and preys upon

the weaker members of society" (2012, pp.122-123). These are similar risk factors that the Los Angeles Gang Reduction Youth Development (GRYD) program uses to identify clients. For the purpose of this literature review, I use this academic definition.

However, Leap (2012) notes that this definition does not connect with the reality of young people's perceptions. For example, recently This American Life produced a report on Harper High School in Chicago. Twenty-six students were shot in the 2011-2012 school year; eight of them died. In interviewing students at Harper, This American Life reporters exposed student-reported realities of gang involvement (Glass et al, 2013, February 15th and 22nd). Similar to the individuals in Leap's work, students said that they are gang affiliated by merely being born on a certain block. As opposed to the academic definition of gang membership, these respondents associate themselves or are identified as gang members because of geography, being born into generational gang affiliation or family association (Leap, 2012). In reality, the researcher notes, "there is no typical gang member, no one-size-fits-all" (p.123).

Thus far, I have reviewed the context and terminology that buttress this study. I now review several domains of literature that inform urban teachers' appraisal process and coping response to a student's homicide.

The Impact and Outcomes of Violent Death

The main sources of literature on the impact and outcomes of violent loss come from grief and bereavement studies. Currier, Holland, and Neimeyer's study explored sense making, grief, and the experience of violent loss (2007). While it is generally acknowledged that violent loss is traumatic and colors the appraisal process and coping response, the researchers note that we know less about why violent losses are traumatic, explaining that in contrast to accidental

deaths, violent deaths are "more likely to involve the violation of taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the sanctity of human life, principally that human beings have an inherent right to live and to be protected from injustice (in instances of homicide)" (p.409).

The literature notes that violent loss is different from other types of emotional and behavioral responses. Historically, grief has been framed as a linear process outlined in stages (Stroebe et al. 2005). In a related study, researchers examined the applicability of the concept that grief develops in stages on those experiencing bereavement due to both natural and violent causes did not specifically identify the type of grief examined in their study as traumatized (Holland and Neimeyer, 2010). The purpose of their study was to examine the relationship between time passed since the loss and grief indicators. Out of a 717 sample of college students, 173 identified the type of loss experienced as death by violence. The study found that in contrast to participants experiencing a death due to natural causes, those who experienced loss due to violent causes reported a statistically significant relationship between the time of loss and disbelief. That is, those experiencing violent loss had a more pronounced report of anger, disbelief and depression for a longer period of time than those experiencing natural loss. Additionally, violent loss respondents reported a higher correlation with time since loss and sense making, suggesting the importance of time in helping these individuals accept the painful reality of violent loss (Holland and Neimeyer, 2010). While the study did not explore the additional variable of the type of relationship (i.e., teacher-student) between mourner and the death due to violence, the findings highlight the vitality to appraisal responses, which my study upholds.

The Effects on Youth Exposed to Violent Deaths.

While there is little research around how the traumatic event of a student's violent death impacts teachers, there is substantial work regarding how violent trauma exposure impacts youth both physiologically and psychologically that can inform this study. Notably, sound findings on the effects of youth's exposure to violence are modest because isolating the consequences of youth's exposure to community violence is a challenge (Lynch, 2003). The vast amount of preexisting and confounding variables make it difficult to correlate exposure to violence and impact, as violence in itself is an outcome of a variety of preexisting stressors. Of the effects research has established, I concentrated on the cognitive and socio-emotional effects pertinent to this study.

Literature notes three types of exposure to violence: primary (victimization), secondary (violence seen or heard), and tertiary (learning of the violent death). Youth exposed to chronic violence primarily and secondarily are challenged with mental health effects such as depression and aggression; acute exposure has an even higher propensity to lead towards post-traumatic stress disorder symptomology (Buka et al, 2001). For example, in a cross-sectional survey of 349 youth between the ages of nine to fifteen, another study found that youth who witnessed violence significantly correlated with intrusive thoughts or feelings and difficulties with concentration and self-regulation (Howard et al, 2002).

The same study found that psychologically, youth reported signs of either internalizing responses to violence (depression) or externalizing responses (antisocial behavior and high rates of substance abuse). Interestingly, the study reported mixed findings on educational outcomes, noting that due to the confluence of risk factors aforementioned, it was unreliable to correlate negative or positive educational outcomes specifically on violence exposure. This identifies the

challenge in arguing direct correlation between a teacher's trauma response and appraisal and their students' educational achievement or lack thereof.

In a study on the impact of community violence on youth's development, Gorman-Smith (1998) reported a direct relation between violence exposure and aggression; change in aggression was not significantly correlated to preexisting stress but only to exposure to violence. Corroborating this finding, Schwab-Stone (1995) found that out of the 2,248 urban sixth, eighth, and tenth graders surveyed for their study, "above and beyond the influence of the demographic variables, both violence exposure and feeling unsafe significantly predicted the report of depressed or anxious mood" (p.1349). Gorman-Smith hypothesizes that "exposure to high levels of chronic community violence may change the normative beliefs about use of aggression or violence" (1998, p.113). This suggestion is similar to another finding that youth surveyed on their exposure to community reported high rates of dissociation serving as a coping mechanism in the short term but could have long-term impacts such as desensitization and absence of empathy (Buka et al, 2001).

Youth exposed to violence experience internal or external shifts in behavior and self-concept. These findings frame the conditions under which students enter their school walls and classrooms, the conditions in which teachers consciously or unconsciously are teaching.

Teachers As Secondary Responders: Secondary Trauma

While there is little research on the impact of violence and traumatized loss on teachers, the scholarship on the impact on other help-providing professions provides insight. Specifically, three areas of research examine the phenomenon of death and dying in other care-providing professions. First, I provide research that supports the argument for urban teachers to be reframed as first and secondary responders. Second, I present existing research in other

professions like social work, nursing, and firefighting. Third, I examine research on secondary trauma and compassion fatigue that can be critical stressors coloring the appraisal and coping responses.

In what contexts are teacher first or second responders? Katrina and other Natural Disasters.

Research has only recently considered compounded and chronic traumas similar to traumas that result from natural disasters. Pynoos (1994) postulates natural disasters in the same frame as chronic stressors, arguing that "students can be exposed to a wide variety of traumatic events, including natural and technological disasters (e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes, ferry boat accidents), exposure to war, sexual and physical abuse or interpersonal violence, community violence, life-threatening illnesses, and medical procedures" (in Krucek & Salsman, 2006)[1]. Some argue that such community violence needs to be reframed as a natural disaster in order to provoke national consciousness to respond to violence and deaths in poor black and brown communities with the same sense of urgency that as with natural disasters (de Joop, 2007).

In thinking of teachers as first or second responders in urban classroom contexts, it is helpful to examine times in which teachers have acted as first responders in contexts of natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina or the California wildfires. In the two year study "I Had to Teach Hard: Traumatic Conditions and Teachers in Post-Katrina Classrooms," Alvarez examined the role of instructional practices of teachers following the disaster. The researcher notes in her findings that, "teachers not only had to cope with their personal stresses but also had to manage unstable environmental conditions, changes in adolescent behavior, and school

[1] Howard et al (2002) agree, stating: "Non–war time exposure to violence by urban children has occurred with such

disciplinary changes that occurred during the recovery process" (2010, p.28). The study chronicles how local universities stepped in to train teachers on culturally responsive teaching in light of disaster exposure. Similarly, teachers found themselves as community organizers, paramedics, and other roles in communities affected by the California wildfires. In this case, teachers demonstrated a "strong sense of community and generosity [by volunteering] at evacuation centers…providing a sense of normalcy and care" (Pang, Madueño, Atlas, Stratton, Oliger, and Page, 2008, p.19). In both instances, teachers were pivotal mitigating factors in their students' meaning making processes.

What we know about the impact on death and dying in other care-providing professions such as social work, nursing, firefighting, and policing.

Other professionals inherently confront violent loss and death as a part of their occupation. Studies on the impact of death and dying in other professions can be useful to substitute for the gap in literature on the impact of death and dying on teachers. One study, for example, examined the nature and impact of grief that oncologists experience after a patient loss, focusing both on personal and professional aspects of their lives (Granek et al, 2012). Similar to my study, the researchers note that the scholarship lacks qualitative studies examining this issue, despite "the evidence that grief over patient loss is an intrinsic part of clinical oncology" (2012, p.964). Through semi-structured interviews, the authors found that oncologists experience burnout and compartmentalization. Importantly, two findings emerged that have potential impact on my study. First, oncologists reported to either be motivated to increase care or to withdraw and dissociate from patients. That is, the oncologists acknowledged grief due to patient loss. This impacted current and future care, either positively or negatively. Similar to oncologists, teachers could report an increased motivation to teach in urban schools or could report a

detachment and withdrawing from the commitment to urban schooling; either reaction would influence teaching and learning. Second, respondents reported a struggle with emotional boundaries between past and current patients. Specifically, they were not able to see current patients and divorce their care from patients who had died. Potentially, teachers may report a similar challenge in struggling to discern between lost and current students, impacting instruction.

Other studies have focused on profession-specific stressors related to interaction with traumatic events and violent death. One study examined the nature and impact of exposure to stressful incidents on urban firefighters and paramedics (Beaton et al, 1998). Through surveying 173 professional firefighters and paramedics in two Northwest urban cities, the researchers found that respondents did not differentiate between event specific incidents and ongoing exposure on their levels of duty-related stress. While their study was highly limited, they found that professional firefighters and paramedics' report of high stress did not depend on the number of stressful incidents. Meaning, it is possible that the amount or frequency of student deaths teachers experience does not matter; one is enough.

Even closer to the role of teacher is school counselor. Most small public high schools do not have school counselors and instead those roles get shifted to administration and the teachers. As such, Donnelly and Rowling's (2007) study explored the impact of critical incidents on the counselors by three dimensions. They looked at impact on the workplace (school or system), the work (reporting and managing critical incidents) and the worker (the personal and professional self of the counselor). Respondents described the stress of having to manage their own personal response to the incident conflicted with being open and able to provide for students. In connection to this study, urban teachers may have to restrain their own response and coping to a student's death to be able to care for the other students they teach.

What do teachers' experience in urban settings? Preexisting stressors of teachers & teaching in urban high schools.

Having reviewed the literature on teachers as first and secondary responders and the impact of violent exposure on youth, this section describes existing research on urban high school teachers' preparation and attrition behaviors and their perceptions of students. As potential first/second responders, it is important to examine how teachers in urban settings are trained and engaged in the process and context of their school communities. This study investigates how teachers' own personal and professional factors influence their cognitive appraisal of a student's violent death and his or her resiliency in response. Therefore, this section first examines preexisting stressors and the pretext of teaching in urban schools, regardless if a teacher looses a student due to a gang-related violent death. Second, I review how teachers in urban high schools understand their students and their students' environments. Gang-related violent death is both laden with social stigma and, related, youth exposed to violence experience many effects that are subsurface or exposed and manifesting in external behaviors that impact a teacher's understanding of them.

Preparation-Are teachers prepared to interface with trauma?

Many scholars note the challenge of preparing teachers to work in urban schools, regardless of school level (Ingersoll, 2004; Jacob, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007 Eckert 2012). While we know that the student-teacher relationship is a fundamental attribute of historically disenfranchised students' educational outcomes, research is underdeveloped as to whether or not teachers are prepared to have nontraditional, counseling-like relationships with their students. One study notes that an outcome of students who experience chronic trauma may be that they have a hard time building healthy relationships,

challenging issue because unusually those students depend on stable relationships with their teacher(s) as a means to mitigate other risk factors (Dods, 2013). In semi-structured interviews with four youth who were asked to reflect on their educational experiences while they were dealing with trauma, the study reports that a unifying theme was the "the unmet need to establish caring connections with teachers," and that albeit "participants were unsure how to connect, they saw these relationships as essential to their well-being, engagement, and success at school" (Dods 2013, pp.81-82). Moreover, the participants voice the need for teachers to initiate care and connection with students experiencing trauma. The more personal relationship might have a role in a teacher's meaning making and coping response to his or her student's death in two ways. First, previous to the student death, the teacher may or may not have attempted to reach out to the student, which may impact a teacher's affective response to the death. Second, there are other students in that teacher's classroom for which a teacher needs to adapt and cope positively in order to be able to provide care and connection to current and future students beyond the ones who were killed.

Moreover, urban teachers are not prepared to deal with their students' trauma. One study examined teachers' experiences supporting their students after trauma exposure and found that teachers report a low feeling of efficacy in dealing with trauma (Alisic, 2012). The exception to this is when teachers are identified as crisis assuagers in episodes of natural disasters. In a mixed-methods study on urban teacher preparation, Eckert (2012) found that teachers in high poverty/high minority urban schools "encounter a number of stressors specific to the urban environment that they feel unprepared to cope with. These stressors and a lack of preparation geared toward urban teaching can lead to lower levels of teacher efficacy" (p.11). However, the

author does not elaborate on what those stressors are; they may or may not include student gang-related death.

Regardless of adequate training, urban teachers work with youth exposed to violence, frequently provide counseling and support for their students. In her dissertation work, Maring (2006) interviewed twenty teachers from three middle schools with predominantly African American students located in neighborhoods with high violence levels through examining the impact of community violence on teachers. The research found that respondents depicted their strategies, and support needs [as]: 1) guidance 2) structure and 3) self preservation. Specifically, teachers in violent communities confronted challenges providing youth with guidance and structure, while preserving their own mental health. If teachers are not trained before they enter the classroom to make sense of the secondary trauma, the schools with the highest needs for quality teachers may lose those teachers due to compassion fatigue.

Retention & Attrition Issues- how does environmental trauma, as manifested via student violent death, impact teachers' attrition behaviors?

It is possible that teacher turnover in urban schools is an outcome of teaching in a school situated in a community that experiences high rates of violence. As noted in the definition of "urban schools," disproportionately high teacher turnover rates distinguish a school from suburban (Jacobs, 2007; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Achinstein et al, 2010). At the same time, the Gang Reduction Youth Development program of Los Angeles cites teacher turnover as a main risk factor at the school level for a young person to become likely to get more involved in gang culture.

The teacher-student relationship can both cause and prevent teacher attrition. Caring for students requires emotional understanding and emotional management, or what Chang and Davis

call “emotional labor” (2009, p. 107), labor that may lead to compassion fatigue and counter transference or could serve as inspirational factor to remain in the profession (Freudenberger, 1975). One study found that secondary school teachers reported an emotional fulfillment when their students had breakthroughs when they saw their work impacting students’ lives (Hargraves, 2000). What the literature does not report is the potential impact on teachers who invest emotionally into their students and the event of a violent loss of a student.

Lastly, research is beginning to examine how a teacher’s own personal characteristics and identity interplay with persistence in or leaving teaching in an urban school. One study suggests that that a factor left out of existing research on teacher retention is the “humanistic commitments of teachers of color” (Achinstein et al, 2010, p.85). That is, teachers of color may be staying in urban schools and not leaving at the same rate as their White counterparts. This may be because they identify with their students and want to make a difference in the lives of students of color (Achinstein et al, 2009). A teacher’s race, class, gender or another personal characteristic may play into their interpretation of a student’s death and the subsequent impact it has on him or her.

Regardless of the teacher’s racial identity, Hunter Quartz and the Teacher Education Program (2003) Research Group’s study examined the retention rate over five years of teachers in their program regarding their preparation to teach in urban classrooms. Importantly, the teachers in this study all were prepared and self-identified as “social justice urban educators.” The researchers found teachers from high-poverty urban schools to be more likely than the average teacher to “cite students’ lack of motivation and discipline problems as reasons for their dissatisfaction” and suggest that “given this link between deficit conceptions and urban teacher attrition, [the researchers] suggest conversely that non-deficit conceptions may be a crucial factor

in retaining good urban teachers" (Hunter Quartz and TEP Research Group, 2003, p.106). This suggestion addresses there exists a connection between teacher preparation for working with students in violent communities and the way he or she understands the community and the student.

Teachers' perceptions of their "urban" students and their communities.

How a teacher understands his or her students might impact their response to a student's violent death and how he or she copes with the death event. The lack of knowledge and awareness that many teachers have about diverse students critically impacts historically disenfranchised students to access an equitable educational experience. Stuart (2007) notes that the requirement for teachers to be culturally competent today is more complex in that in addition to "the traditional considerations related to culture (ethnicity, race, customs, beliefs, values, religion, and language differences), teachers must now consider the 'cultural' aspects and the impact of trauma and the effects it has on student learning and achievement" (p.16). The lack of explicit understanding and competency training directly addresses the fact that the "diverse student" is experiencing contexts of deep and real traumas that many educators themselves have never experienced, deepening the schism even further. How teachers understand a violent death of a student is socio-culturally charged, both in how a teacher understands death from his or her own cultural framework and in how the teacher understands the community in which he or she works (de Joop, 2007).

Moreover, teachers' perceptions of their students and the community environment relate to their reported retention factors. Student body characteristics surface in the literature as reasons that urban schools become "hard to staff" schools. Urban high school teachers often report a frustration with student discipline, lack of motivation, and interest (Ingersoll, 2001b; Hunter

Quartz, 2003; Achinstein et al, 2010). While there is a great deal of research in the social work, public health, and psychology disciplines that connects the impact of youth experiencing chronic trauma and violence and their attendance rates, ability to self-monitor and engage (Berman et al, 1996), there is a lack of work that investigates teachers' understandings of trauma on student learning and behavior. This directly connects to how teachers understand what it means to be gang involved and their potential grief experience: students who are gang affiliated tend to have lower attendance rates, lower achievement scores, and behavioral challenges. Students tend to become gang affiliated because of environmental systems and structures, in addition to the impact of chronic trauma.

Specifically, perceptions of what a gang-related death is and why it happens inform the way we as a society think and respond to a death. Recent examples like Hadiyah Pendelton and Kiante Cambell's deaths demonstrate that some youth's deaths do not fit into what the literature would identify as predictable based on existing risk factors for gang involvement. There are types of students who may not fit into what neither society nor teachers conceptualize as potentially in danger of being killed may complicate teachers' appraisal and coping process and responses.

Therefore, while teachers may have ideas of which of their students are gang-affiliated based on what they have been told by programs like GRYD, academic research, or their own beliefs, they may be wrong. This discordance between the theoretical definition of gang affiliation and the reality that youth experience might impact the teacher's appraisal response and coping process.

What supports do teachers need to cope and be resilient in the face of a student's violent death?

This study investigates potential supports teachers may need to cope after a violent death of a student. In a study of youth at a Miami high school experiencing high rates of homicide, the authors found that students reported the perception of support to be more important than the actual received support (Berman et al., 1996). Similarly, as schools face situations of extreme stress, leadership has been found to be an obvious but effective mitigation factor (Donnelly & Rowlings, 2009). School counselors identified that an effective principal during normal times translates to an effective principal and well organized response as a school when under duress or crises. The more trust and calm the counselors experienced, they more they felt efficacious and able to provide for students. Again, these studies above informed my study but still contribute to the gap in the research I attempted to fill.

Additionally, grief researchers call the denial of the ability to respond to loss as "disenfranchised grief" (Rowling, 2001; Doka, 2002; Kastenbaum, 2009). Disenfranchised grief might occur for three reasons: 1) the teacher does not feel that the teacher-student relationship is a relationship that garners societal approval or understanding of the loss, 2) the social stigmatization of a gang-affiliated student might invalidate the approval to grieve, and 3) the mere lack of research, attention, organizations, and supports offered to teachers experiencing grief in itself might be a form of disenfranchisement. Concerning the second hypothesized reason, related research in suicide applies as it is a related form of traumatized death; survivors of a loved one's suicide report high levels of stigmatization, embarrassment, guilt and depression that restrain the individual to access resources to heal (Dunn & Morrish-Vidners, 1987; Stillion, McDowell, & May, 1989; Redmond, 1989 in Doka, 2002). If the teacher feels that the student's

behavior may have contributed to his or her own death, or that society might blame the victim, there is high potential for the teacher to experience disenfranchised grief.

The most recent report of the 2012 U.S. Attorney General's task force on children exposed to violence illustrates the disenfranchisement of teacher appraisal and coping in the details the impact of traumatic exposure of violent events on children and posits critical strategies for prevention and intervention. The report "Communities Rising Up Against Violence" argues for the training of any childcare provider to identify traumatized children. Additionally, the report asks for schools to provide resources for children who are experiencing trauma but omits what teachers themselves might need as to support, care, and resources.

Lastly, schools are not required to keep data on student deaths. This implicates support and coping provisions in two ways: 1) the lack of data complicates the ability to support high need schools, and 2) existing data on schools becomes unreliable as a high school's student body impacts the attendance rate, graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and more. The lack policy about how to keep record of student death signifies that the death of the student is not recognized and possibly not valued by the system. It then becomes up to the individual school leadership itself to create protocol. This is an example of a systemic contribution to chronic trauma in urban schools as it is a case in which the care giving system not only falls short of not only proving support resources to the individuals in need but the school system itself aggravates the coping response of the community (Cook, Blaustein & Spinazzola, 2003). A desirable outcome of this study is to push district policy to create holistic mechanisms to keep record of student deaths to provide supports for both internal and external community members.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories frame this study: 1) secondary trauma theory—what the teacher experiences after a violent death, 2) Cognitive appraisal theory—how a teacher makes meaning of a student's violent death, and 3) Constructivist Self-Determination Theory—how a teacher copes and bounces back after a student's violent death.

How Do Teachers Experience Violent Death, Second Hand? Secondary Trauma

Research establishes that secondary trauma and compassion fatigue—interchangeable concepts—are realities of many individuals working in the care-providing professions (Fischer, 2002). Figley's (1995) work defines and conceptualizes secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and counter transference. Secondary trauma is experiencing a traumatic event through the relationship with the individual who experienced it in first person (teacher experiences secondary trauma through interactions with students who experience it first hand). Compassion fatigue is the experience of professionals when they burnout from over empathizing with their client, or in this case, the student. Counter transference occurs when the care provider (the teacher) sees him or herself in the client (student), unconsciously or consciously over-identifying. Figley (1995) defines all three as processes and not fixed conditions, but also as inherent red flags that all care-providers must be aware of and supported through if experienced. For example, one study argues that firefighters are at chronic risk for compassion fatigue from ongoing experiences with secondary trauma from dealing with victims of fire and witnessing injury and death (Fischer, 2002).

Many researchers utilize and develop secondary trauma theory in application. Like firefighters, social workers are a well-studied profession that experiences high levels of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue, and are arguably more congruent with the teaching

profession than any other. Dane (2000) conducted focus groups of child welfare workers to capture reported personal, professional and spiritual stressors and resources. The study found five themes. First, social workers all reported experiencing compassion fatigue, having initially felt excited and hopeful by their profession but later experiencing ongoing sadness and detachment. Second, focus groups reported experiencing self-blame after youth clients died. Third, the profession is made of both successful and difficult cases, but interestingly, social workers reported the agency itself as a stressor. Fourth, there was shared perception of organizational stress and burnout. Fifth, social workers reported their own spiritual and religious beliefs pivotal in adapting to the chronic stress and fatigue at work. While this study does not explicitly examine social workers in urban contexts nor traumas that are linked to a violent loss, the findings nevertheless support the use of the secondary trauma theory to illustrate the utility of examining the various stressors and resources that care-providing professionals may or may not have at their disposal to assist in adaptation.

How does one making meaning out of a violent event? Transactional theory.

Transactional theory provides the framework for examining two theoretical concepts, appraisal and coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1987). Researchers note that the theory is asset and not deficit based, shifting the conversation from negative stressors to positive responses. Two aspects of the theory are particularly useful for this study: the relationship between the individual and environment process is contextual and long term, and emotion is a system comprised of factors like resources, belief systems, mediating processes, and short and long term outcomes of a traumatic event.

Importantly, cognitive appraisal and coping are the two main variables defined by transactional theory. First, cognitive appraisal refers to how the teacher would think about the

world and then make meaning of the evaluation as it relates to him or her individually. For example, a teacher cognitively processes a student's death and then question and resolve what the death means for him or her. There are two kinds of cognitive appraisal. It is not simply appraising the immediate impact of the event, but it also considers how the teacher would contemplate changing the conditions that created the event. Second, the researchers posit that coping has two main functions: first, problem focused coping which serves to regulate emotional distress, and second, emotion-focused or cognitive coping which serves to adjust emotional stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1987, p.147). Understanding how teachers adjust to emotional stress may benefit their response and coping to the violent loss of a student and also could impact other preexisting stressors.

How can trauma be transformative? Constructivist Self-Development Theory (CSDT).

Constructivist Self-Development Theory (Saakvitne, Tennen, & Affleck, 1998) posits that traumatic events require humans to adapt in negative and positive ways, though both responses serve to protect the individual. CSDT builds upon Self-Determination Theory that argues that humans have three basic needs: to feel competent, autonomous, and have significant relationships. Accordingly, CSDT frames trauma as transformative (Dods, 2013). For example, as aforementioned, youth exposed to frequent violence have a propensity for numbness or disconnect, serving as a protecting barrier in between their vulnerabilities and the external, out of control world. Conversely, adaptation to trauma can be a source of resilience and transformation for teachers. Importantly, the theorists note that "CSDT understands the individual's adaptation to trauma as an interaction between his or her personality and personal history and the traumatic event and its context, within the social and cultural contexts for the event and its aftermath"

(Saakvitne, Tennen, and Affleck, 1998, p.283). The theory serves as a useful paradigm through which both the individual, the teacher, and larger systems that encapsulate the circumstance of a youth's violent death.

Examples of Secondary Trauma, Cognitive Appraisal, and Constructivist Self-Determination Theory utilized in relevant research.

Three researchers model the employment of these theories in recent studies that inform this research. Hill's (2011) dissertation further informs this study by examining teachers' perspectives on teacher stress. Hill examines the challenges recounted by urban elementary school teachers who work with traumatized children. Specifically, the researcher examines the dynamic of secondary traumatic stress, how students' trauma transfers to teachers. Hill notes that teachers are often the first adults to help students make meaning out of trauma specifically due to community violence. He explores how secondary trauma stress impacts teachers on a professional level via instruction and on a personal level in terms of coping mechanisms. He used in-depth interviews with nine female elementary school teachers who work at a designated trauma sensitive school in Massachusetts. While Hill's findings confirm that teachers report high levels of secondary stress that impacts them personally and professionally, his sample size was not only small but also selected from a school environment that intentionally served traumatized youth. The researcher suggests that future studies examine non-designated trauma schools, secondary schools, and that they review the role of race and culture of both students and teachers in the trauma and care provision for both. My study addresses the first recommendation.
Bailey et al (2013) examined Black mothers' process in finding meaning after suffering from gun violence loss of their child and their growth and recovery process. Through a mixed methods approach that first surveyed mothers regarding their stress-resilience process and then in-depth

interviews to capture deeper understandings of the mothers' personal processes, the authors found that Black mothers whose children were murdered were more likely to be resilient and bounce back when they cognitively appraised their loss as meaningful. While this research provides infrastructure for my own study, it does not examine another key figure in a young person's life: the teacher. Resilience both ensures their own persistence in the teaching profession and enables them to provide for their students. As such, this study investigates teachers' cognitive appraisal processes and resilience following a traumatic violent death. Dods' (2013) qualitative study of student perspectives on needed support further underpins my study. Dods studied youth's reflective accounts of what supports they needed when in school and experiencing trauma. The study relies on Constructive Self-Determination Theory, which I draw on for my own study and described above. In four in-depth interviews, Dods explored how critical the teacher-student relationship was in mitigating students' experience of their trauma in the school setting. However, the researcher notes the study is limited in that it does not specify what kind of trauma students' were experiencing and students interviewed were middle-class youth in suburban, not urban, contexts.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was twofold: 1) to frame the issue of urban teachers' cognitive appraisal processes and resiliency subsequent to student death due to gang-related gun violence and 2) to address existing research that informs the study and yet at the same time demonstrates the gap in the literature. The question is complex and it is fitting that the areas of informing research are complex. First, I examined existing studies to as to provide background to what we currently know about appraisal, coping, secondary trauma, and violent loss in the teaching profession. Notably, no research specifically looks at teacher meaning making and

resilience after a violent loss of a student. Second, albeit that urban teachers are not usually conceptualized or treated as first or secondary responders, I argue that because of the environments in which they teach, environments that I describe earlier in the chapter, they might as well be. As such, I look at what existing research tells us about first and secondary responders' grief experience and the nature and impact of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue on them as people and professionals. Third, my research questions investigate how a student's violent death might impact a teacher's professional endurance. As such, I look at what research tells us about how teachers may or may not be prepared to teach in these context specific conditions and why and which teachers choose to stay in classrooms. Moreover, because part of the appraisal and coping process is colored by the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased, and because that relationship is built on one individual's understanding of the other, I examine existing research on teacher conceptions of students, particularly those that live in chronically traumatized communities. Again, while all these areas of existing scholarship help my study, none of them answer the problem in question.

CHAPTER THREE

METHDOLOGY

The previous chapters detailed how student violent deaths might impact secondary urban educators. My research specifically aimed to study how educators cognitively appraised and responded either by coping or demonstrating resiliency after their students' violent deaths. I employed two methods to study this phenomenon: surveys and interviews.

While trauma and bereavement literature have begun to focus on violent loss, few studies focus on the emotional response of teachers whose students died violently. Chronic gun violence impacts young people in many urban cities across the country, whether that impact manifests as a bullet wound or a loss of life. Those who teach these young people (or have taught them previously) are impacted by the student's death, both in mitigating the experience of violence and death for their students and in their personal experience of the violent event(s). However, we know little about the meaning-making process of urban secondary teachers whose students were killed via gang-related violence. We also know little about how teachers cope or become resilient in reaction to their students' violent deaths. This study sought to close the existing gap in the literature by focusing on the cognitive appraisal and resiliency of teachers in urban high schools following the death of their students to gang-related gun violence.

This study depicted the cognitive appraisal process and the resiliency of educators who work in urban school contexts with specific attention to student gun-related death. To address this purpose, the following questions guided this study:

1. According to urban high school teachers, how does student violent death impact their professional sense of self and teaching practice?

2. What factors influence urban high school teachers' cognitive appraisal process and becoming resilient following the violent death of a student?
3. According to urban high school teachers, what kind of support do they need after a student's violent death?

Research Design

This was a sequential mixed-methods study designed to understand urban teachers' responses to student gang/gun-related death. Such a design was appropriate when neither qualitative nor quantitative designs could have revealed the deepest understanding of the research problem. As a researcher, I wanted to "both generalize the findings of a population as well as develop a detailed view of the meaning of a phenomenon or concept for individuals," by collecting both "closed ended quantitative data and open ended qualitative data proves advantageous" (Creswell, 2009, pp.18-19). I used multiple methods in this study to obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, qualitative techniques "are particularly good at gaining insight into the processes and events that lead up to the observed variation and have the key advantage of providing unexpected insights" (Borkan, 2004, p.4). Quantitative methods work best to isolate and identify variables and correlates in specific moments of time, like a freeze frame.

This study's research design adopted a distinct approach known as sequential transformative strategy. Sequential transformative strategy is a two-phase study rooted in conceptual framework(s), having an initial phase (in this case, quantitative), and second phase (in this case, qualitative). My study, as explored in the previous chapter, was rooted in three conceptual frameworks: 1) Secondary Trauma theory—what the teacher experiences after a violent death, 2) Cognitive Appraisal theory—how a teacher makes meaning of a student's

violent death, and 3) Constructivist Self-Determination Theory—how a teacher adapts and is resilient after a student's violent death. As Creswell notes, a sequential transformative strategy enables the study to "create sensitivity to collecting data from a marginalized or underrepresented group" and also can "give voice to diverse perspectives, to better advocate for participants, or to better understand a phenomenon or process" (2009, pp.212-213). Because teachers' welfare after a crisis at a school site is often left unaddressed, and because there is a dearth in the literature that tackles this particular phenomenon, a sequential transformative study was applicable and apt. This study aimed to contribute to the void in existing violent loss literature by employing a mixed-methods research design.

Thus, the intent of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods study was to capture urban educators' cognitive appraisal process and resiliency response to a student gun-related death. The first method employed surveys to capture surface-level data; the second method utilized interviews to capture deep and weightier data. By capturing surface-level data, I contributed to the lack of existing data such as how many teachers experience a student death, at how many and which sites, which sites have an overrepresentation of teachers experiencing student deaths, and the extent of the impact of these experiences. The surface-level data defined the scope and scale of the unfamiliar phenomenon. The deep and weightier data, such as the nature of the impact seen in how teachers make meaning of these deaths, if and how they cope and are resilient, provided both practitioners and researchers an illustrative insight into teachers' subjective, first person narratives of these experiences. Separately, each method captured elements of the trend, but together, they helped me to provide a richer analysis of the phenomenon.

Sites and Sample Populations

I targeted a large urban school district in Los Angeles to locate as many urban public high schools within the region as possible. Two sub-regions (South and East) in the district experienced a plateau in youth gun-related death after a period of high violence from 1995-2005; three other sub-regions (Central, West and the Valley) continues to experience a high rate of gun/gang related youth homicide. I concentrated on these sub-regions not only because of the high poverty, crime, and youth homicide rates associated, but also because I had previously established relationships and connections with school communities in each zone helping to generate participants. I limited my study to schools in California because this choice allows for a wider spectrum of the phenomenon, increasing generalizability.

In each sub-region of the district, I selected multiple types of high schools in effort to study a wide spectrum of how the phenomenon manifests in various contexts. As such, I recruited large comprehensive schools, small pilot schools, charter schools, a continuation school, and schools under the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools run by the Mayor's office.
In addition, after I received IRB approval from both UCLA and the school district, I kept abreast with the LA Times Homicide report; when I saw young people killed around a region of a school with which I was familiar, I reached out to the school directly. Through this approach, I was able to study school communities who were experiencing violent loss freshly. This added to the richness of the spectrum of the phenomenon as I recruited schools that experienced student violent death ten years ago to this current year.

Demographic Data of Samples

Demographics quantitative data: Surveys.

A total sample of 146 urban high school LAUSD teachers completed a modified version of the Stress Appraisal Measure (SAM; Peacock & Wong, 1990) and the Connor-Davidson resilience scale (CD-RISC) (Connor and Davidson, 2003) instruments. At the beginning of the survey, I contextualized the directions so that respondents answered the survey regarding either prospect or real experience of a violent student's death. Teachers answered demographic questions, background questions about their awareness of supports offered in the event of a student violent death, as well as experience with trauma-sensitive training. Before taking the measurement component of the survey, teachers indicated whether had not or had experienced a student violent death, and if the latter, how many deaths. In order for any teacher at a target site to be eligible to take the survey, I asked respondents to select if they were answering the survey in 1) anticipation of a student violent death (i.e., if they had never experienced a student's death), 2) in reflection of a present student's death (in the past year), or 3) in reflection of a past student's death (a year or more previous).

The quantitative data was comprised of the results from 146 surveys administered in 14 high schools across five regions in a large urban school district in Los Angeles. Of the 151 teachers who responded to the survey, I used 146 data sets; I eliminated surveys that had incomplete responses. 32 teachers who had never experienced a student violent death (21.9%) and 114 teachers who had experienced at least one student gang/gun related death (78.1%) took the survey. Appendix F details the descriptives of the survey sample population.

Demographics of qualitative data: Interviews.

The qualitative data was comprised of sixteen interviews with urban high school teachers who indicated on their surveys that they had experienced student violent death(s) and were willing to be interviewed. The interviews were designed to understand the psychological, sociocultural institutional factors that influenced teachers' appraisal of the death event(s), their resilience, and the supports teachers report to need in the event of a student's violent death. Interview responses allowed me to investigate teacher experiences, enriching the depth of the discussion of this phenomenon.

The 146 survey respondents were asked to participate in interviews. Out of 146 respondents, two teachers said "maybe," 90 teachers said "no" and 50 teachers said, "yes" to be interviewed. I followed up with every teacher who indicated a willingness to be interviewed and based on responses to email and phone inquires, availability, and my goal to have representation for each region if not school site, sixteen teachers participated in interviews. All interviewees had experienced at least one student violent death.

Appendix G details the demographic information for each interview participant: ten males (62.5%) and six females (37.5%) from a mix of high schools from the south (31%), east (37.5%), west (12.5%), Valley (12.5%) and central (6.25%) participated in the interviews. Seven identified as White (43.7%), four identified as Latino/a (25%), three identified as African American (18.7%), one as Armenian (6.25%) and one as Native Indian (6.25%).

Methodology

First phase: Quantitative Methodology

Participants.

As aforementioned, I reached out to most high schools in the five regions (East, West, Central, Valley, and South). I recruited fourteen school sites, and from those fourteen school sites I administered 146 surveys. Per the principal's request, I presented at the beginning or end of a faculty meeting so as not to disturb instructional time or professional development space. I offered teachers the choice to take the survey at the site or take it online through Survey Monkey.

Methods and Design.

The first phase was comprised of surveying whole faculties at urban high schools to provide a sample through which the extent of the phenomenon—teacher cognitive appraisal and resiliency response of a student violent death—can be studied. These quantitative questions will research the baseline experiences of teachers captured a spectrum of teacher experiences about student death, not only finding teachers who share similar experiences in relation to the phenomenon, but also more interestingly, the counter cases, i.e., teachers who do not share similar experiences. Respondents' scores on the selected measurements of cognitive appraisal and resilience defined this spectrum. The questionnaire was an anonymous fixed-response instrument used to yield the range of teacher experiences of student gun-related death across a whole school site. In this way, the study explored phenomenon with both breath and depth.

Instruments.

I drew upon existing measurements that have, in combination, been employed in similar studies to examine appraisal, coping and resiliency in sample populations responding to violent

loss (Bailey et al, 2013). Two measurements were used in tandem to comprise the survey: the Stress Appraisal Measure (SAM) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). Both measurements have strong internal consistency and reliability.

The Stress Appraisal Measure (Peacock & Wong, 1990) is a 28-item questionnaire, developed in response to the need for a "psychometrically sound instrument that measures theoretically important dimensions of both primary and secondary appraisal" (1990, p.228). It is an appropriate tool to use to measure educators' assessment of the violent loss of a student. The researchers defined primary appraisal as how a person assesses an event in regards to that individual's wellbeing. While the authors created the instrument to allow the participant to define the event for him or herself, I instructed the participant to define the event or events as the violent losses of their students. The event assessment is measured across three dimensions: harm/loss (events that have already occurred), threat (anticipated), and challenge (anticipated). Secondary appraisal is how a person, after a significant event, thinks about this event and what can be done. It is a measurement of that person's perception of control, which is similarly measured across three dimensions: what is controllable by self, controllable by others, and uncontrollable by anyone. In addition, SAM includes a scale to capture perception of general perceived stressfulness (Peacock & Wong, 1990, p.228).

SAM is a 5-point (1-5) Likert-scale instrument. Participants' cognitive appraisal scores were calculated by finding the mean for each of the six subscales illustrated in Table 3.1.

3.1

Stress Appraisal Measure (Peacock & Wong, 1990) domains and example questions

Domain	**Item of SAM**	**Example Questions**
Threat	5, 11, 20, 28	Does this situation [the death of student] make me anxious? Is the

		death of Student going to have a negative impact on me?
Challenge[2]	7, 8, 10, 19	Is the death event going to have a positive impact on me? To what extent can I become a stronger person because of the event?
Centrality	6, 9, 13, 27	Does this death event have important consequences for me? How much will I be affected by the outcome of the situation? Does the situation have long-term consequences for me?
Control-self	4, 15, 17, 23	Is there someone or some agency I can turn to for help if I need it? Is there help available to me for dealing with this problem?
Control- others	4, 15, 17, 23	Are there sufficient resources available to help me in dealing with this situation? Is there anyone who can help me manage the death event?
Uncontrollable	1, 3, 18, 21	Is this a totally hopeless situation? Is the outcome of this student's death uncontrollable by anyone?
Stressfulness	2, 16, 24, 26	Does the death event create tension in me? Does this situation tax or exceed my coping resources? To what extent does the death event require coping efforts on my part?

Table 1: Stress Appraisal Measure domains and example questions

Importantly, SAM evaluates "centrality," a person's perception of the importance of the situation and "how much the person has at stake in an encounter" (ibid, p.234). This schema is important in examining the scope of the phenomenon at hand.

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003) is a 25-item self-rated assessment developed to provide a well-validated measurement for resilience. The researchers define resilience as how someone thrives in the face of adversity, which for the purposes of this study is the death event of a student. The instrument was constructed based on previously researched characteristics of resilient people (Kobasa, 1979; Rutter, 1985; Lyons;

[2] The "challenge" factor was deemed inappropriate by the district's IRB and was thus not used in the survey.

1991). The measurement has been employed in over twenty-one studies in over 10,000 subjects; all found excellent internal consistency with the CD-RISC (Dong et al, 2013). Since the development of the CD-RISC, two briefer versions have emerged. The 10-item (CD-RISC 10) instrument was developed, comprised of items 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19 from the original scale (Campbell-Sills, Forde, & Stein, 2009). The two-item (CD-RISC 2) is based on items one and eight to measure bounce back and adaptability (Vaishnavi et al, 2007). Both versions have obtained similar mean scores to the original CD-RISC. Lastly, Dong et al (2013)'s version of the CD-RISC changed the verbiage in the original instrument to the first-person so that respondents could identify as active participants in their own resiliency. The researchers also added the question "I find my job rewarding" to assess job satisfaction, which symbolizes purpose and balance, both of which are associated with increased resilience" (2013, p.13). I used Dong et al (2013)'s version of the instrument for my study (See Appendix B) in conjunction with an abbreviated version of the CD-RISC 10.

By using the SAM and CD-RISC in tandem, I captured critical data that spoke to my research questions, as each instrument investigates educators' cognitive processes (primary and secondary appraisal) and responses (coping and/or resiliency).

Procedure.

I contacted sites with which I had either a personal connection (i.e., I knew a teacher at the site or I had a connection who knew a principal). Due to the sensitive nature of my study, it was important to reach out to schools through a connection so as to establish trust and safety. Per access and recruitment for survey administration, I emailed principals of high schools in the district(s) to elicit approval. Following, with the principals' collaboration, I surveyed the whole site for participants. I attend faculty meetings and presented the questionnaire in person,

distributing and then collecting the questionnaire after that meeting. At each site, I explained the purpose of my study to teachers during school leadership team and faculty meetings and answer any questions that arise. The intent of these presentations was to build trust as well as garner participation from teachers. I invited all high school teachers at each school site to participate and respond to the questionnaire. This practice is supported by trauma-informed theory that presumes trauma to be universal; by inviting all faculty members, I did not target individual teachers and opened the option to all.

At the faculty meeting in which I presented the study, I offered teachers the option to take the survey via Survey Monkey if they did not feel comfortable filling out the survey in front of their colleagues. I followed up with teachers through email, asking for confirmation from those who would like to participate in interviews. To avoid the perception of coercion, administrators did not participate in the sample selection. To ensure no harm imposed on the participant, I provided each participant with local mental health resources (see Appendix D).

I recruited from October 2013 through February 2014. If teachers signed up to take the survey via Survey Monkey, I sent reminder emails and calls seven to ten days after the first email, thanking them for their time and encouraging them to respond if they have not done so. I also offered to send a brief summary of results and include an Amazon gift card drawing as incentive.

Second phase: Qualitative Interviews

Participants.

My minimum recruitment size for the second phase of my study was two participants per school region, for a total of ten teachers. I interviewed six teachers from South, six teachers from East, two teachers from West, two teachers from the Valley, and one teacher from Central for a total of sixteen teachers interviewed.

Because of the nature of the project, I focused more on depth rather than on breadth data, meaning that I preferred a small sample size of participants with longer interviews (45-90 minutes) than larger samples sizes with shorter time to hear their narratives. This approach was modeled after life history methodology collection.

Method and Design.

In this phase, I used qualitative interviews to probe significant survey responses by exploring aspects of the impact of student gun-related death on teachers in urban high schools in Los Angeles. The reason for following up with qualitative research in the second phase was to enhance my understanding of the quantitative results.

The qualitative component of this study crucially captured the stories and experiences of teachers, illustrating the nature of the phenomenon at hand. As such, the second phase was composed of deep interviews to grasp (and in some cases, develop) the coherent narrative of educators. Narrative analysis, or life or oral histories, uses first-person accounts of experiences as data; the text of the interview is analyzed contextually. The goal of narrative analysis is interpretive with the objective "… to understand the phenomenon and the meaning it has for participants" (Merriam, 2009, p.34). Because of the sensitive and personal nature of a person's meaning making experience after a violent loss, this methodology aligned the context and subject matter of the project. Rowling, a researcher of disenfranchised grief, underscores the "contribution [that] qualitative research methods can bring to our understanding of the complex phenomena involved in grief, bereavement, palliative care and the experience of traumatic incidents" (p.167)[3]. Qualitative research can expose cultural systems that oppress and

[3] In the same article, "Being in, being out, being with: Affect and the role of the qualitative researcher in loss and grief," Rowling notes the potential for grief transference between the interviewee and interviewer, and provides

marginalize certain groups of people (Merriam, 2009, p.36). Likewise, Howard notes that counter-stories are used as a method of telling stories of individuals whose experiences have not been told, as a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse (2008).

Moreover, qualitative interviews were appropriate for this study because I sought to uncover the teachers' coherent narratives of when a current or former student was or is killed due to community/gang violence. Pennebaker and Seagal coined the term "coherent narrative" to describe the "act of constructing stories" as one that helps people better understand an emotional experience and themselves, as the process allows one to "organize and remember events in a coherent fashion while integrating thoughts and feelings" (1999, p.1243). While this study did not aim to provide psychological treatment for educators processing a student death, qualitative interviews acted as a vehicle to capture coherent narratives in that the interviewee organized and structured his or her own personal and professional story. By sharing their experiences, teachers illustrated ways in which schools experienced and engaged with community violence. Such research was qualitative by nature because it focused on individual or groups' ascribed meaning to their experience (Creswell, 2009, p.4).

Instrument.

I used an interview protocol to guide the semi-structured interviews. The interview began with a standard introduction to the study so that each interviewee heard identical framing. The protocol began with a constructivist question: "What has been your experience?" In this way, participants constructed their own narratives and the interview questions did not guide the

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guidelines for qualitative interviews that focus on the sensitive issues of grief and bereavement. I followed these guidelines and was conscious of the ethical dilemmas she defines unique to qualitative research of this nature.

response; the response guided the interview questions. In addition to these interview questions, I had questions at the end of the protocol to pilot attitudinal questions (regarding, for example, teacher perception of their students, environmental contexts, etc.). Each interview ended by me asking participants what the experience of the interview itself was like for participants so that I garnered their metacognitive process of developing their narratives and processing the experience with student violent death. I closed with a thank-you statement to acknowledge the interviewee's time and dedication to this study.

I asked questions that expanded upon survey questions this study employed (See Appendix C). At the same time, the interview questions will be open-ended and fluid in order to respond to each participant's unique experiences (Hill, 2011). For example, I asked how teachers found out about the student, what they remember about the student, how they report to be affected by the students' death, their approach to relationships with students before and after experiencing a death, and what supports he or she may have received or not during the loss episode. As a model, Parapully et al. (2002) personalized each interview per the participant's response in the questionnaire.

Procedure.

As aforementioned, at the end of the questionnaire, participants had the option to volunteer to be interviewed. While interviewee selection will be volunteer-based, I followed up directly with teachers who show interest in the questionnaire via email and by phone. If they volunteer, I followed up by email and a phone call at least once if not more to ensure maximum recruitment potential. I attempted to meet with teachers before or after the school day in the so as not to disrupt their teaching. Some interviews were conducted over the weekend or during the

teachers' conference periods, but only at their suggestion. I told each participant before the interview that they can withdraw at anytime without negative repercussions.

I interviewed participants to generate individual accounts of the death experience. Interviews were semi-structured, face-to-face, and one-on-one to offer participants a feeling of confidentiality, safety, and the space to expound upon their experiences. I interviewed participants at a neutral site of their choice out of options I will provide (e.g., either at their school or in a library). Interviews occurred between December 2013 and February 2014. Each interview was recorded using an iPhone and digital voice recorder. I made hand written notes in the event any data collection equipment fails. Each interview was transcribed within 48 hours of the interview.

Data Analysis

Surveys.

The surveys were divided into three sections: demographic data, background data, and the SAM and CD-RISC 10 measurements. For example, I asked for demographics such as the teachers' subject specialization, grade, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. I asked background information regarding the number of student deaths experienced, what kind of supports teachers have received after a student death, and what kind of training he or she may have received that addresses trauma and violent loss.

Modeling Bailey et al.'s study, quantitative data analysis involved data cleansing, reliability testing, descriptive statistics and correlations and linear regression (2013, p.7). I used SPSS to calculate sum means. An underlying assumption in Bailey et al.'s quantitative data analysis was that coping strategies and resiliency factors were a direct response to stress from the initial appraisal of the death event. Due to this assumption, I used linear regressions to analyze

the influence of coping strategies and resilience factors for both primary and secondary appraisal processes.

Bailey et al.'s study produced two areas of results that I hoped to mirror. First, the researchers analyzed the SAM overall reappraisal, the SAM primary appraisal, the SAM secondary appraisal, and the CD-RISC. The SAM primary and secondary appraisals should highly correlate with the overall reappraisal because how one perceives harm, loss, or challenge (primary appraisal) is mitigated by how one understands his or her own control and supports available (secondary appraisal). Like Bailey et al., I ran regressions to examine if there is a correlation between resiliency and primary and secondary appraisal.

Interviews.

For the second phase's analysis, I organized and prepared the data for analysis, transcribing interviews, and typing up interview notes. I read through all the data to get an overall understanding on the interviews' meaning. Per Creswell's suggestions, I paid attention to the tone of ideas, the use of the information as I read, and took notes in the margins to capture my general thoughts about the data in this initial stage (2009, p.185).

After transcribing verbatim interviews that I audio recorded, I read through each transcript several times and assigned color-codes for themes that reflected emerging themes. The overarching themes were "Strategies employed after a student death-help, management, support," "How deaths affected thoughts and feelings about teaching," "Thoughts and feelings about community violence," "Personal impact," "Description of death event and student," "Description of death aftermath," "Feelings about the death event," and "Reaction to the death event." One independent research partner read through the transcripts and coded the data based on the same

themes. We cross-walked our codes per select interviews and their quotes ensuring inter-rater reliability.

From the themes aforementioned, new themes and then sub-themes emerged when I examined common phrases, language, and repeated terms or phrases throughout the transcripts. For each theme and sub-theme, I selected demonstrative quotes that captured the essence of that finding.

In case studies of twenty-six Canadian miners' posttraumatic growth after an unjust loss, in this circumstance, a mine explosion, researchers employed Numerically Aided Phenomenology (NAP) by which they coded qualitative narratives by themes. Using "qualitative clustering techniques" to group participants into similar groups based on their "paths toward adjustment" after a loss (Davis, Wohl & Verberg, 2007, p.699), the researchers highlight that it is crucial for the creation of a cluster to be based strictly on the "narratives provided by our participants, as opposed to preconceived notions of the authors, ensuring that "the phenomenological experience of the participants is retained as much as possible" (ibid, p.702). Additionally, to ensure a systematic process of analyzing textual data, I coded topics based on past literature and common sense by coding texts that were surprising or unusual, and coded for texts that speak to larger theoretical issues present in research. Such themes emerged from my three theoretical frameworks as well as cognitive appraisal resilience constructs such as personal competence, control and cognitive appraisal constructs such as centrality, controllable- by- self and uncontrollable-by-anyone (Bailey et al., 2013, p.9). A research partner read through select interviews that I coded and we compared results to ensure interreliabilty coding.

Ethical Considerations

I addressed potential for risk at every stage, from access to the interview. In my invitational email, I addressed the potential risk. When I presented to faculty, I addressed the potential risk of involvement. Every participant signed an agreement to informed consent that explicitly stated potentials for risk, such as emotional triggering from bringing up past or present sensitive experiences like that of a student death. However, I also named benefits from the study, such as the opportunity for teachers to voice their experience, as narratives that potentially could become advocacy points to school districts to enhance their provisions of wellbeing for educators like themselves.

In order to maintain confidentiality of participants, I was the sole person responsible for contacting potential participants. I described the rationale and process of the study to enlist cooperation, consensus, and trust in the study and in me as a researcher. Moreover, I created pseudonyms for each participant to protect confidentiality and personalize individual comments, removing all names and positions from notes and transcriptions. Site administrators were never informed as to which teachers volunteered to be interviewed.

One of my research questions addresses supports needed in order to cope. Potentially, teachers could feel unsafe reporting lack of administrative support if they are anxious of their supervisors' reactions. Pseudonyms will be in place to prevent individual retaliation.

Because this study examined issues pertaining to trauma and loss, it was of highly sensitive nature. Therefore, it was fundamental for me as a researcher to not only be aware of my approach but also be very clear about my role. I presented myself as a former teacher, a coach, and as a researcher. I explicitly named that I experienced student loss myself to build trust and credibility. Lastly, I was very clear that I am not in any supervisory role whatsoever.

As Hill (2011) notes, researchers who investigate difficult material and use interviews to elicit meaningful discussions must have a unique set of interpersonal skills. I believe I have these set of skills; I have the training and sensitivity to handle and navigate difficult conversations. Moreover, I also have personal experience with student death. This may have allowed teachers to feel camaraderie and trust in my intentions behind the study. While my strengths allow people to feel safe and warm with me, easily building trust, I was cautious and professional, aware that my role was not clinical/therapeutic. To hold my professionalism accountable, I prepared a paragraph that I read before the interview to establish boundaries. If during the interview I felt the process was harming a teacher, I would have stopped the interview immediately although this case never arose.

Reliability and Validity

I designed this research to address the above concerns by providing triangulation mechanisms to maximize the probability that the findings of the study had traction. Moreover, readers are able to determine the extent to which the findings of this study match their own experience in their local contexts.

In a larger sense, loss is highly individualized and rooted in social context. A concern for transferability is that the study may be too contextualized. However, Dods (2013) found that similar themes surfaced from interviews with "students with differing characteristics…support[ing]…the idea that the struggles and needs of youth affected by trauma cross socio-economic status groups and that there are shared commonalities specific to trauma" (p.88). Therefore, while I did not anticipate transferability, it does not mean that the themes of teachers' loss response and coping behaviors could not inform other teachers who experience student violent death at other sites or at different teaching levels (elementary/middle).

There are five main challenges to this study: bias, reactivity, insufficient evidence, hindered ability to respond, and internal validity issues. First, in order to curb my bias from influencing transcription and analysis, I used direct quotes in the analysis and discussion sections. I compared transcribed interviews with the original audio recordings and then edited for accuracy. Moreover, in effort to avoid bias in my interpretations, I triangulated interviewee responses from participating school sites to enrich my own understanding of teacher experiences and to better understand what was being done in these schools to support coping responses (Levy Clarke, 2012). Lastly, I removed all names and then share transcripts of interviews with participants to receive feedback in order to secure accuracy.

Second, because the loss of a student may be value-charged, teachers might have felt like they have to respond to the idea of losing a student in a certain manner. In order to avoid reactivity, I communicated to participants that their personal experience is what I was interested in, rather than a generalized experience. They helped me most by being candid about their feelings and behaviors in relation to this topic.

Third, there was potential for me to have insufficient evidence to support my conclusions at the end of this study, as my sample is small. Because this study has never been done before, in methodology or implementation, there is the possibility that while the problem of study would be valid, the way in which I designed and carried out my study will not be. Even so, this will inform future studies. Additionally, because I am examined an experience, I was aware that the study may be restricted in that "one-time interviews have limitations as ways of getting others to access and disclose their own emotions" (Hargreaves, 2000, p.816). By conducting multiple interviews with teachers from multiple school sites, I believe that there was sufficient evidence from which to draw conclusions.

Fourth, teachers' personal philosophies and levels of comfort with the subject of death might have affected their abilities to respond to interview questions (Mak, 2013). For this reason, I over-recruited participants if in case some teachers are unable to articulate their feelings regarding this topic.

Lastly, as with any retrospective study, a further limitation was recall bias, challenging the internal validity of the findings. I systematically recorded, both electronically and through note taking, everything that occurs before, during and after the data collection period, in order to minimize recall bias and enhance internal validity.

Summary

I used a sequential mixed-methods approach to capture urban secondary teachers' appraisal process and coping response after the death of a student to gun-related violence. The bounded region for the study was a large urban school district in Los Angeles. The quantitative data by means of a school-site questionnaire captured baseline data as measured by the Stress Appraisal Measure and the CD-RISC 10 Measure. It also served as a filter through which a smaller group of participants will self-select to be interviews. The qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews provided a deeper understanding of teachers' individual experiences and processes. Findings of this data will be subsequently discussed quantitatively in Chapter Four and qualitatively in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings from a survey administered to 146 high school teachers in a large urban school district in Southern California. The surveys comprised modified questions from the Stress Appraisal Measure (Peacock & Wong, 1990) to measure teachers' cognitive appraisal, and a modified version of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Index (CD-RISC) to measure teachers' resilience. The results enabled a comparison of teachers with a range of experiences with fatal, gang-related violence against students. The quantitative findings in this chapter address the following research questions:

1. According to urban high school teachers, how does student violent death impact their professional sense of self and teaching practice?
2. What factors influence urban high school teachers' cognitive appraisal process and becoming resilient following the violent death of a student?
3. According to urban high school teachers, what kind of support do they need after a student's violent death?

Survey data revealed factors that influenced teachers' cognitive appraisal (primary, secondary, and overall), as well as factors that promoted their resiliency after a student's violent death. In this chapter, I will discuss these findings in detail. First, however, I will describe the relevant characteristics of the sample.

Sample

Prior to discussing the detailed findings, it is important to give relevant characteristics of the sampled population. As described in Chapter Three, I utilized SPSS 20 software to generate descriptive statistics on survey respondents. Tables 4.1 through 4.3 illustrate the groupings of teachers on key characteristics. The majority of participants in the study (n= 114; 78.1%) had

experienced at least one student's gang/gun-related death (Table 4.1). Some participants had no experience (n=32; 21.9%).

Table 4.1

	Frequency	**Percent**
Yes	114	78.1%
No	32	21.9%
Total	146	100.0%

Table 2: Teacher Experience with Violent Student Death

Teacher respondents who had experienced a student's violent death were also asked to indicate what kind of relationship they had with the student—personal (close relationship), affiliated (they knew of the student), or alumni (the student had graduated). They were asked to reflect on either a past student death (if the death event had occurred more than a year ago) or a present death (if the student was killed in the immediate year). Those who had not experienced a student death were asked to respond to the questions hypothetically, anticipating what they might experience if one of their students was killed in the future. Some teachers who had, in fact, experienced a student death answered the survey in anticipation of a future student death. While this was strayed from the study design, these responses provided another category of data, making the spectrum of impact even richer. Table 4.2 illustrates the resulting four groups of respondents. Table 4.3 shows how long it had been since these teachers had experienced a student's violent death.

Table 4.2

Group Number	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Experience with student homicide	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
How respondent answered survey	Anticipated	Past Year	Present Year	Anticipated
Frequency	N=32	N=75	N=17	N=22
Percent	21.9%	51.4%	11.6%	15.1%
Total	N=146 (100%)			

Table 3: Type of Respondent

Table 4.3[4]

	Frequency	Percent
N/A (Never experienced student homicide)	31	22.5%
In the last month	12	8.7%
In the last 3–6 months	2	1.4%
In the last 6–12 months	7	5.1%
In the last 1–2 years	31	22.5%
In the last 2–5 years	19	13.8%
More than 5 years ago	35	25.4%
Other	1	0.7%
Total	138	100.0%

Table 4: Time Since Student Death

Findings

Cognitive Appraisal and Resilience

As noted above, the survey respondents were grouped according to their experience with a student's death (Table 4.2). To assess patterns of similarity or difference in the four different groups' responses to factors of cognitive appraisal and resilience, I ran frequencies across all factors. (See Appendix E for descriptions of the factors for each measure.). I also sought to determine what might predict teachers' cognitive appraisal (i.e., whether they experienced student homicide as a significant experience, how they coped with the event, and their overall stress impact) and resilience (whether certain variables predicted feelings of autonomy, competence, and self-determination, in light of the homicide event). Thus, I also ran a regression model using internal and external qualities as independent variables.

[4] The discrepancy between the percent of teachers who reported that they experienced a student death in the last year totals to 15.2% Table 3, yet as demonstrated in Table 2, 51.4% of teachers said they had experienced a death in the last year. This discrepancy might be attributed to teachers misunderstanding the survey's request to indicate from what perspective they took the survey. I will discuss this discrepancy further in Chapter 6.

Finding One: Anticipation of a future student homicide causes teachers higher rates of stress.

Higher primary scores on the cognitive appraisal construct indicated more negative event appraisals (i.e., the person perceived the event as threatening and significant to his or her well-being). This negative appraisal manifests as stress.

In response to questions that comprised the factor of "threat," teachers did not report that student violent deaths had an impact on them personally (74.4%; n=105 responded "not at all," "slightly," or "moderately") or professionally (82.5%; n=113 responded "not at all," "slightly," or "moderately"). The only teachers who responded "considerably" to these questions were those who had experienced having a student killed but provided survey responses that anticipated a student being killed in the future.

The survey questions also explored the extent to which teachers perceived a student's violent death as significant to their well-being—a concept known as "centrality" (Peacock & Wong, 1990). In contrast to reports across all four groups that student deaths did not have a high impact on them personally or professionally, findings for centrality were more mixed. In response to "Does this situation have important consequences for me?" over half (55.6%; n=79) reported "moderately" or "considerably." Response rates were similar for "How much will I be affected by the outcome of this situation?" (50%; n=70), and "Does this situation have long-term consequences for my teaching practice?" (51.4%; n=72). Importantly, however, teachers who had experienced a student death and answered the survey with those experiences in mind predominately responded "not at all" or "slightly" to centrality questions, indicating they did not perceive their experience in the past as significant to their lives today.

Similar to findings for the threat factor, the only teachers who responded "extremely" to "How much will I be affected by the outcome of this situation?" and "Does this student's death have serious implications for me?" were those who had experienced a student's death but answered in anticipation of another student being killed in the future. Only teachers who thought about deaths in addition to past experiences indicated high response rates of overall stressfulness.

Finding Two: Regardless of their experience with student homicide, teachers felt that they had supportive resources in their toolkits.

Another goal of the research was to determine how individuals mitigated their stress with their coping skills. Whether or not they had experienced a student being killed due to gang- or gun-related violence, teachers' responses to secondary appraisal factors reflected that they had been and would be able to cope following a student homicide.

Responses to the question, "Is there someone or some agency I can turn to for help if I need it?" were almost evenly distributed across the Likert scale, though a slight majority (51.5%; n=71) answered that they either "moderately" or "considerably" agreed they had someone to turn to for help in the event of a student violent death. In response to "Is there help available to me for dealing with the death event?" the teachers with the most diverse responses were those who had experienced a student killed and were answering in response to this past death. Just over one-fourth (27.8%; n=20) responded "slightly," 23.6% (n=17) responded "moderately," and 33.3% (n=24) responded "considerably." A similar distribution pattern emerged for "Is there anyone who can help me manage the problem?" and "Are there sufficient resources available to help me in dealing with this situation?" These findings support consistency between factors for the "Control-Others" variable. Teachers across all groups reported that they considered

themselves able to overcome potential deaths in the future and that they had the necessary external resources to respond to student homicides.

Secondary appraisal factors mitigate the degree of overall stress. Therefore, if teachers had high frequency rates of secondary appraisal, this should be reflected in their frequency rates for stress factors. These data support this relationship. With respect to overall stressfulness, teachers generally believed that, regardless of death experience, they had both the ability to cope and the resources to do so. In response to "Does this situation tax my coping resources?" 60.2% (n= 83) reported "not at all" or "slightly." The only group to distribute almost evenly across "not at all," "slightly," "moderately," and "considerably" were teachers who had not experienced a student killed. In other words, those who had experienced student death felt they had been and would be able to cope if faced with the same situation again in the future.

Finding Three: Teachers' resilience and appraisal of the phenomenon were not significantly affected by experiencing the violent death of a student or by time since the event.

Related to the previous finding, experience with a student's death did not influence teachers' resilience or appraisal scores, as evidenced by mean scores for each factor (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Experienced Student Death	**Resilience**			**Primary Appraisal**			**Secondary Appraisal**			**Overall Appraisal**		
	Mean	N	S.D.	Mean	N	S.D.	Mean	N	S.D.	Mean	N	S.D.
No	**4.10**	32	0.73	**2.95**	31	0.79	**3.25**	30	0.77	**3.03**	31	0.60
Yes	**4.12**	112	0.63	**3.19**	113	0.97	**3.28**	113	0.69	**3.19**	113	0.62
Total	4.11	144	0.65	3.14	144	0.94	3.27	143	0.71	3.15	144	0.62

Table 5: Mean Factor Scores for Resilience and Appraisal by Experience with Student Death

A slight variation appeared when mean scores of resilience, primary, secondary, and overall appraisal were differentiated according to the lens through which teachers responded to the

survey (Table 4.5). Those who reported on a past death had a slightly lower mean score for resilience and a considerably higher primary appraisal score—which then influenced a higher overall appraisal score—than did those who answered with respect to a future death.

Table 4.5

	Resilience			**Primary Appraisal**			**Secondary Appraisal**			**Overall Appraisal**		
	Mean	N	S.D.	Mean	N	S.D.	Mean	N	S.D.	Mean	N	S.D.
Reported on a past death	**4.08**	90	0.64	**3.35**	91	0.95	**3.25**	91	0.73	**3.27**	91	0.63
Reported on a future death	**4.18**	54	0.67	**2.77**	53	0.80	**3.31**	52	0.67	**2.96**	53	0.55
Total	4.11	144	0.65	3.14	144	0.94	3.27	143	0.71	3.15	144	0.62

Table 6: Mean Factor Scores for Resilience and Appraisal by Type of Scenario Envisioned

Lastly, time lapsed since the student's death did not appear to have an impact on teachers' resilience or appraisal of the event. Mean scores stayed consistent regardless of how much time had passed since the student death event (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Time Since Student Death	Resilience			Primary Appraisal			Secondary Appraisal			Overall Appraisal		
	Mean	N	S.D.	**Mean**	N	S.D.	**Mean**	N	S.D.	**Mean**	N	S.D.
N/A (no student death)	**4.22**	31	0.63	**2.81**	30	0.89	**3.13**	29	0.74	**2.89**	30	0.62
In the last month	**4.38**	12	0.41	**3.23**	12	0.80	**3.63**	12	0.78	**3.39**	12	0.59
In the last 3–6 months	**4.25**	2	0.35	**3.50**	2	1.77	**2.79**	2	1.72	**3.24**	2	0.41
In the last 6–12 months	**3.82**	7	0.45	**3.05**	7	0.93	**3.05**	7	0.58	**3.05**	7	0.59
In the last 1–2 years	**4.12**	31	0.88	**3.15**	31	0.95	**3.47**	31	0.69	**3.23**	31	0.64
In the last 2–5 years	**4.04**	19	0.49	**3.22**	19	1.08	**3.09**	19	0.70	**3.14**	19	0.70
More than 5 years ago	**4.02**	33	0.52	**3.32**	34	0.95	**3.19**	34	0.59	**3.21**	34	0.57
Other	**5.00**	1	.	**3.00**	1	.	**3.44**	1	.	**3.14**	1	.
Total	**4.12**	136	0.63	**3.13**	136	0.95	**3.26**	135	0.71	**3.14**	136	0.62

Table 7: Mean Factor Scores for Resilience and Appraisal by Time Since Student Death

Finding Four: The number of years in urban teaching contexts and the number of student homicides related to teachers' self-perceptions of resiliency.

While it might be reasonable to assume that more years of teaching experience would translate into higher expressions of resiliency, the current data show the converse expression. Specifically, the more years of teaching experience a teacher reported, the less resilient the teacher reported him or herself to be. For every year in service, resilience decreased by .169 points (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

	Appraisal			**Resilience**	**Age**	**Yrs Teach -ing**	**Relationship to Student**			
	Overall	Primary	Second-ary				Personal	Affiliated	Alumni	Total
Overall Appraisal	1									
Primary Appraisal	.860**	1								
Secondary Appraisal	.556**	0.093	1							
Resilience	.283**	0.099	.378**	1						
Age	.283**	.336**	0.042	0.016	1					
Years of teaching service	0.113	0.131	0.046	**-.169***	.436**	1				
Personal Rel.	-0.04	-0.015	-0.069	-0.032	**.379****	**.260****	1			
Affiliated Rel.	-0.052	-0.016	-0.077	0.056	**.300****	0.143	.760**	1		
Alumni	-0.056	-0.02	-0.092	-0.022	0.159	0.094	.496**	.573**	1	
All Relation-ships	-0.061	-0.018	-0.089	0.026	.297**	0.163	.780**	.913**	.817**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 8: Correlations between Resiliency and Key Characteristics

Additionally, as teachers reported more years of service, they also reported higher rates of experience with student deaths. And for every student killed who was known personally the years in service correlated positively by .260. Similarly, the older a teacher was in age, the more student deaths experienced, whether personally or through affiliation.

Finding Five: The more internal control teachers felt, the more they predicted being able to cope with and overcome future deaths.

According to the correlation results (Table 4.8), the more self-control a teacher felt, the less the event of a student being killed was perceived as threatening (.254**). Interestingly, the construct would predict a similar correlation between "Control-Others" and "Threat," in that the more external support teachers felt, the less threatening student homicide would be to them. The data do not reflect statistical significance for that relationship. The relationship between teachers' resilience and external controls (secondary appraisal constructs) did run as statistically significant, however, meaning that the more resilient teachers perceived themselves, the more they perceived themselves as having the agency, resources, and support for coping with the experience of a student homicide from outside sources.

Table 4.8

	Uncontroll-able	Stress	Control -Others	Threat	Centrality	Control-Self	R	PA	SA	OA
Uncontrol lable	1									
Stress	0.073	1								
Control-Others	0.109	0.01	1							
Threat	0.129	**.755****	0.05	1						
Centrality	0.015	**.750****	-0.055	**.714****	1					
Control-Self	0.126	0.129	**.420****	**.254****	0.024	1				
Resilience	.223**	0.123	**.209***	.222**	-0.027	.389**	1			
Primary Appraisal	0.074	.811**	-0.006	.918**	.933**	0.143	0.099	1		
Secondary Appraisal	.457**	0.091	.828**	.204*	-0.019	.758**	**.378****	**0.093**	1	
Appraisal Overall	.278**	.807**	.398**	.846**	.752**	.479**	.283**	.860**	.556**	1
# of Items	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	8	9	21
Mean	3.21	2.95	3.13	3.41	2.87	3.48	4.11	3.14	3.27	3.15
S.D.	0.93	0.91	1.01	0.96	1.07	0.86	0.65	0.94	0.71	0.62

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Correlations between Factor Averages of Key Items

Finding Six: Teachers' trauma training informed their appraisal of student homicide.

Teachers' mean scores on the relationship between their training background with trauma and violence and their resilience reflected the Constructivist Self-Determination Theory framework (Saakvitne, Tennen, & Affleck, 1998) outlined in Chapter Two. Specifically, the more competent teachers felt with the phenomenon of youth homicide, the more resilience they self-reported. Means for resilience were highest for teachers who indicated they had personal supports, academic background training in counseling or trauma-informed practices, or personal experience with homicide. The latter was reinforced in secondary appraisal scores; teachers who had personal experience with community violence had the highest mean score for expressing a sense of self-control and potential to overcome future death experiences. (See Table 4.9.)

Table 4.9

Describe the nature of training you have received regarding working with communities in trauma.	**Resilience**			**Primary Appraisal**			**Secondary Appraisal**			**Overall Appraisal**		
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0, None	4.03	82	0.65	**3.24**	81	0.95	3.08	80	0.70	3.12	81	0.64
Very Little	3.95	5	0.41	2.53	5	0.72	**3.99**	5	0.46	3.09	5	0.49
In-house training/services (school-based)	4.23	14	0.95	2.71	14	0.97	3.58	14	0.52	3.08	14	0.55
Professional development (District)	4.25	5	0.40	**3.85**	5	0.60	3.81	5	0.73	**3.74**	5	0.55
Personal supports (e.g., psychologist)	**4.38**	4	0.32	3.07	4	1.14	3.56	4	0.42	3.26	4	0.73
Personal experience with homicide	**4.75**	3	0.43	2.82	3	0.44	**4.11**	3	0.29	**3.51**	3	0.24
Academic background	**4.28**	15	0.46	3.30	16	0.90	3.16	16	0.72	3.22	16	0.62
Total	4.12	128	0.65	3.17	128	0.94	3.25	127	0.72	3.16	128	0.62

Table 10: Mean Factor Scores for Resilience and Appraisal by Professional Training

Unsurprisingly, teachers who reported having no training or background had a high primary appraisal (harm and challenge) mean score; these teachers found the phenomenon of youth homicide to be extremely significant. Interestingly, teachers who indicated that professional development offered through the district was their main source of support and training indicated a high primary and overall appraisal score, indicating a high level of stress.

Finding Seven: Teachers' appraisal ratings were affected to some degree by race/ethnicity.

Teachers who self-identified as American Indian, Middle Eastern, Asian Pacific Islander, and of mixed ethnicity, as well as African American/Black teachers, had the highest resiliency scores (Table 4.10). African American/Black teachers also scored the highest primary appraisal and overall appraisal means, indicating a high stress response to youth homicide. White teachers scored the highest mean in secondary appraisal, indicating a sense of high hopefulness, internal and external coping resources and mechanisms.

Table 4.10

Ethnicity	Resilience			Primary Appraisal			Secondary Appraisal			Overall Appraisal		
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
African American/ Black	**4.15**	13	0.63	**3.53**	13	0.72	3.28	13	0.82	**3.35**	13	0.60
White	4.10	54	0.55	3.05	54	0.92	**3.43**	54	0.65	**3.17**	54	0.62
Hispanic/ Latino	4.06	56	0.77	3.19	56	0.99	3.02	55	0.72	3.09	56	0.62
Other[a]	**4.18**	15	0.52	2.80	15	0.86	**3.54**	15	0.59	3.09	15	0.57
Total	4.10	138	0.65	3.12	138	0.93	3.27	137	0.71	3.14	138	0.61

Table 11: Mean Factor Scores for Resilience and Appraisal by Race/Ethnicity

[a] "Other" includes mixed ethnicity, Asian Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and American Indian.

Finding Eight: The impact of a student homicide on urban high school teachers can be predicted by teachers' resilience, experiences with student death, and age, as well as by the number of student deaths they have experienced.

Through regression analysis, I found that teachers' ethnicity, gender, years of experience, and marital status were not predictive of overall appraisal. Importantly, their resilience, experience with student death, age, and number of student deaths experienced were predictive factors. The final model is as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4$$

Where:

Y = Overall Appraisal

X_1 = Resilience

X_2 = Reported on future death (0=past death, 1=future death)

X_3 = Age

X_4 = Total number of students killed

Table 4.11 presents a summary of the model. The ANOVA and coefficients are presented in Tables 4.12 and 4.13.

Table 4.11

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.451[a]	.204	.179	.55534	.204	8.369	4	131	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), StudKillTot_R, Resilience, FutureDeath, Age_R

Table 12: Model Summary

Table 4.12

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.324	4	2.581	8.369	.000[b]
	Residual	40.401	131	.308		
	Total	50.725	135			

a. Dependent Variable: AppraisalOverallW

b. Predictors: (Constant), StudKillTot_R, Resilience, FutureDeath, Age_R
Table 13: ANOVA

Table 4.13

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	**(Constant)**	1.717	.361		4.755	.000	1.003	2.431		
	Resilience	**.264**	.074	.279	3.567	.001	.117	.410	.994	1.006
	FutureDeath	**-.289**	.109	-.228	-2.640	.009	-.505	-.072	.815	1.226
	Age_R	**.013**	.005	.237	2.730	.007	.004	.023	.810	1.235
	StudKillTot_R	**-.011**	.005	-.195	-2.332	.021	-.021	-.002	.873	1.146

a. Dependent Variable: Overall Appraisal
Table 14: Coefficients

As shown in Table 4.13, for each additional year in a teacher's age, his or her average overall appraisal increased by .013. The scores of teachers who reported on a future death but had never experienced a student being killed were -.289 lower than if they had reported on a past death. In other words, teachers' likelihood of feeling stressed and impacted by this phenomenon increased if they had had more experiences with student homicide. Likewise, the more student homicides a teacher had experienced, the more negative his or her appraisal of the phenomenon. Another way to explain the prediction is that for every death a teacher experienced, his or her appraisal became more negative by -.011. Lastly, teachers' individual resiliency was a strong predictor of how they appraised a student death event. Using this model—based on the R squared change—we can predict 20.4% of the variance in teachers' cognitive appraisal based on the aforementioned variables.

Summary

Through frequencies, correlations, and multivariate regression analyses, the quantitative survey data depict the cognitive appraisal behaviors of teachers. There is evidence that there are certain factors—including number of deaths experienced, age, and resiliency—that predict which

teachers may be at risk for a higher negative appraisal and thereby higher overall stress in the event of a student violent death. Notably, teachers' marital status, gender, and religious affiliations were not found to be statistically significant variables in relation to appraisal or resilience. Neither degree of relationship to the killed student nor the time lapse between the death event and the time of interview presented as statistically significant. The next chapter details the qualitative findings that emerged from interviews conducted with teachers selected from this survey sample.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from data collected through interviews with 16 urban high school teachers, all of who indicated via survey that they had experienced at least one death on the survey. The interviews explored the phenomenon of student death and its impact on the lived experiences of teachers. These interview data were analyzed according to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two, which relates to urban secondary teachers' cognitive processes, meaning making responses, and supports needed after a student homicide.

As noted earlier, this study examined the following research questions:

1. According to urban high school teachers, how does student violent death impact their professional sense of self and teaching practice?
2. What factors influence urban high school teachers' cognitive appraisal process and becoming resilient following the violent death of a student?
3. According to urban high school teachers, what kind of support do they need after a student's violent death?

Findings

Impact on Sense of Self and Practice

The gang- or gun-related violent death of a student impacted teachers' professional sense of self and practice in four ways. First, inside the classroom environment, teachers modified their teaching behavior to become more relational in their interactions with current students, in part because participating in a student's funeral or vigil opened and deepened teachers' perspectives to their students' lives outside of school. Second, death events challenged teachers'

motivations to continue to support current students. Third, teachers assumed responsibility for failing to prevent their students' homicides. Lastly, teachers reported secondary trauma behaviors as they prioritized their students' welfare over their own in coping with a death. I address each of these themes in turn.

Finding One: Experiencing a student violent death caused teachers to integrate new social emotional competencies into their teaching practices.

After a student's homicide, teachers reported changes in how they related to their students and in their approaches to teaching. Previous studies have noted that teachers' practices are associated with their conceptions of their role: teacher-focused practices center on content delivery; student-focused practices center on interactions between student and teacher (Prosser & Trigwell, 2006; Trigwell, 2012). Here, teachers shifted from being cognitively focused on standards and achievement to adopt new social emotional competencies in order to build relationships with their students.

One of the most prominent impacts of student homicide was that teachers assumed a different teaching style: their interactions with students became more positive and student-focused. Teachers' relationships with current students became more empathetic and compassionate. When asked how experiencing a student's violent death impacted their approach to teaching, 9 out of 16 teachers (56%) said their relationships with their current students changes—in particular, they became more attentive and caring to students they perceived to be "at-risk." For example, Joanna[5] noted that after the most recent shooting of one of her students, she began concentrating on students who were failing and skipping class, and she created individualized interventions. Likewise, Joseph recalled the direct result of his students' deaths as

[5] All teacher names are psuedonyms.

a transformation in how he cared for students who belonged to gangs. When discussing the impact of how one of his student's deaths impacted his teaching, Josef began to cry. "I'm a lot nicer to them," he told me. He continued:

> All of them. All of these kids. Even the "dumb ones." I'm a lot nicer to them, because it's so fleeting. It takes so little time, like the next day [a student is] gone. And I can't control that. The only thing I can control is how they feel here. I don't like harassing them. I don't like demeaning them. I don't like isolating them.…That's the biggest change between then [before his first student was killed] and now. But back then I would call out a stupid gang member and say, "Get your stupid stuff, and blah blah blah." But you know what that did? For the most part, they'd stop coming. That's all it did. It pushed them away. I just reinforced what they already felt. And now I don't do that anymore.

In a similar vein, Jack also talked about listening more to his current students: "[Now] I don't take for granted the interactions I have with students. I make sure I am more intentional. Especially when they are sharing stories about their lives. Being able to listen to it and take it as 'this is their experience,' being more intentional with my job." Similarly, Valentino shared that the biggest effect for him was that he became more empathetic and took time to listen to his current students. When his student—an alumnus—was shot, he found himself approaching current students with more compassion and understanding:

> You just realize how much you really want to make every moment count in the classroom. Even if it's not teaching, it can be just a conversation, it's the most important part of teaching, is just listening to the student because they have so much to say.…I think for me, I had to become a little more understanding of those needs [of students'

communities]. If there was any tension in the classroom towards me or if I feel they're being hostile, I have to remember, it's not a personal attack.

Importantly, following a student's death, Valentino became more conscious of the contexts surrounding his students' lives as he built relationships with them.

Jocelyn shared a similar reflection of how the death of her student changed her approach—now with a focus on trust and safety. She consciously created a safe classroom environment, and trust became a primary foundation. Instead of punishing students for being absent, when they returned to class she approached them with empathy. Jocelyn softly noted the impact her student's death had on her teaching:

> I've become more mellow. I used to not ask questions, and if a kid wasn't doing well, I would jump on him. Now it's like, "Are you ok, is everything ok? I'm glad you're back, you missed three to four days. Are you ok?" Whereas before, it was like, "Where were you? You missed this, you missed that." So it's taken some time.

Here, a student death changed one teacher's practices regarding relationships with her students—from blame and a content focus to concern.

In thinking about his first experience with a student's violent death, Adam noted a shift not only in how he treated students outwardly but also in how he perceived them. Similar to Valentino, he became more student-focused and conscious of the contexts of his students' lived realities. Adam told me that he did not grow up in a community similar to those of his students, and that when he entered the profession, he carried many preconceptions about what "gang bangers" were. After a student on his campus was killed, he shifted from thinking about his students as "gang bangers" to "students who are in a gang." He explained: "Once you start thinking of it that way, first you realize they are students, and then you realize they are in a

gang….[Now] I get offended when I hear 'gang bangers.'" Experiencing a student homicide increased this teacher's capacity for empathy. In general, teachers shifted from understanding their students as *defined by* their contexts to understanding them as individuals *living within* certain contexts with the potential to change.

Three teachers spoke directly about shifting from being cognitively focused as teaching professionals (i.e., with an emphasis on standardized tests, academic performance, etc.) to becoming socio-emotionally centered. Bill told me that his student's death reminded him why he entered the teaching profession in the first place: to create relationships with students. He described the impact of his student's death as a reminder that he "didn't become a teacher to teach people how to put a period at the end of a sentence or what a noun is, or what a character in a plot theme [is]." "That's not why I became a teacher," he explained: "I became a teacher to make a difference in people's lives on a deeper level. The more I invest in standards and curricula and agendas and readings, the more I will burn out." However, despite his original intentions, he found himself concentrating on testing and standards-based teaching. His student's homicide reminded Bill, "It's about the human connection." It would appear that after a student dies, teachers' relationships with current students become more conscientious, empathetic, and focused on creating a safe classroom environment.

Additionally, funerals, memorials, and other aspects of the aftermath of a student's death had a humanizing effect. Teachers cited attending memorials or funerals for students as a significant catalyst in adopting social emotional competencies in their teaching practices. Through those events, they were exposed to the deceased students' lives beyond the classroom walls. Seven out of the 16 teachers (44%) from different school sites described a change in how they understood their students and the realities of their lives after attending funerals and

memorials. These rituals uncovered previously silent aspects of the students' lives; suddenly teachers became intimately connected to their family, friends, and community. Kelly noted that her student's funeral allowed her to see how much her student had touched other people. Jack agreed, noting that the memorial allowed him "to see how [his student] had impacted so many people beyond just his classmates—the admin, staff, community partners." Bill, Jack's colleague, expanded upon that experience:

> I could see people's reactions to [the killed student] and how much he meant to them. Could just see how much love there was there for him, you know. It's not just something you're aware of on a daily basis. So you know seeing that reality…I guess it changed my worldview of the deep impact people can have on each other, even though they're not really aware of it.…Some of his buddies, his gang-banger buddies from the street, they were just bawling. They just loved him so much.

Jack reflected further on the impact of that experience, later in the interview: "[My student's death] really let me see under the surface of students. There are people that care about them, there are people that love them. They've had a background." Kelly, Bill, and Jack were exposed to who their students were beyond what they knew of them in the context of the school and their classrooms.

Jocelyn remembered seeing her current students at a funeral for a killed student. She recalled being reminded of their humanity as she saw how they mourned for their friend. That shared experience allowed her to connect and build relationships with students in a deeper way:

> You see these wannabe *cholitos*, and I'm like, come on, yeah right. But they're human, we're human. They have a heart, they have a purpose, they can be in love. They might

be outcasts of society, but they are just like us, but with a different upbringing, with difference experiences, and I see that,…Yes. I can make the connection with them.

The death aftermath—the funeral and memorials—caused teachers to acknowledge and understand their students' worlds beyond the classroom and beyond preconceptions of their deceased students.

Finding Two: Teachers perceived the violent death of a student as a loss of investment.

Teachers whose practices were already relationally- driven felt stripped of their efforts when their students were suddenly killed. Ten out of the 16 teachers (62.5%) described the death event as a loss of investment. Teachers were affected due to the untimeliness of the death and the perceived wasted effort on their part. Students' deaths had an even greater impact on teachers when the students were beginning to make more positive life decisions after a period of difficulties. Jocelyn shared: "And I always question, why now? Why when he wanted to do good, when he started to turn his life around? He would have been the perfect example for students." Similarly, Kelly described the student death she experienced as "personal" because the student was trying to "turn it around." Jack shared a similar sentiment:

> You know, it feels very unfair, especially in this case, because the person was trying to make their life better.…He had already turned things around, you know, so it is very tragic, in that sense.…It definitely hurts a lot more because it seems a little unfair that he had already turned his life around, or was starting to turn his life around, trying now going in a different direction, and all of a sudden, bam!

Overall, teachers perceived certain student deaths to be less expected or deserved when the student had begun to shift away from previous socially stigmatized behavior to more socially normative and approved behavior.

Nine teachers expressed also experiencing student homicides as wasted professional effort. Jack saw his student's death as a "let down." As he described it, "[My student who was killed] was very ambitious. He had a lot of goals. He passed a majority of his classes in a couple months. He had a good head on his shoulders. It was kinda like a 'we did it' when he graduated. But when we found out [that he was killed], I considered it kind of meaningless. My work and the school's work." Valentino similarly expressed the disappointment his student's death had on his teaching team collectively: "When he passed the exit exam, we were all proud. Many of us had just invested so many hours, and to know that all those invested hours were taken away, just like that—what's the point?" Doug shared that student deaths challenged how much he had invested in trying to support his students to a seemingly purposeless end. "With that kind of experience, you know that kid, you know him by name, and you've met the mom, you've done it all, and you've kind of exhausted your resources on how to help this child," he explained. "Seeing the pictures of that kid with the detectives, and realizing, it's kind of awful." In all three of these cases, teachers described feeling low self-efficacy: for how much they felt they had put in to their students, they expected outcomes that would reflect their investment. A student's gang/gun-related death tested the incentive to continue to support students when the teacher and or school had invested a great deal of time, energy, concern, and resources in that young person with ultimately seemingly little return. In short, teachers who conceptualized a student's homicide as a loss of investment signaled that the death challenged their motivation and hope in the profession.

Finding Three: Teachers felt responsible for not preventing students' deaths and took responsibility in preventing future student deaths through interventions.

In teachers' descriptions of how they thought and felt about student death events, the theme of prevention, intervention, and self-blame consistently arose. First, because teachers felt responsible for not preventing the students' deaths, they assigned self- and collective blame. Second, the impact of experiencing the homicide resulted in teachers taking on new protective roles in their students' lives.

Student homicides caused teachers to feel as though they had failed at their job. In their interviews, five out of the 16 teachers grappled with their own responsibility for the death events. Jack was a second year teacher whose student was shot in the fall, just three months prior to the interview. With the event fresh in his mind, Jack noted that, "It's been tough. I think about this in terms of success and failure in my mission as a teacher. For awhile I considered myself a failure.…Still today…I feel like I've been able to let go of that and move on and realize it's not my fault." Maya's student was killed in 2005; in her interview, she repeatedly questioned: "What's my role? How can I help them? Am I helping them? Am I somehow getting through to them? Am I?… Am I really helping them? And at that point I wasn't sure." Joanna did not use the word failure, but she did state that she still held on to guilt from not being able to intervene in her student's death: "When [my student] was shot and we were calling on the phone and no one was answering—that was frustrating. Maybe if someone could have gotten there earlier, that wouldn't have happened." The perceived inability to prevent her student's death transferred to larger anxieties: "I started having a lot of nightmares. I had them periodically in the past about guns, about violence, about getting shot, and being in the situation where I had to protect other people. And I felt like I couldn't do it, in my dreams." Teachers felt guilt and

blame that then manifested beyond the day's teaching hours and affected their personal lives. These findings indicate a sense of helplessness when teachers felt that they should have been able to prevent the situation.

The notion of powerlessness in being able to prevent a student's homicide caused teachers like Karen a lot of pain: "The impact was hard; it was sad. He's gone, no one could reach him, no one could help him, no one could save him. It was hurtful." She continued, "The hurt was that I could not help him; I could not reach him to say, 'this is important.'…And it wasn't just me that couldn't reach him; it was all his peers that couldn't reach him.…With those boys, it's hurtful that somebody, not just me, but somebody couldn't have supported them. I don't know if [my student] was a junior or senior. He might have been a junior. He was at least seen by all these people by the time he died." By "all these people," Karen was referring to the number of teachers and adults who had presumably "seen," or taught the young man killed before his death, and yet, according to Karen, none of them intervened effectively in his life's destination. Joseph described his first student's death as "an empty feeling" and "inability to protect." He noted that, "if we [the staff] are the last resort and they [students who are members of a gang] don't get it, we can't help them get it. It feels so powerless." Likewise, a student death caused Doug to question his locus of control: "It's really shocking because this boy can be having a blast—like in the classroom, we hang out and we talk, and the next day he can be gone.…It's impacted me because it makes me realize that I see this bright eager student, he could be absent the next day, and what can I do?"

In sum, the shock and suddenness of a student homicide was exacerbated by teachers feeling they should have been able to prevent the event, but failed to do so. This translated into feelings of helplessness, disillusionment, and disempowerment.

Secondly, experiencing a student homicide caused teachers to assume new protection and intervention roles. Strikingly, all but one teacher (15/16; 94%) noted the direct connection between experiencing a student violent death and the resulting need to protect current students from situations they perceived as dangerous. Indeed, in conscious and subconscious ways, teachers' awareness of the contexts of their students' lives and the realities of community violence caused them to modify their interactions with them.

For example, Jocelyn recalled that right after the death of her student, "the only thing I remember telling him [the deceased student's brother]—and I kept insisting and repeating myself—don't retaliate. Please don't retaliate." At the same school and as a result of the same student's death, Diana described that every Friday before releasing her students to the weekend, she used to write, "Have a good weekend" on the board. After her first student was killed, she changed her words to "Have a safe weekend." Diana explained that she became hyperaware that she might not see some of her students return on Monday. Right after the death, and still years later, she implored her students to take care of one another over the weekend.

Richard noted that he worried about his students' safety, so he usually drove them home. Doug recognized the subtle ways in which student death had impacted his approach to students, instructing them not to walk home at night and giving them bikes to ride instead. He explained, "You start to think of these kids outside of the classroom, from my experience in all this; you don't give the kid a jersey with the number 13 on it when you're ordering uniforms." Joanna, too, felt a heightened responsibility for her students' safety:

> As a teacher, I would try to impart on them to be safe, to not run towards a fight.…While they are at school, I feel that's my job. My job is to keep them safe…I'm trying to help them, protect them, but I can't control them when they leave campus. I mean, I can't

control them when they are on campus either, but one of the things I've noticed is that when they are in class, they seem to be safer.

Her new expression of protectionism was highly connected to assuming a sense of control. Adam agreed: "[the student's death] heightened my feeling of responsibility. Kids are under my supervision, and I have to make sure it never happens under my supervision.…I take it very close. My attention is very strong. If I notice bullying, I immediately jump in to prevent further altercations. I try to make it a family setting to prevent altercations." In this case, Adam's protectionist strategy added a new role to his teaching practice: safeguard.

Karen noted that seeing current students fight often triggered anxiety that their behavior could result in violence or death. Right before our interview, there had been an altercation between two students. She explained: "We had a student today that got into an altercation with another student.…He got into this altercation and I was like 'Oh my gosh, please!' I was like, 'I'm not going to let you. Look at me.' We don't want to see him on the news, on the negative light." Likewise, Steve described similar conversations with his current students: "I try to talk to the kids: 'the way you're behaving right now… the next thing you're going to see is the pavement.'" Alex also intervened with students he perceived to be in danger: "Now I call them aside and I talk to them one on one. [He motioned to the empty chair next to him.] 'What do you have to gain from conducting yourself in this way?' [He motioned to himself] What can I do to intervene?" Doug mused, "Maybe you preach a little more than you did before and make sure they understand what these parties can be, and if you're at the wrong place at the wrong time." Teachers found themselves leading new conversations with students, taking on new intervention roles for students they perceived to be at risk for potentially getting killed. Joseph named the new role of teacher as protector directly:

> Honestly, I felt like, "Fuck, we gotta protect them."…What does it [student gang related homicide] make us do? It makes us protect them more. It makes [our principal] go down the hall every Tuesday and Thursday, after school, obviously he doesn't get paid for it, but he opens the gym. You know why? So they're not out there. We do after school clubs, why? So they're not out there.…We want to protect them.

Adam agreed. "We're kind of like the gatekeepers to these students' lives," he told me. "This all makes you tougher, I guess. I think it impacts me very subconsciously." These intervening and protectionist roles were additional manifestations of the aforementioned finding that teachers became more socio-emotionally attuned: not only did they become more aware of the contexts of their students' lives, they took on more active roles in their students' lives.

Teachers also described a stronger focus on their current students' postsecondary planning, which, in this sense, became a protectionist mechanism. They noted that if their students went to college, they would escape the dangers of their community contexts. Ten out of 16 (62.5%) teachers mentioned encouraging their current students to get to college and be successful as an outcome of experiencing a student death. As Joseph described, **"**We want to help them.…We want to help them get out." And, as Jack elaborated, "We [the faculty] are all impacted the same way. We've all grown from it. We are definitely investing more in our students' future, a collective shift."

In sum, for many of the teachers, intervening in students' direction in life appeared in one-on-one conversations, in literally intervening in fights in the hallway, in staying later after school, and in keeping students at the school and not on the streets. Others became more attentive to ensuring their students' matriculation to college as a means to leave home and leave the perceived danger.

Finding Four: Teachers tended to focus externally on the welfare of their students rather than internally on their own welfare in response to a student's death.

Five teachers explicitly noted that they put their students' processing and responses to their peer's death before their own, exhibiting secondary trauma behavior (Figley, 1995). Valentino, for example, remembered the initial staff reaction to the news about her student's death: "Everyone was so shocked at the moment, we had to think, number one, about what were the best interests for the students." At another school site, Diana explained: "You have to be strong because you have to tell these young people, young Americans, that you're sorry this happens, but let's do something about it, and let's move on." A colleague of Diana's, Jocelyn, illustrated how putting students' needs before her own affected how she experienced receiving support:

Students get some kind of help, but for us, I remember, the faculty needed to talk to someone, to a counselor, but they were mainly there for the students. And I felt, you know what, it's for them, let them get first dibs. But I never got the chance to go in and speak to anybody. And I held it in, and for the longest time, even after the funeral, and everything, even to this day.

Jocelyn's experience illustrates the long-term impact of prioritizing students' needs over her own. She repeatedly remarked how surprised she was at how emotional she was becoming during her interview. Miguel, her student, was killed in 2012, and two years later she was still experiencing unresolved grief. Joanna shared a similar delayed processing: "For me it didn't hit me until much later. I felt like I was on autopilot for a while. And I think because my students knew him and were connected, I felt pressure to pull it together." Likewise, Joanna spoke about the long term impact of "keeping it together" for students. She noted that after her students' deaths, there was a pronounced separation between home and school: "I've never cried at school.

Never cried. But when I go home at night…" she trailed off. "It's almost like I have to hold it in, and then I know it's going to happen, but I just have to wait until I feel like I'm ready to let it out."

According to secondary trauma theory, often it is the system itself that exacerbates the trauma. How systems respond to crises can actually perpetuate or create new trauma (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Saakvitne et al., 2000). In this case, the system is the school and the school district. For example, five out of the 16 teachers discussed the unexpected role of leading conversations with their students after a classmate was killed. Valentino's school administration gave each teacher readings to use for the conversations, but he did not receive any other support in how to navigate the process. Joseph described his apprehension on the Monday morning after a student was killed over the weekend, when he was instructed by administration to facilitate conversations about the death with his students:

> I had no clue what to do or how to do it. I had been dreading that day, I had been dreading that day all morning.…[The students] were sitting very much like this, like in groups, so you would see pods, and you saw that empty seat, and the kid that was sitting next to him was crying. And you could hear him sobbing and whimpering, and nobody is saying anything.

Not one of the five mentioned this role as empowering or as a part of reassuming agency. Instead, they all expressed feeling stressed with the responsibility to navigate their students' processes without adequate or thorough training and support.

Findings: Cognitive Appraisal and Resilience

Cognitive appraisal theory (Lazurus & Folkman, 1984) is used in psychology to describe one's emotional reaction to and evaluation of a stressful event. Through this theoretical lens, I

examined teachers' processes and responses to student homicide in order to examine whether there were certain predictive or preventative factors that cause teachers to positively or negatively cope emotionally. Fundamentally, people react differently to various events, and by examining emotional reactions across my sample, I was able to study whether teachers perceived student death events to be significant to their own well-being (primary appraisal) and if they thought they were able to cope after the death of their student(s) based on the resources available and who should be accountable (secondary appraisal).

The qualitative data support the quantitative findings presented in Chapter Four, in that secondary appraisal is highly correlated with resilience. As such, the following discussion is divided into two subsections: 1) teachers' primary appraisal, and 2) secondary appraisal and resilience. Regarding teachers' primary appraisal, there were three main findings: 1) the more student deaths teachers experienced, the more they expected and anticipated one of their current students to be killed; 2) student gang-related deaths threatened teachers' sense of personal safety; and 3) female teachers in particular reported the death of a student as a trigger to imagining the deaths of their own children. Regarding secondary appraisal and resilience building, there were also three main findings: 1) how teachers placed blame for students' deaths depended on how they felt about the student killed; 2) teachers built resilience through inspiration and support from current students; and 3) teachers created new roles after a death event, developing their autonomy and competency.

Risk, Concern, and Stress—Primary Appraisal

A central component of primary appraisal is that the event or phenomenon induces anxiety and challenges a person's sense of security and safety. If a person appraises an event to have negative outcomes, their overall stressfulness is heightened (Peacock & Wong, 1990). In

interviews, teachers reported feeling they were at risk, that they had elevated levels of concern for themselves and their students, and that they felt high levels of stress induced by student homicide. According to Lazarus (1991), these types of appraisals directly influence if and how teachers are able to cope.

Finding One: Teachers who experienced a student's violent death anticipated that another of their current students would be killed.

Five out of the 16 teachers (31%) reported that they expected that one of their current students would die. For those who had experienced multiple student deaths, the probability of a current student getting killed influenced how they made meaning of a singular death event. Dennis, for example, reported that he had experienced 24 student deaths in his teaching career. When asked how he made sense of this, he explained: "I guess after a while you don't want it [a student killed], but it's an expectation. You just hope it's not one that you know." Kelly, a teacher from a different site and region who had similarly experienced 23 student deaths, noted: All of these [deaths] were like two years apart. So it's kind of like, really? Another one?…So none since [2011], thank God. I almost anticipate it. Well, it's two years, it's going on three, yea! Going on four-yippee! Got through another year. I have to be honest about that.…I live in that anticipation that there will be another one, because it's the reality of it.

Joanna also said she lives with the stress of anticipated student death. After 11 student deaths, she described teaching with the lingering question of which student would be next:

> It's just one of those things that seems to repeat itself. Each year. I almost dread, "oh God, who is it going to be this year?" Every year.…I keep thinking this year will be the one it doesn't happen, and every single year it's happened.…To see as a teacher a cycle

of it, it's almost like a merry-go-round. Its like, "Who's it going to be this year?" I don't want it to be like that. That sounds jaded, but sadly I think it will happen again.

Out of the five teachers who reported expecting current students' deaths, Valentino was the only one who said he grew up experiencing community violence himself. He articulated an expectation that he would experience student death due to the context of the school where he taught: "When things happened like that, it was sad, it was awful. But at the same time, it came with the territory. It wasn't mind-blowing, like 'Oh my God, this kid got shot.' It was more like 'What do we do next, because it's gonna happen again.'" The compounded expectation that the situation of youth homicide will not change, that more students will be killed, is an influential factor in how these teachers coped and adapted to each death event.

Finding Two: Teachers reported that student violent deaths created a sense of threat to their own personal safety.

According to primary appraisal theory, threat refers to the potential for harm or loss in the future. Seven out of the 16 (44%) interview participants explicitly described anxiety and fear for their personal safety when they appraised student death events. Richard described that after the shooting of one of his students, he spent time thinking about what his school's plan was regarding school shootings, even though the student death he experienced was off campus in the nearby community. As he ardently explained:

> So [if] there is a gun on campus or someone shooting someone on campus, you're on your own. I wonder if I could be, if I would try to stop the shooter, or if I would lift a kid up and use them for protection.…Every school should have a plan, I should know what to do if there is a shooting on the other side of campus or near me…because we have a fire drill, so we should have gun drills.

He closed his interview by imploring me to to "push for teachers to have a gun on campus, or tasers," carefully explaining that he himself did not want a gun but he would feel safer knowing teachers were allowed to have mechanisms to combat potential violence, real or unreal.

Joanna, a teacher who had witnessed one of the 11 student deaths she experienced, also explained:

> I've noticed that I almost always want to know where the exits are when I go places. I almost always am looking for escape routes.…My brain goes to shooting, fear, it almost reinforces the fear, even though the odds are still low. I don't like to go places at night by myself. I feel like I'm always looking over my shoulder. Often times when I'm in a place I have to map out the exits, like I said. In my brain I play: If someone were to come in here and shoot, what would I do, where would I hide? Looking for hiding places is a bizarre thing.

Joanna exhibited a high sense of threat to her own personal safety, in addition to her students' safety. Similarly, Adam, a second-year teacher who was on campus during his student-teacher year and was in the vicinity when the fatal stabbing of a student occurred, explained that he had feared for his safety ever since:

> Are we in danger during school time? I started asking about lock down procedures at this school. Every teacher keeps their doors locked during school. It got me to think on a different level in terms of violence and schools.…I find myself thinking about it, having a plan. I'm not joking. If I was in a classroom and we were trapped in and I would come up with a subconscious plan of how to get students out. Okay, I'd break the window with this chair and get the kids out of here.

Adam visualized and mapped out escape routes. It is clear that he, too, appraised student homicides as directly related to his own safety. Similarly, after hearing that a student was shot near campus, Bill remembered constantly asking himself, "Is something gonna happen? I'm out here in the bungalow. I think then for a couple of days when class got out, I'm leaving right away, peeking around the corners. So in that case I felt, like, you know, unsafe." Although Maya's student was killed on the streets of South Central Los Angeles, and not on campus, she shared that the homicide had a "psychological impact on us [teachers], too. We think, 'Is this a safe environment for me? I can't waste my life in this kind of environment,' we think."

Joseph explicitly noted how the fear had manifested for him after the death of two students: "There's the lack of sleep, and the lack of sleep tends to go with the tossing and turning and self-doubt, fear. I think fear was the biggest and strongest one. What were you fearful of? The idea of it being so arbitrary, so quick, so sudden. There's no rhyme, there's no reason." Overall, it was common for the unexpected nature of violent deaths to cause these teachers to think about themselves in danger of violence that was out of their control.

Finding Three: The violent death of a student caused female teachers to imagine what it would be like if their own children were killed.

Out of the six women interviewed, four discussed how being a woman played a role in their process of meaning making and in the aftermath of a student death. Jocelyn repeatedly referred to her killed students as *mis niños*: "And that's what makes it hard," she explained, "and I think that's what made it really hard with [my student]. He became part of my family." Kelly understood her role with her students as their "mama." Diana felt it was a female connection that caused the mother of her deceased student to reach out to her after the death of her son. "The teachers are *maestras*, so she came to me, maybe, I don't know. I'm a woman too, you know?

I'm a woman too. Maybe because I'm close in age to her. Maybe there's something there." Likewise, as she described the death of two male students, Karen characterized the loss as maternal: "When both of them died, I felt like I had lost a child. Because all of them, I try to care for them. I have kids who call me mom. [My student who was killed] actually called me 'mom.'…I try to show them that someone loves them."

Secondary Appraisal & Resiliency Building

The factors that contribute to a person's secondary appraisal—a person's perceived internal and external resources of control—are highly related to the factors that contribute to a person's ability and likelihood to be resilient after a traumatic event. A high secondary appraisal of an event can mitigate a high level of stress from the primary appraisal. That is to say, if a teacher feels that the phenomenon of gang/gun-related youth homicide is not hopeless, and if the teacher feels that he or she has the necessary skills, tools, and support structures, the level of threat, anxiety, and stress triggered in the first stage of primary appraisal will be alleviated. As a result, this person would be able to cope (Peacock & Wong, 1990). Conversely, if a person does not believe him or herself to have the resources and supports at hand to overcome the situation, the stress from the event will be prolonged and prevent positive coping mechanisms. As discussed in previous chapters, resilience is one step beyond coping; it is the difference between thriving after a student's death and simply surviving the event.

Finding One: Teachers' perceptions of a killed student's circumstances, social conditions and behaviors mitigated how they placed accountability for the homicide.

Secondary appraisal can refer to how people assign culpability to a situation. When asked, "What has your experience been with student violent death?" teachers responded with a

narration of the death event itself, usually beginning with how many deaths they had experienced and then recounting the actual details of how the student was killed.

As they reflected on their feelings regarding the death event, nine out of 16 teachers mentioned they experienced surprise but not shock based on the perceived character of the killed student killed. Emotional responses—such as surprise and shock—infer different assignments of accountability for students' deaths. They either "had it coming" and therefore they were accountable for their own death (though the death was still a surprise), or they were innocent bystanders and therefore the blame for the death was unresolved (resulting in shock).

In describing one student death event, Dennis, a teacher of 20 years who reported experiencing approximately 18 deaths, explained: "Amongst those of us who had him, it was basically like no one was shocked, everyone was sad. Nobody wanted it to happen, no one was happy that it happened, but no one was shocked." He continued to share that the particular student in discussion "had it coming" because of his gang involvement. While Dennis experienced a sense of sadness at the loss of life, he noted the impact of this death was not as hard as it had been for other students when he did not expect it.

Likewise, Doug expressed that he "wasn't so much angry at that incident, because we saw it coming." Instead, the real anger and pain was "for the kids that weren't so tied up, like the girl who got shot in the car because her boyfriend was playing with a gun. That was an honor roll kid, that's angering. That's awful." In contrast, "[With] certain kids, if something happened, you think it makes sense." In reflecting on one particular student death, Valentino expressed a similar sentiment:

> When they told us a recent alum got shot, every teacher in there was like "Oh my God, who was it?" And when we heard it was him, we kind of realized, "Oh okay, he got shot."

> And it could've been something he could've avoided, because we knew him in ninth grade and his conditions were—we weren't really that shocked.

In contrast, as Doug alluded to above, some teachers described shock and a more prolonged impact when a student who they perceived not to be involved in gang activity was killed. Richard, for example, noted, "I've been at [my high school] since 1999, and I definitely remember the first student I ever had that died. She was in college in Oklahoma at a party and she got stabbed to death. And she was really nice. I imagined it was a mistake. The first one I will always clearly remember, because I was at school, and I thought they were kidding at first." In sum, how teachers cognitively appraised student death events often connected to how they perceived the student's character and environmental conditions.

Finding Two: Teachers built their own resilience through inspiration and support from current students.

Three teachers described their current students as motivators for helping them become resilient after a student's death. After feeling out of control and hopeless after the death of her student Miguel, Jocelyn found meaning in her current students' work:

> I see the progress, I think, "Oh wow, I am making a difference. They came in not knowing, and now they know." Not just skills, not just the knowledge that they gain, but the social interaction. I see it, especially in physical education, I see it a lot. They come in all shy and they don't want to work cooperatively with others, and they are forced to talk about character, and then they blossom. That's one of the most amazing things, I get to see them blossom.

Kelly shared the same sentiment, expressing that when students became hopeful and felt more efficacious through her teaching, that mitigated the grief she felt after one of her students were killed.

Joanna not only noted that she found inspiration to thrive from current student success, but also that after the death event it was her current students who supported her to proceed through her grief: "As an adult I don't like to lean on kids for my support," she explained, "but oddly, sometimes when they would come to me and want to talk about it, sometimes that was helpful for me." In making her classroom a safe and encouraging place where students were wanted, Joanna regained a sense of self-determination and competency.

Jocelyn also noted that she kept her deceased student's work as motivation. "So I guess why I keep [my deceased student's] papers too," she reflected, "so when I have situations where I'm going through this depression, and I feel like nothing's going right, I think, 'Just hang in there.'…And because [the killed student] expressed that, because they came to your classroom, they became better people, better students. I mean, what better work can you ask for?" Jocelyn returned to the memory and relationship with the student who was killed as a reminder of why she should stay in the teaching profession.

Finding Three: Teachers took on new roles after death events, and these new roles promoted their autonomy and competency.

In reflecting on what helped them access agency, teachers noted various new roles they adopted after their students' deaths, and this gave them a sense of regained purpose and control. After one of her students was killed, Joanna became an outspoken advocate to build a fence around her high school's open campus. As she described the need for the fence she paused, realizing that the event had occurred off-site: "The fence wouldn't have done anything for them,"

she noted. "I guess in a way I feel like there is a separation with what I can help contribute to keeping kids safe and what I have no control over. I don't have control over kids walking around in their neighborhoods." To reclaim control, she took on fighting for a fence around the school's perimeter.

Two teachers described actively participating in their students' funerals. Kelly, who is Catholic just as her student was, assisted Father Greg Boyle, Director of Homeboy Industries, at Dolores Mission Church—doing so "really helped me a lot in terms of my own closure." Steve had an active role in one of his student's funerals at the request of his principal: "[My student's] execution resulted in me having a very different place in that community." His leadership in arranging and leading portions of the service not only helped his own process, but it led him to subsequently take on new leadership roles. In fact, after one funeral, the retaliating gang asked to meet with him.

Lastly, three teachers described becoming school representatives to the families of the slain students. Doug wrote letters to a mother after her two sons were killed in separate homicides, something he had never done before. Diana recalled the mother of one of her killed students coming to see her:

> And so she's talking to me in Spanish, and I'm pulling out these words, you know. "Why, why, *por que, por que?*" And just crying, and this is in the hallway because she feels like she has to come over here and tell me personally. It's not like you and I might call the school and say 'Look, this is what happened." No, her debt is to come to me, to the *maestra*. You know, you go straight to the teacher, straight to the teacher. So it was hard. It was really hard. I remember holding her and crying.

Jocelyn had a similar experience comforting the mother of one of her students: "It was hard to even go up to her, but I did, and we hugged and she cried, '*maestra, maestro..mi hijo.'* She was strong, oh my God, she was so strong." Being the point person and the connection between the family and the school gave these teachers a sense of purpose and role.

Findings: Needed Supports

Support structures and resources are instrumental components of positive secondary appraisal and resilience. Per the social ecological model of resilience, resilience is demonstrated by how an individual navigates support and, at the same time, how the environment allows for "positive development under stress" (Ungar, 2013, p. 255). After a student violent death due to gang/gun violence, a teacher's sense of support and personal agency depends on the make up of his or her social ecology.

Interestingly, teachers in this sample did not name internal controls, such as spousal support and therapy, or self-care practices like yoga or meditation and the like, as significant supports in coping with a student's violent death. They predominately named external controls that the school site or district might have provided after a student was killed due to gang violence. Specifically, teachers reported three types of external supports they needed in order to cope: 1) to connect with other teachers at the site who knew the student; 2) to receive coherent communication and have greater access to information about the death event and aftermath of the death event; and 3) validation of the student's death through memorials and marked tributes to the student's life.

Finding One: Teachers reported a desire to connect with colleagues who shared the student death experience for support.

Eight of the 16 participants reported that connecting with colleagues who taught or had a relationship with the killed student was essential to the support they needed. In particular, they reported feeling alone and without anyone to turn to, and said they did not want the services provided by the district. Jocelyn, for example, recounted her need for connection with her colleagues, especially those who shared a relationship with the same killed student:

> We didn't get that opportunity.…[I needed] reassurance that I'm not alone. "Do we continue? Do we make changes?" I wanted more feedback from my colleagues as well. How they felt. And I wanted them to know how I felt, too. Just share. Knowing that I'm alone, like, "He just mentioned all those things," and it's like, "I'm not alone. I care just as much, like they do." A lot of times I think, "Am I the only one? No!" And we don't get a chance to really talk. We get to sit down at faculty meetings and we're only concerned about what's on task, but we don't get a lot of times for ourselves.

Joanna reflected on the support that she wanted but had not received when each of her 11 students was killed. "Man, if we would have had a meeting of teachers who wanted to talk about it on campus, maybe with those people helping us, it would have been so much more helpful. Talking about it then may have saved me some of the grief I've had to go through down the road." She continued, "At first I remember feeling a little embarrassed. I looked around and didn't see anyone else experiencing what I was. But then I realized that 'Oh, so many of those teachers have left. Maybe this has a hand in it.' I started to wonder, often—surely I can't be the only one who feels this way." Clearly, Joanna needed a sense of connectivity and validation from her colleagues in her response to the students' deaths.

Joseph reiterated the need for groups to be teacher-run versus district- or administration-led: "Where would you support or how would you be able to do it? There's too much stuff going

on. The truth is that teachers are not open to it. They see it as criticism. They see it as, "If I open my classroom to anyone…" they are exposing themselves to criticism." Richard firmly stated that he was not (nor would he be) open to district-provided support: "When students have been murdered or injured severely," he explained, "if someone needs somebody, they have to set something up. Because we're all district employees, they may say something that they have to tell their boss, and they are mandated to saying something, so there's hesitancy, at least on my part. I wouldn't talk to anyone from the district."

Here, teachers identified that the school climate—separate from the issue of student death—played a role in the supports they needed. All of the teachers I interviewed worked at schools in low-income communities with high rates of community violence, and these schools also tended to have low achievement scores and high teacher attrition rates. As such, the climate of trust or distrust set the context for why teachers did not feel safe or willing to open themselves up to their administration or district and expose themselves as needing emotional support. In fact, when school leadership or teachers themselves did discuss a death event, sometimes the conversations—often in large staff meetings—led to more distress and disconnection. Karen named the lack of connection to colleagues who had similar relationships with her two deceased students. Her colleagues' reactions, which were different from her own, exacerbated her stress:

> When you really care about your kids…When you don't have that back up or support, when something like that happens, its like, "Where am I? What is going on?" When I heard them [the other teachers] talking about [the killed student], I was like "Wow, no one deserves that!"…It's hard for me—its like a disconnect, no sympathy, no concern, no care. It's like, just another day. That's so sad—loss of life, anybody's life, should be sad.

Karen called for teacher-led support groups that would join her to colleagues who wanted to connect with the concern and care that she was experiencing. Jocelyn agreed—she needed support groups for teachers who shared the experience of having a student killed. As she recounted the faculty meeting after a student was killed in 2012, she communicated anger and resentment about the fact that the principal had opened up the meeting for teachers to share thoughts about the student and the event. She felt that teachers who did not know the student should not have spoken about him, and she yearned for a more private space with colleagues who did have a connection; she "would have liked…to sit with those teachers who knew [my student], and talk about him, and just let it out." Karen and Jocelyn, like other teachers, voiced the need not only to connect with colleagues but particularly colleagues who knew the student who had been killed intimately and might have a shared experience. Without that connection, they felt distanced and separate, at times even isolated, from their colleagues.

Finding Two: School systems' communication about a student death and its aftermath informed how teachers experienced support.

Teachers reported needing support from their administration and leadership through clear, relational communication and access to as much information about the death event and its aftermath (such as funeral and memorial details) as possible. Maya, for instance, spoke at length about how not knowing the details of the student's service prohibited her from attending. Understandably, she wished her administration had provided encouragement and more information: "I would want them to say, 'Tell me there are services and that I really want you to meet…'—[encourage me to] meet with somebody, give me the name of the person, the social worker." Similarly, Doug noted:

> I've always been an independent person. I would hope somebody would take the time to pull you out of the class to talk to you. To show that maybe you don't need it, maybe you do, but even if you don't, let's make sure you're okay. I would think that would happen for most public sectors, like police. If something like that happened, there's a protocol you have to go through to make sure you're okay to get back on the job. I've never seen that with teachers.

Teachers reported they wanted encouragement from the system, the administration, or site leadership, to attend the memorial. Five teachers explicitly mentioned that attending the student's memorial service was an important factor in feeling supported. Two reported not being aware of the necessary information and still, years later, wishing they had been able to go. As Maya described:

> Having been there [at the memorial] might have affected me, but I might have been able to deal.…And then to share that experience with other teachers and let them know this was something that happened, I don't know.…Because I'm imagining these things, like I'm imagining him lying on the street.…[I visualize] what really happened, what went down, and don't know what his family is doing now. Had I gone, I might have had a phone number, someone to contact.

Likewise, both Steve and Valentino, who were from different regions with entirely different student death experiences, described at length the importance of going to the memorial service to, as Steve said, "show care through time." Importantly, Steve was an active member of his school community. He was involved in theater, in student leadership, and was closely tied to the administration. He was a central figure in one of his student's memorials. And Valentino described it as a factor that promoted his and his school community's resilience. Valentino

taught at a small charter school; every teacher was told details about the memorial and teachers carpooled to the *velario* (wake). Both were in contrast to Maya, who actually worked at the same school as Steve, yet did not receive information about her student's death. As a result, she felt separated and detached from any information.

Indeed, teachers described a variety of ways in which they found out about their students' deaths. Five said they found out from current students and/or from Facebook. One was informed by a colleague, another via text message from her principal, and another via a memo issued by the principal; two teachers found out from the news. Teachers who mentioned how they found out about a death connected that to how they processed it. In her interview, for example, Maya underscored the relationship between notification and processing and response; she wanted to find out directly from administration: "I think I would want them [administration] to personally notify the teachers, in person, like say, 'Please meet with me, I have something to tell you,' rather than writing it on a flyer, which is so impersonal." Finding out through Facebook, memos and texts—impersonal and distant communications—exacerbated the stress of the death experience for some teachers.

Diana found out about her student's death from other students. Back from Christmas vacation, she noticed her student's empty seat. Another student called out that the student had died, and Diana described that moment as a "piercing sound." Recounting that moment in the classroom, Diana reenacted turning around quickly and looking at the empty chair. She described the challenge of processing the information herself and at the same time managing her students' reactions. She ran out of the classroom to get validation from the office that the student had, in fact, been killed.

A lack of information and, subsequently, an unmet need for validation of a student's death resulted in teachers searching for information on their own time. As Joanna explained, for each student death she has experienced, she has found herself (in both the long and short term) conducting Google searches for information:

> I found myself sometimes Googling the shootings of the kids. It's almost like, "Did it happen? Was I there? I'm going to Google that." I read an article and I'm like, "Oh, it did." One day last year I parked in that front lot [where Augustin was killed]. I didn't even realize that it happened to be the anniversary of the death. And that was weird. And then I'm like, "When was it?" I remember thinking about it, and then I looked it up, and it was that day. Or the kid Richie—I sometimes think I'm going to find something out. I don't think anyone was ever convicted. For Omar there were. For Andrew, they caught the kid who shot him, but he was in jail for something else. For Richie they never did, and you can go onto the *LA Times* and look it up and see the details and where it happened. Sometimes I find myself looking at that. Its like a weird pull for acknowledgement. You want the facts to it. It eases the envisioning to it. "Then what happened? Who did it?" It's like Googling an old boyfriend.

Adam similarly sought out more information than he was given, and instead of using Google, he turned to his master teacher, who was able to provide information. According to Adam, details about the event helped him make meaning of an event he found senseless:

> I had my master teacher to talk to. She was near the student. You want answers, you definitely want someone you can talk to. You can't bottle up that kind of emotional stress. You're going to go home and that stress is going to affect you as a teacher.…You want to know everything. Who was the kid? Who were the parents? I heard the kid

> grew up in a gang setting and the parents were ex-gang members, so the kid was automatically born into that type of family. The kid apparently wasn't in a gang. I wanted to know everything. What's the reason?…Could it have been stopped? What was the purpose of the violence?

Teachers needed coherent information in order to assuage anxiety and to speak to the unknowns that might have manifested in anxiety. How school systems communicated and disseminated information about the student death and its aftermath (e.g., the memorial) informed if and how teachers experienced support.

Finding Three: The practice of honoring the deceased student was a factor in teachers' ability to build resilience.

One of the ways that social ecological structures like schools can influence teachers' resiliency and allow individuals in a community to rise to their own resilience is by naming and addressing the death event. As such, a key factor in teachers' resiliency following the violent death of a student was the act of honoring the student's memory, whether through a ceremony or shared memorabilia. Joanna recalled:

> When [my student] died, I was pleased that the Boys and Girls Club came over and brought bracelets that had one of his favorite quotes on it [and] his name. I thought that was really cool, and the kids liked it. And I did. I mean, it was just a plastic bracelet but having that made me be able to connect and say, "Yeah, I had him and he was a really good kid." And I was able to start conversations with the kids about it.

Jack and Bill, who taught at the same site, both shared that their school painted a mural of Tupac and a rose emerging from concrete, with an actual white rose bush planted at the foot of the

mural in the student's honor. In each interview, they both noted how honoring the student had supported their processing of the event.

At Steve's former school, where he had experienced three student homicides, he and the student leadership installed a plaque under a tree "honoring fallen students"; they also created altars for other killings. In working with his students to construct the memorial, his students, colleagues, and he were able to process and have conversations about both the students and the larger phenomenon of gang-related deaths. Through those conversations and the collective act of creating a memorial space, he and his community were able "to think about it, talk about it, cry about it, express the grief about it.…I think what has to happen is that it needs to be marked somehow. It needs to be memorialized. It cannot be glossed over.…Honoring the person, their memory, going to funerals, going to events are important." In another school community, Valentino, an art teacher, said he keeps the artwork of a killed student hung in his classroom. Memorials can serve as a supportive means to process, and when the period of mourning is over, they function as a marking of the teacher's state in their grief process. After her student was killed in 2012, Diana and her colleagues hung black ribbons in the student's honor. Diana noted that the black ribbons were now gone: "There comes a time when you just have to put the stuff away already.…The memory is in your heart, the learning experience is in your brain.…I no longer need that visual reminder, so that's what anything posted up is—a visual reminder. So yeah, I put it away. But I didn't put him away. I can never forget about him."

Summary

In this chapter I have presented findings from the in-depth interviews conducted with 16 urban high school teachers, all of who experienced one or more students killed due to gang/gun violence. The data reveal that these teachers were affected by student homicides in that they

became more socio-emotionally competent in their work with current students. They also self-assigned blame and responsibility for the deaths in their past experiences and assumed new responsibilities geared towards intervening in future student deaths. Moreover, they exhibited secondary trauma behavior, as they prioritized their students' emotional welfare over their own. Teachers' cognitive appraisal and resiliency development were impacted by the ongoing experience of student death and, in some cases, perceptions that the death events created a personal threat to their own safety. Their overall stress was mitigated by new roles and relationships that allowed them to reclaim a sense of autonomy, competency, and significant relationships; this appeared in teachers taking on new roles in the death aftermath and in turning to current students for motivation and persistence support.

Lastly, teachers needed and wanted external support structures and systems that allowed them to connect with colleagues who had relationships with the slain student. They needed to receive information about the student's death and related events in a coherent, systematic, and personal manner, and to see the student's life honored at the school site as a means of validation.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The central goals of this research were to identify how to support and care for urban high school teachers when their students are killed due to gang-related violence, and to bring the research community's attention to this fairly emergent area of study. Given these goals, this discussion chapter summarizes key findings from the quantitative and qualitative components of the study, and then offers recommendations in three essential domains: urban teachers, school site leadership, and school districts and systems. In the final section, I discuss the limitations and strengths of the study itself and the ways in which it can inform future research.

Summary of the Findings

Quantitative Findings

Following the violent death of students, urban high school teachers' appraisal was evaluated in relation to their self-reported resiliency. Appraisal was assessed by primary appraisal constructs (if teachers perceived the event to cause harm or threat) and by secondary appraisal constructs (if teachers believed they had internal and external supports). Similar to Bailey et al.'s (2013) findings, I found correlations between primary appraisal (.860 at the .01 level) and overall appraisal and secondary appraisal (.556 at the .01 level) and overall appraisal. These correlations reflect the appraisal process wherein teachers' perceptions of harm or threat are mitigated by their interpretations of internal skills and the external agencies of support available to them.

Per the cognitive appraisal framework, secondary appraisal should have been positively correlated with resilience, and it was. Resilience as primary appraisal was not correlated,

however, and primary appraisal and secondary appraisal were not correlated—findings that differ from Bailey et al.'s (2013) study and that contradict what the framework would predict. Resilience was not correlated with primary appraisal but was correlated with secondary appraisal (.378 at the .01 level), which is in line with the definition of resilience and secondary appraisal: they share similar constructs, such as competency and autonomy (resilience) and control of internal and external resources (secondary appraisal).

Three significant findings emerged from the quantitative analysis. First, teachers who had experienced a student killed reported a high sense of resilience, perception of supports available and accessible, and a sense of hopefulness. While the data revealed three variables that influenced teachers' resilience (number of years in urban teaching contexts, number of homicides experienced, and training background in trauma), respondents overall reported a high perception of internal and external control resources.

Second, the model that predicts teachers' overall appraisal in the event of a student violent death contributes to our understanding of predictive factors and intervention measures for teachers who might experience higher levels of stress. In the event of a student violent death, teachers who self-report low resilience, who have experienced multiple deaths, and/or are older (age fifty and above) might experience higher levels of stress than those who self-report high resilience, have experienced fewer deaths, and/or are younger in age.

Third, neither time lapsed between the death event nor the degree of the relationship between teacher and student was found to be statistically significant. This is notable, and it diverges from previous research (Holland & Neimeyer, 2010). This finding implies that teachers' appraisal of a student's violent death merits attention, whether it has been ten months since the event, or ten years. Because teachers are rarely invited to develop a coherent narrative about

traumatic death experiences, and because this is a relatively understudied phenomenon, temporal spacing from a death event is not relevant to how teachers can be supported. Likewise, the degree of the relationship between student and teacher does not matter; if a teacher knew the student personally or knew of the student killed, the idea and impact of the death is not likely to influence the teacher's appraisal. The only exception was for the correlation between older teachers with more teaching experience who had a personal relationship with the deceased student.

Qualitative Findings

As earlier studies have found, violent deaths cause people to reassess their purpose, sense of self, and worldview (Armour, 2002; Bailey et al., 2013). The qualitative data in this study support those findings. Specifically, three significant themes are of relevance: First, teachers who appraised a student's homicide as negative and highly stressful experienced traumatic stress reactions such as hypervigilance, hyperarousal, and self-blame. Second, teachers became more conscious in creating safe classroom environments and building positive relationships. Third, teachers reported that their schools' leadership styles were a central mitigation factor for stress after the death of a student.

There was one important difference between the story told by the qualitative data and the story told by the quantitative data: Quantitatively, teachers reported that a student's violent death did not have major personal or professional significance for them, nor did they report that the event was highly threatening. In the interviews, however, this was a major theme. Per the cognitive appraisal framework (Lazarus, 1987), emotional appraisal is comprised of two constructs: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal theory examines if the

event—in this case, the death of a student due to gang/gun violence—is significant to the individual. If it is highly significant, the event becomes highly stressful.

Interview participants self-selected to discuss the event (insinuating significance); thus, this particular group might have been more stressed than the larger sample. For teachers who appraised the event as highly stressful, student deaths might have created heightened threat levels and hyper vigilance, feelings of disconnection, and self-blame. Self-blame frequently appears in the survivors of homicide victims; in this case, it may have stemmed from the inability of teachers to protect students from harm (Dane, 2000; Sharpe, 2013). According to Kliewer and Sullivan (2009), high threat appraisals are tightly coupled with maladaptive cognitions like feelings of personal failure, loss, and ambiguous threat. In the current study, teachers reported feeling their own personal safety was at risk, even though most often the death events had occurred off-campus and in contexts completely unrelated to the teacher. This might be connected to the context of gang violence: teachers might imagine retribution, or their own unfamiliarity with gang violence itself might lead to heightened anxiety because the nature of the violence is unknown.

Nevertheless, the ideas that the violent deaths could be random and that gun violence was a reality created a sense of ambiguous, uncontrollable threat. Importantly, teachers described feeling personally accountable for their students' deaths as well as for their current students' welfare. In gang/gun violence deaths, the perpetrator is often unidentified, and the justification behind the death seems unwarranted and random. Thus, teachers might self-blame as a way to gain a sense of control in a chaotic environment. Those who appraised a violent death event as highly stressful might have formed coping mechanisms to make sense of an experience that is often senseless.

Teachers reported that experiencing a student's gang/gun-related death changed their sense of professional purpose: They became more empathetic and sensitive to students' lives outside of the classroom, and the event itself increased their social emotional competencies. Similar to Granek et al.'s (2012) study on the impact of patient death on oncologists' professionalism, these teachers reported being motivated to increase care for students—a strong example of positive adaptive behavior. Like the mothers whose sons were killed in the study conducted by Bailey et al. (2013), teachers found meaning and opportunities to develop resilience as they focused on creating positive relationships with the survivors around them—in this case, their current students.

The theme of investing in positive relationships with current students had conflicting implications. On the one hand, after experiencing a student's death and/or the aftermath (such as a memorial or vigil), teachers reported an increased investment in current students' lives and welfare. On the other hand, they reported that when a student in whom they and their school community had invested a great deal was killed, they felt a loss of return, a wasted effort. They also reported anticipating another of their current students getting killed and they described the anxiety that the anticipation evoked. Thus, these findings present discord and a lack of resolution in how teachers engage with current students after a death event.

The qualitative findings further revealed that how teachers build resilience after a student death is interconnected with the types of supports they need in order to adjust, cope, and thrive. In a study of schools in violent communities, Maring (2006) found that teachers needed: 1) guidance; 2) structure; and 3) self-preservation. Similar to the current findings regarding teachers' secondary trauma behavior, Maring's respondents grappled with challenges in providing their students with guidance and structure while preserving their own mental health.

Respondents in this study echoed the need for guidance from school leadership in the form of encouragement to attend memorials and vigils, access to available supports, and structures that would foster a sense of connection between staff members and the school community. To be sure, as schools face student violent deaths, leadership is an effective mitigation factor (Donnelly & Rowlings, 2009). In fact, in a study of youth at a Miami high school experiencing high rates of homicide, students reported the perception of support to be more important than the actual received support (Berman et al., 1996).

Every teacher interviewed for this study reassessed his or her own competency in light of emotional stress. The ongoing nature of student deaths created persistent (not "post") trauma as it is commonly referred. This stress was not a zero-sum experience: it was not adaptive or maladaptive, but rather a process defined by resources and belief systems (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Unlike other research on the impact of violence on youth, however, these teachers did not show signs of internalizing their responses to violence (e.g., depression) or externalizing their responses (e.g., antisocial behavior, substance abuse, or maladaptive coping mechanisms such as disassociation and absence of empathy) (Buka et al., 2001).

Departures From Earlier Findings

In addition to the differences in this study's quantitative findings as aforementioned, Two main themes that the literature predicted would arise were that socio-culturally-charged appraisal factors, such as age, gender, race, class and religion, would factor into resilience, and that teachers would become active change agents against gun violence as a means of building resiliency. Neither of these themes significantly emerged from the data in the current study. The fact that sociocultural factors did not arise as predictive factors for appraisal or resiliency in neither the quantitative nor the qualitative data contradicts Bailey et al.'s (2013) study, which

pointed to the importance of a religious and/or spiritual framework for Black mothers following the loss of a child to homicide. Race and ethnicity also did not run as significant predictive factors, nor did teachers report these aspects of their identities to be central to their meaning making process, as had been found in previous studies (Goldsmith, Morrison, Vanderwerker, & Prigerson, 2008; Achinstein et al., 2009). Indeed, teachers mentioned their personal experience with community violence: seven out of sixteen interview participants (44%) identified with their deceased students because they themselves had personal experience growing up with gang culture. The remainder of teachers reported unfamiliarity with community violence and mentioned not being from the same community as their students as a factor in how they appraised the death event(s). Nevertheless, teachers did not develop a coherent narrative around their own identity and its relationship to how they understood the deaths of their students. While other research has posited that how people understand a violent death of a student is socio-culturally charged, the current findings do not fully indicate that teachers understand death from their own cultural frameworks or in relation to their understanding of the communities in which they work (de Joop, 2007) in any major way.

As discussed in Chapter Four, race/ethnicity did affect teachers' appraisal ratings to some degree. Nevertheless, race/ethnicity did not present as a statistically significant predictive factor in overall stress scores. African American/Black teachers did have the highest primary appraisal score, representing a high stress response to student death. Likewise, they also presented the highest mean score for resilience, contradicting what the framework would predict. That is, African American/Black teachers self-reported the highest levels of resiliency; they had the highest perceived threat and challenge, but their mean score of secondary appraisal (resources available to mitigate perception of harm and threat) was roughly in line with the average score

overall. As discussed above, the framework would predict a pattern of high resilience and secondary appraisal, not resilience and primary appraisal. Moreover, while teachers' race and ethnicity was not a significant theme in the interviews, some teachers who identified as African American/Black or Latino/Chicano did mention their own upbringing in relation to personal experiences with community violence. For example, Karen, a teacher who identified as African American, closed the interview wondering about the future for African American girls after so many African American boys were getting shot and killed. Her meaning making was primarily regarding her students' identities, however, not her own.

The theme of activism, or teachers taking on a role to change or fight against gang violence, likewise did not appear in the interviews. Cognitive appraisal theory posits that the appraisal of the immediate impact of the event is important, but how the teacher might contemplate changing the conditions that created the event is also relevant (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Bailey et al. (2013) found that mothers whose sons were killed violently used activism against gun violence as a main mechanism to regain control and build resiliency. Similarly, Parappully et al. (2002), in their phenomenological study, found that resilient characteristics like activism allowed parents to thrive after the traumatic loss of their murdered children. Relatedly, Gratch and Marsella (2004) discussed two types of coping strategies: problem-focused, aimed at changing the environment of the problem, and emotion-focused, aimed at dealing with internal emotional regulation after a traumatic event. For example, events appraised as "undesirable but controllable motivate people to develop and execute plans to reverse these circumstances. On the other hand, events appraised as uncontrollable lead people towards denial or resignation" (Gratch & Marsella, 2004, p.1).

Interestingly, participants in the current study did not reflect either type of coping strategy, nor did they discuss activism that might combat gun/gang-related violence or its impact on schools and their classrooms. While one participant discussed how his active role as a teacher leader in his school allowed him to access resiliency-building opportunities—because he was already connected to groups of teachers and students that allowed him to process his students' deaths—his activism was already in place before the death events. While teachers' activism could be evident in the shift in focus in their teaching (relationship-based, focus on postsecondary opportunities, etc.) as a form of activism, teachers did not express political activism against social factors that cause gang violence and youth homicide. Perhaps this theme did not arise in interviews because these teachers may have perceived their presence in urban high school contexts and the profession of teaching itself as a form of activism.

The quantitative and qualitative data both demonstrate that traumatic loss is not linear, but rather a dynamic experience that requires ongoing coping responses. Teachers described unique experiences that were similar and yet diverged from experiences of violent death in other helping professions. Building from Horowitz, Weiner, and Jekel's (1995) term "compounded community trauma," perhaps a new term, "teacher compounded trauma," might be more useful in thinking about how to understand and support urban high school teachers' process and responses to student violent death. As the data indicate, student deaths triggered other types of student traumas. Teachers spoke about students' miscarriages, abuse experiences, tertiary traumas from witnessing violence, and more. They also frequently discussed deaths they had experienced in their personal lives—gang related or not. As such, student gun/gang-related deaths triggered other traumas that teachers were living with and confronting on a daily basis, and they became part of their complex relationships with the teaching profession.

Recommendations

Urban Teachers

As reviewed in Chapter Two, in order to be resilient following a student death, teachers need to feel competent, autonomous, and have significant relationships so that the event can become transformative. This can be achieved in a number of ways. First, similar to Bailey et al.'s (2013) implications, the current findings suggest that teachers must have and create opportunities to advocate for and get involved in purposeful activities in memory of their students. While some teachers voiced a desire for the school system to create those opportunities for them, others took on active leadership roles, in which they themselves fostered a sense of control in a context that is very out of control.

Second, because these teachers were working in compounded trauma teaching contexts, the data suggest that they would benefit from a practice of self-knowledge and mindfulness—a practice that does not hinge upon external resources. Mindfulness is a term that references "a particular kind of attention that is characterized by intentionality, present moment focus, and nonevaluative observation of experience" (Brodrick & Jennings, 2012). Mindfulness in urban schools is rapidly capturing national attention: schools from Oakland, California, to Nashville, Tennessee, are finding resonance in adopting awareness and emotional regulation skills in communities living with ongoing traumatic stress. In a recent multisite study, researchers found that mindfulness-based approaches supported urban youth by increasing their own capacity to adjust and cope with persistent stress (Mendelson et al., 2010). If, as the current findings suggest, the anticipation of a student getting killed creates ongoing stress, teachers should to be aware of and reflective about how that stress manifests in themselves and impacts their teaching practices.

A rigorous self-care regime must be a part of any teacher's professional practice; it is an essential factor in strengthening individual competency in dealing with youth homicide.

Third, because teachers are not only part of a transactional relationship with their students but they are also implicated in helping students navigate the death of a classmate, teachers must unite and together create a culture of directly addressing the event. Teachers repeatedly reported in their interviews that they felt a familial-like relationship with students. As such, it is helpful to refer to Bowen's family systems theory (1974), which suggests that human behavior does not operate in isolation, and that family members are interdependently connected. When teachers like Oliver, Valentino, Steve, or Diana experience prolonged stress or related emotional distress, so too will their students, and vice versa. And when teachers like Jack, Jocelyn, Adam, or Maya address a traumatic death and model emotional adjustment, their students can benefit. While this may be perceived as the placement of more responsibility on teachers, in fact this is an opportunity for teacher empowerment.

Lastly, a primary mediating factor for ongoing stress for students is the social cohesion of the adults in their environment (Wingo et al., 2010). Therefore the interdependent relationships cannot be between teacher and students only, but also between teacher and fellow teacher. School leadership has a role and responsibility in fostering that culture, but so do teachers themselves.

School-Site Leadership

As evidenced by the data, teachers might register a student death as significant and as a severe stressor, and each may process the event differently. Leadership must be trauma-informed and sensitive to the variety of ways that staff might react, as well as the different needs

of each adult staff member. Indeed, this study's findings make clear that school environments can either mitigate or exacerbate emotional distress among teachers.

The quantitative and qualitative data indicate that, for some teachers, professional development organized after a student's death supports teacher resilience. Some teachers in this study experienced unnecessary additional trauma when their school leadership did not appropriately handle the death event aftermath. According to Ungar (2013), resilience is about an individual navigating support and, concurrently, about how the system or environment "has the capacity to provide resources in ways that are culturally meaningful" (p. 256). This definition purposefully decentralizes the individual teacher and examines the system as a whole in effort to alleviate blaming or stigma of the individual, which can contribute to an individual's prolonged or complicated grief (Ungar, 2013).

Teachers in this study called for a certain type of principal leadership to lead schools that experience gang-related student homicides. Steve, for example, offered specific guidelines:

> Ultimately it comes down to [having a leader who understands staff needs]. You need to have a leader who will step forward and step up and serve as a liaison. I've done that role—the liaison between the teachers, administration, and the students. A clearinghouse so to speak.…You need someone to be a clearinghouse. You need a way to get through the grief, to get through the incidents. Everyone is very different with it. Some people don't feel much at all, or barely knew the kid. Some are devastated. Some are reminded of all the other times it has happened.

Along these lines, two main suggestions emerge from the teacher interviews: 1) the value of episodic, event-specific support of teachers; and 2) the need for ongoing, process-oriented support of teachers. That is, teachers need school leadership not only to appropriately address a

student death event itself, but also to recognize the chronic traumas and environmental stressors that they work with and through. The recognition of chronic stressors can in itself be an important stress mediator.

School-site leadership can provide ongoing, process-oriented support in a number of ways. First, leadership should develop coherent safety plans and communicate them thoroughly to staff. Teachers in this study felt unsafe and threatened by student homicides near their campuses, and they wanted their schools to create safety plans. Such plans might provide teachers experiencing hyperarousal or an elevated sense of threat a sense of safety and knowledge that administration is accounting for their welfare. As such, safety plans can play a symbolic role in ensuring teachers' psychological safety. But these safety plans cannot simply exist in the administrative office. Rather, they must be communicated to staff members in case a teacher is experiencing hypervigilance. Secondly, teachers need mental health support services not just in the short term after a student death, but year-round.

Support is not just static after an event, but should be chronic, just like the trauma. School leadership should be operational and instructional, as well empathetic to staff needs. Leadership in urban high schools must be attuned to events in the community in order to support school staff. For example, students are frequently killed over the weekend, during summer months, or over holiday breaks. School leadership must be highly aware; if a young person is killed, the teachers need information and facilitation to come from the school leadership.

The findings additionally provide insight into what supports teachers need in the short-term after a student is killed. First, teachers should be notified of the death in person: albeit that this practice was specifically mentioned by three teachers, other teachers spoke about the exacerbated trauma they experienced from finding out about deaths through impersonal

communications like Facebook, the news, memos, or even intercom. Principals may need to distribute written notice of a student's death, per district regulations, but this should not be the only means of communication. Second, school leadership should notify teachers of the supports offered and encourage them to utilize mental health opportunities. Third, leadership should communicate memorial or funeral details to staff, and allow staff to attend. While some may choose not to do so, the current qualitative findings suggest that participation can be a mediating factor in a teacher's appraisal of the death event, and as discussed above, have a long-term impact on his or her approach to teaching. Fourth, school leadership should support the creation of a memorial for the student on campus. Recognition of the death in such a way is important to teachers' (and, presumably, students') grieving processes.

Teachers further indicated a desire for the creation of space for teacher-led professional development and support groups. These support groups might be facilitated by a liaison trained in grief support but should not be led by someone in an administrative role, as some teachers may be reluctant to participate in a group mediated by a supervisor. School-site leadership can identify teachers who have experienced student death in the past and provide opportunities for them to lead professional development activities, thereby cultivating autonomy and competency. As Kliewer and Sullivan noted, "in regard to violence exposure…threats evoking concerns about one's value are linked to the core need to feel competent…to the core need for relatedness to others" (2009, p.863).

School-site leadership may want to encourage customized support groups for different populations, perhaps by ethnicity or age group, or by experience with student death, as demonstrated by the quantitative model I presented that predicts which teachers might be more at risk for high stress after an incident. Additionally, from the qualitative data, teachers called for

support groups led by colleagues who shared a relationship with the deceased student. Previous studies have shown that homogenous groups create a "greater sense of belonging and support among group members, resulting in diminished symptoms of posttraumatic stress reactions and other favorable outcomes" (Sharpe, 2013, p. 9). Sharpe (2013) also noted that for communities of color, "greater value and emphasis is placed on relational coping strategies such as seeking help and support from family and friends rather than acquiring support from formal support networks" (p. 4).

Urban School Districts and Systems

Together, the quantitative and qualitative data illustrate that teachers often do not find the services offered to them by their districts to be effective. In fact, at times it exacerbated their feelings of disconnection. Furthermore, the degree to which teachers felt knowledgeable of trauma-informed teaching practices highly correlated with how they appraised the death event. District- or organization-sponsored training was often random and non-intentional, if it existed at all.

Given the current lack of available district and system resources available to teachers, and the stated importance of these resources in the data, urban districts should carefully reexamine their roles in supporting urban teachers as they deal with traumatic violence toward students. In order for principals and school site leadership to create environments that foster resiliency after such an event, urban school districts must reexamine how they address the impact of gun violence on the schools they serve and provide distinct services for teachers and their school leadership. Such services may include guidance in the development of strong safety plans for schools, and coherent training and guidance for schools and their systems as they develop trauma-informed practices. Lastly, school districts often hold policy power over school sites,

impacting how school-site leadership can support their teachers. Teachers in the current study frequently complained of having to use personal time to attend a student's memorial, and this prevented some from attending. Support should not just appear at schools in the short-term and in the form of triage or crisis management, but should manifest in ongoing implementation to foster the environment necessary for teachers, teacher-leaders, and school-site administrators to survive and thrive.

For teachers, school-site leadership, and school districts, all of these recommendations must be considered in the context of two trauma-informed approaches[6]: traumatic loss is socio-culturally bound (de Jong, 2007) and trauma is universal. The teachers who participated in this study understood student homicides in relation to larger sociocultural issues. As Sharpe (2013) noted, surviving a homicide is a "multidimensional and complex process. How someone resolves/handles this loss is likely impacted by many factors that go beyond just the event or their relationship with the victim" (p. 1). In fact, Sharpe named the sociocultural response model to coping as "cultural trauma." That said, each adult's response to and processing of a student's death is unique and bolstered by his or her own belief system. As these data suggest, this type of event can trigger other traumas that teachers have experienced. As such, members of the urban school community may be even more empathetic and compassionate to one another than their counterparts in other contexts.

Finally, a central trauma-informed practice is the assumption that trauma is universal. Here, this suggests that all adults in a school interact with the assumption that everyone is impacted by a student's death, not only the teachers who may have taught the student directly. It

[6] See The National Center for Trauma Informed Care (NCTIC) for more information on trauma-informed practices (http://www.nasmhpd.org/TA/NCTIC.aspx, DOA 5.22.14).

also suggests that school districts should approach every school under their guard with the same policies and practices of teacher support. It may be useful to target schools situated in higher rates of community violence, but the current findings suggest that the frequency of student homicide is not an important factor—a single student death is enough to merit short- and long-term support.

Finally, it is essential to note that the support teachers need in order to survive and thrive after a student's homicide cannot fall on teachers themselves. Oftentimes teachers felt they needed to ask for support resources themselves. Additionally, it might seem in my recommendations that I suggest it is on teachers themselves to ensure self-care and manage their classroom's well being. I am not. What needs to occur for teacher mental health in general and much more specifically in the context of a student's homicide is a systemic issue. Local and statewide systems must recognize that for schools that sit in areas of high community violence, teacher wellness is essential and must be prioritized.

Limitations of the Study

Although every effort was made to create and implement a comprehensive study of urban high school teachers' cognitive appraisal of and resiliency after a student's gang/gun-related death, this study does have certain limitations. First, there were limiting factors that impacted data collection: 1) schools do not track the number of student homicides; 2) student transience challenges the ability to target teachers who may or may not have had a relationship with a particular student who was the victim of homicide; and 3) teacher transience challenges the ability to study the spectrum of impact at a single site. The sites and teachers included in this study represent a particular view on the study issues. Other settings and participants may have yielded different results.

The study sample was self-selected. I only interviewed teachers who volunteered to participate, thereby excluding the voices and lived experiences of others who may have had different appraisals of a student's death but did not feel comfortable or willing to express them. Because participation in the study was optional, the resulting sample may have been biased or skewed toward particular perceptions and/or experiences.

The choice and implementation of the measurements themselves may also have limited accurate data collection and analysis. I utilized instruments that had been previously validated, but with modifications to make them relevant to this study. For example, the Stress Appraisal Measure (Peacock & Wong, 1990) was specifically constructed to measure anticipatory stress and perception of future events, but I modified it to capture perceptions of the past and present year's events. Similarly, I did not use the entire CD-RISC 25 but rather asked participants only four of the original 25 questions. I did so not only for the purpose of time, but also to mirror other studies like Bailey et al.'s (2013) that used this approach. Unlike Bailey et al.'s study, which measured cognitive appraisal and resilience following a death, however, I measured present (current year) death, and defined the past as any experience previous to the current year. Doing so allowed me to recruit a larger sample. Had I replicated Bailey et al.'s study, I could have measured the potentially stronger relationship between resilience and secondary appraisal compared to the relationship between resilience, as well as primary appraisal and the reciprocal nature of stress and appraisal and stress and resilience.

In this study, teachers answered the survey reflecting on one specific death instance, but for teachers who had experiences multiple deaths, different experiences with student homicides may have conjured different appraisals. This approach assumed that a teacher who had experienced 10 student deaths, for example, processed and responded to all of them in the same

manner. In a sense, I treated episodes of death events like one culminating experience. It is not possible to determine whether the completed surveys measured episodic or chronic experiences with the violent death of students.

Traumatic loss is an ongoing experience, and my study captured only a single moment in time. For many teachers in this study, this was their first time processing and discussing this type of event, and their first opportunity to develop a coherent narrative around a student's death. If the same teachers were interviewed again today, they might tell a different story. Thus, while the current study is an important starting point in the examination of this important phenomenon, it is by no means the end. In the same vein, the study's scope was limited in that I did not investigate preexisting protective factors that may have influenced teachers' self reported resiliency.

Finally, this study is potentially limited by my own biases as the principal researcher and as a former urban high school teacher who has experienced the death of students due to gang violence. To assuage potential biases of this type, I engaged with outside researchers in the coding and interpretation of survey and interview data.

Strengths of the Study

Though there are several limitations to this study, there are important strengths and contributions as well. Although, like Howard et al. (2002), I was unable to correlate negative or positive teaching outcomes specifically with violence exposure (confluence of risk factors), I did identify factors that predict certain teachers to be more at-risk for high stress and traumatic loss than others. This equation is new and potentially carries great utility for school-site and district leadership, if not for teachers themselves to increase their own self-awareness. Further, this study brings attention to neglected constructs in stress research. As described in earlier chapters,

the urban teacher experience is rarely examined, specifically when it comes to secondary (seen or heard) and tertiary (learning of) student violent gang-related death. My sample included various types of schools (structure, size, geographic zone), and mirrored Dods' (2013) study, in which he argued that such a diverse sample "supports[s] the idea that the struggles and needs of youth affected by trauma cross socioeconomic status groups and that there are shared commonalities specific to trauma" (p. x). Likewise, my study suggests not only that there are shared commonalities among teachers specific to the traumatic loss of a student, but also that this type of loss can be not simply transactional, but transformational.

Importantly, a central strength of this study is its contribution of teachers' voices to the literature. This study provides profound insight into teachers' lived experiences and quarries what supports teachers themselves report to need in the event of a student's gang/gun related homicide. Through this study, we have the opportunity to listen and learn from teachers who are working in challenging environments and contending with the realities of student death. Indeed, the implications of this study can support pre-service teachers, teachers who work in similar contexts and either have or may experience a student homicide, school site leadership practices, school system policy, and beyond.

Suggestions for Future Research.

Because this study is phenomenological in design, it should lead to much future research. Indeed, when approached for participation, principals, counselors, other school staff frequently voiced the desire to participate—they wanted their experiences voiced. Because this phenomenon is environmental in nature and because many of the recommendations implicate other actors in the school system, future research might examine the cognitive appraisal and resiliency response and process of wrap-around staff and administration, as well as district

leadership. Furthermore, this study was bounded to urban high schools, but homicide is the leading cause of death in youth ages 10 to 24. As such, the experiences of educators at middle schools and institutes of higher education should be explored. A deeper understanding of their experiences would enrich our understanding of this phenomenon greatly.

As mentioned in above, this was the first opportunity that some teachers had to develop coherent narratives about their experiences. Moreover, it is quite possible that due to time limitations and emotional regulation, some teachers were only able to share surface level reflections on their experiences. Consequently, future research should include longitudinal studies to allow for these issues. Moreover, while my study provides strong evidence that teachers' self-concept as professionals is impacted by a violent student death, there is room to examine how, for example, a resulting more humanized pedagogy may then transfer to students' cognitive performance.

Lastly, future research should examine the transferability of the current findings to teachers' experiences with other forms of student death. I repeatedly met teachers who wanted to participate in this study because they had experienced a violent student death that was not gang/gun-related, including from car accident or suicide, as well as non-violent deaths due to illness. All of these experiences deserve attention. Future studies might also look at the impact of mitigating factors that this study found to be important. For example, future research might compare the experiences of teachers who participate in grief support programs to a control group.

Concluding Remarks

All too often we conceive of trauma as debilitating and pathologizing, yet, as this study illustrates, urban high school teachers are resilient in the face of trauma. Despite this resilience, however, it is evident that following a student's violent death, teachers' mental health and

welfare demand attention. Teachers in urban communities that experience compounded, ongoing violence are first and secondary responders, and they must be prepared and treated accordingly.

At the end of each interview, I asked participants what the research process was like for them. Their words underscore the powerful need for continuing work in this area:

> Kelly: Anyone who says this isn't worth talking about is disconnected. You don't have to come from it to be touched by it.…Your study is viable. I'm not the only one with multiple deaths. Especially being in this neighborhood, or choosing to teach in this neighborhood, you're signing on for that. It's part of the package. Do you choose to be a part of it? It's going to happen. I anticipate it. Do I look at a kid and say, "Oh, are you going to be one of them? I hope not." But you just don't know.

> Steve: It was good to remember. Like, I couldn't even remember Byron's name. I had to stop. I'm a big talker about metacognition. I was fascinated that in the past couple weeks, even the thought of this interview—it was like one memory after the other.

> Joanna: In some ways [this interview] almost feels empowering to me. It's like acknowledging that I have made it through something like this. I'm not trying to take anything away from the kids. I feel like I'm kind of a survivor of this, too. And if it does happen again—and I hope it doesn't—I do have coping skills. But I really had to fish them out for myself. It's made me feel better and has given a voice to what I've gone through, and has acknowledged that this is not an easy thing to go through, not something to sweep under the rug. Teachers, too, experience it.

And as Diana's interview closed, I asked her what it was like for her to speak with me. Crying, she expressed that she had not realized she was still emotional about the death:

> Thank you for thinking that this needs to be.…Wow, thank you for thinking about teachers. I never thought about that.…We're warriors. Bottom line, we are warriors and we are resilient people, and this neighborhood, when people come from here, they are already warriors. Because there's no one out there who is not a warrior that is going to put themselves in a situation like this.

My hope is that this study sparks further investigation and dialogue about the disenfranchised grief that teachers may experience, reframing community violence with the same sense of urgency that we do with natural disasters or tragic accidents. This study brings to light the importance of violence-related deaths, with a particular focus on the implications and aftermath of these deaths for teachers. Each student killed by gang violence demands the same attention, and each educator in the young person's school community deserves to teach in a culture of care and concern, a culture that supports them as professionals and as people. We can learn a great deal from these teachers, these warriors, but we must be willing to listen and ensure their voices are heard.

APPENDIX A: Letter of Consent

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Urban Teacher Process and Response to Violent Student Death

Leora Wolf-Prusan from the department of education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you teach at a high school situated in community violence. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not adversely affect your relationship with your school site or any other affiliated organization/agency.

Why is this study being done?

I am interested in examining the impact of violent student death (past or anticipated) on urban high school educators.

I am interested in looking at how teachers understand the death of their student and how they cope with the loss.

I am specifically interested in learning about how losing a student impacts you both professionally and personally.

What will happen if you take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- You will complete a questionnaire that provides demographic and contextual information as well as information about how you process[ed] and respond[ed] to a student death event. This survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.
- At the end of the survey, you have the option to volunteer to be interviewed.
- If you volunteer to be interviewed, I will ask that you participate in a sixty to ninety minute, face-to-face interview with me. We can schedule a convenient date, time, and location for the interview.
- With your permission, I will record the interview.
- All study materials will be safely stored for three years according to federal regulations; if the data are not needed after that point, I will destroy all materials.
- I will protect both your identity and that of your school by giving pseudonyms and disguising identifying information.
- You should understand, however, that I may quote directly from our interviews but will not use your name in any part of the study and any identifying information will be disguised.

Initial here for consent: _____

How long will you be in the research study?

Participation will take a total of about twenty minutes for the survey and approximately 60-90 minutes for an interview. The survey will be administered between September and October 2013. I will follow up with you if you choose to volunteer for an interview in November and if selected for an interview, I will contact you to arrange a convenient time and place of your choice to conduct the interview. I aim to conduct interviews between January 2013- February 2014.

Initial here for consent: _____

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that you can expect from this study?

- There may be a risk in that I am asking you to examine sensitive personal information, which may bring up powerful emotions. At any time during your participation in this study, you may withdraw without any negative consequences.

Initial here for consent: _____

Are there any potential benefits if you participate?

- You might benefit from having the opportunity to voice your experiences after one of your students has died.
- The results of the research may help school districts and sites themselves address the needs of teachers after a violent loss and how this may impact the quality of life and well being for teachers.

Initial here for consent: _____

Will you be paid for participating?

- If you choose to participate and take the survey, you will be automatically entered in a pool to receive an Amazon gift card.

Initial here for consent: _____

Will information about you and your participation will be kept confidential?

- Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

- I will be the only person reviewing and transcribing the interviews and will maintain your confidentiality by keeping the signed consent forms separate from the interview data. I will erase the tapes after transcription. I will not use your name in any written materials and every effort will be made to disguise your identity.

- Individual interviews will be audio- recorded. You have the right to review, edit or erase the research tapes. You have the right to review the recordings made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

Initial here for consent: _____

What are your rights if you take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Initial here for consent: _____

Who can you contact if you have questions about this study?

- **The researcher:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

  Leora Wolf-Prusan

415-412-2709
Lwpucla2014@gmail.com

Alternatively, you can contact the researcher's dissertation co-chair, Dr. Christina Christie:
Tina.christie@ucla.edu

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
  11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant | Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining Consent | Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent | Date

APPENDIX B: Survey Instrument

Thank you for your willingness and interest in taking this survey. A couple things to keep in mind before you begin:

This survey is the first part of my study **examining urban high school teachers' processing and response to student violent death** (due to guns/gangs/homicide). At this time, I am not studying other student deaths such as suicide or accidental deaths.

I am looking at **both deaths experienced in the past** and **also those anticipated in the future.**

At any time, you are free to stop the survey. At the end of the survey, there will be supports available to you should you feel the need to access them.

If you have any questions whatsoever, please feel free to email Leorawp@gmail.com or contact Leora directly: 415-412-2709.

Thank you for your time, truly.

The following are quick demographic questions.

Age:
Ethnicity:
Gender:
Marital Status
Single
In a committed partnership
Married
Divorced
Widowed
How many children do you have?
Religious/spiritual affiliation:
Type of teaching credential:
Number of years teaching, total:
Number of years teaching at current school:
Grade(s) you currently teach:
Subject you currently teach:

The following questions focus on your experience with student violent death.

Have you ever experienced a student's death due to violence?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No

During your teaching experience,

Approximately how many students have been killed off site (i.e., not on campus) in the nearby community where you personally taught/teach?

Approximately how many students have been killed off site (i.e., not on campus) in the nearby community that you may have known but perhaps were not your direct students?

Approximately how many students have been killed off site (i.e., not on campus) in the nearby community who were alumni (i.e., they were killed after they were no longer a student at your school)?

Think about a specific student whom you know was killed. When did this student die?

- ❒ N/A
- ❒ In the last month
- ❒ In the last 3-6 months
- ❒ In the last 6-12 months
- ❒ In the last 1-2 years
- ❒ In the last 2-5 years
- ❒ More than 5 years ago
- ❒ Other (Please specify):

[Optional] Who was this student? What was his/her story?

How often do you think about the student(s) who was/were killed?

Please describe the nature of training you have received regarding working with communities in trauma.

In the event a student from your school is killed,

What kind of supports are you offered (that you are aware of?)
What kind of supports are you required to provide for your students?
What kind of supports do you or would you provide (past, present, or future) that may not be required?

The following questionnaire is concerned with your thoughts about various aspects of a potentially stressful situation, in this case the death event (PAST, PRESENT or ANTICIPATED) of a student. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer ALL the questions.

On which specific student death event are you reflecting?

- ❒ A past student death (more than a year ago)
- ❒ A present student death (in the past year)
- ❒ A future, anticipated student death.

As you reflect on the death event of a student, consider: *To what degree do you agree with the items below? (5 strongly agree -1 Strongly Disagree)*	*Rate the item using the scale below. Put a check in the appropriate box.*					
	5 Extremely	*4 Considerably*	*3 Moderately*	*2 Slightly*	*1 Not at all*	*N/A*
Is this a totally hopeless situation?						
Does this situation create tension in me?						

Is there someone or some agency I can turn to for help if I need it?						
Does this situation make me feel anxious?						
Does this situation have important consequences for me?						
How much will I be affected by the outcome of this situation?						
Does this student's death have serious implications for me?						
Do I have what it takes to do well in response to this student's death?						
Is there help available to me for dealing with the death event?						
Does this situation tax or exceed my coping resources?						
Are there sufficient resources available to help me in dealing with this situation?						
How threatening is this situation?						
Is this problem of youth homicide as a general issue solvable by anyone?						
Was/will I be able to overcome the death event or potential deaths in the future?						
Is there anyone who can help me manage the problem?						
To what extent do I perceive this situation [youth violent homicide] as stressful?						
Do I have the necessary skills to achieve a successful outcome for myself in response to this situation?						
To what extent does this event require coping efforts on my part?						
Does this situation have long-term consequences for my teaching practice?						
Is this going to have a negative impact on me personally?						
Is this going to have a negative impact on me professionally?						

I am able to adapt to difficult events.						
I tend to bounce back after a hardship.						
I believe that coping with stress can strengthen me.						
I find my job rewarding.						

The next stage of the study is an interview to go deeper with your regarding come of your responses from this survey.

Interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes and will be at a time and place most convenient for you. Interviews will take place January-February 2014.

Please note that if you consent to be interviewed, you are also consenting to link survey data to interview data, which will comprise your confidentiality.

***Are you interested and willing to be interviewed by Leora for further in-depth learning about your experiences with student death?**

❒ Yes, I am interested and willing.

❒ No, thank you.

Other (please specify)

If yes, please provide your name (a pseudonym will be used in the study), your school, your email, and a contact number.

Name:

School:

Email address:

Contact phone number:

Deepest thanks and gratitude for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact
Leora Wolf-Prusan (principal investigator) at Leorawp@gmail.com.
Again, thank you.

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol Instrument

Interviews will be conducted using an open-ended, semi-structured format. The following questions will guide the interview. Throughout the interview, questions may be adapted according to participant responses in order to elicit highest quality responses and to increase the depth of the interview content.

1. What has your experience been with student violent death? I want to understand this experience. What is it like for you?
2. What strategies did you or do you employ to help you cope after a student death?
3. How have these deaths affected your thoughts and feelings about teaching?
4. How have these deaths affected how you approach your job?
5. What do you think were the causes of these deaths?
6. When you began teaching, what did you think or feel about community violence?
7. How has this experience changed you?
    a. What changed for you in the short term?
    b. What changed for you in the long term?
8. Who have you turned to for help, management, or support?

(If there is extra time)

1. Tell me about gangs and gang life? How do you make sense of them?
2. Tell me more about why are some students more vulnerable to joining gangs while others can stay away?
3. What might be some of the characteristics of students who are gang-involved or at-risk for homicide?
4. How are your students affected by gun violence? Explain.

Concluding Questions

1. Is there anything else (experiences, memories, scenarios with student-death) that you would like to share?
2. What has this interview been like for you?

APPENDIX D: Referral List for Participants

Los Angeles	**211 LA County**	**Dial 2-1-1 or (800) 339-6993** **www.211la.org**	Nonprofit referral service equipped to provide callers help with critical issues such as health care and substance abuse, domestic violence, shelter, food, legal and financial assistance, programs for children and seniors and different types of mental health services.
	Our House Grief Support Center	**1663 Sawtelle Blvd., Suite 300, Los Angeles, CA 90025** **(310) 473-1511** www.ourhouse-grief.org	OUR HOUSE grief support groups create a warm environment of safety and comfort in which children, teens, and adults find the support they need from others who have also experienced the death of someone close. Led by highly trained volunteers, groups are age- and relationship- specific. OUR HOUSE also offers grief support groups in our local schools helping grieving children in low-income, underserved areas of Los Angeles County.
	Southern California Counseling Center (SCCC)	**5615 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90019 (near Fairfax and Pico)** **(323) 937-1344** www.sccc-la.org	Provides individual, couples, and family counseling at a sliding scale fee based on income.

APPENDIX E: Descriptions of the factors for each measure

Measurement	Construct	Independent Variable (Factor)	Question: As you reflect on the death event of a student, consider:
Adapted Stress Appraisal Measure-(SAM)	Primary Appraisal	Threat	Does this situation make me feel anxious?
			How threatening is this situation?
			Is this going to have a negative impact on me personally?
			Is this going to have a negative impact on me professionally?
		Challenge	*(N/A)-IRB vetoed this construct*
		Centrality	Does this situation have important consequences for me?
			How much will I be affected by the outcome of this situation?
			Does this student's death have serious implications for me?
			Does this situation have long-term consequences for my teaching practice?
	Secondary Appraisal	Control-Self	Do I have what it takes to do well in response to this student's death?
			Was/will I be able to overcome the death event or potential deaths in the future?
			Do I have the necessary skills to achieve a successful outcome for myself in response to this situation?
		Control-Others	Is there someone or some agency I can turn to for help if I need it?
			Is there help available to me for dealing with the death event?
			Is there anyone who can help me manage the problem?
			Are there sufficient resources available to help me in dealing with this situation?
		Uncontrollable	Is this a totally hopeless situation?
			Is this problem of youth homicide as a general issue solvable by anyone?
	Overall Stress	Stressfulness	Does this situation create tension in me?
			Does this situation tax or exceed my coping resources?
			To what extent do I perceive this situation [youth violent homicide] as stressful?
			To what extent does this event require coping efforts on my part?
Adapted CD-RISC	Resilience	Resilience	I am able to adapt to difficult events.
			I tend to bounce back after a hardship.
			I believe that coping with stress can strengthen me.
			I find my job rewarding.

Negative and Positive Values Associated with Likert Scale Responses and Factors

If a teacher responded to questions that comprised the controllable factor with a "5," he or she was indicating that the phenomenon of youth homicide was highly controllable, which is positive. In contrast, if a teacher responded to questions that comprised the threat factor with a "1," he or she was indicating that the phenomenon was not threatening, which is positive.

	1 (Not at all)	→	**5 (Extremely)**
Uncontrollable	Uncontrollable		Controllable
Stressful	Stressful	2 (Slightly)	Not-Stressful
Control-Others	No-Control-Others	3 (Moderately)	Control-Others
Threat	Threat	4(Considerably)	No-Threat
Centrality	Centrality		No-Centrality
Control-Self	No-Control-Self	→	Control-Self

APPENDIX F: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Sample

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Sample by Factor

Factor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Uncont1	139	1	5	2.63	1.30
Uncont2	136	1	5	3.02	1.11
Stress1	142	1	5	3.03	1.22
Stress2	138	1	5	2.23	1.14
Stress3	144	1	5	3.48	1.07
ControOth1	138	1	5	3.20	1.27
ControOth2	137	1	5	3.16	1.18
ControOth3	140	1	5	3.16	1.09
ControOth4	138	1	5	2.98	1.05
Threat1	142	1	5	2.85	1.33
Threat2	139	1	5	2.55	1.12
Threat3	141	1	5	2.60	1.23
Threat4	137	1	5	2.27	1.17
Threat5	137	1	5	2.27	1.17
Central1	142	1	5	3.25	1.24
Central2	140	1	5	3.21	1.27
ControlSelf1	139	1	5	3.38	1.14
ControlSelf2	138	1	5	3.67	0.97
ControlSelf3	142	1	5	3.47	1.03
Resilience1	143	1	5	4.02	0.82
Resilience2	142	1	5	4.09	0.82
Resilience3	144	1	5	4.00	0.90
Resilience4	144	1	5	4.36	0.75

Descriptive Statistics-Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
African American/Black	13	9.3
Mixed	3	2.1
White/Caucasian	54	38.6
API	8	5.7
Middle Eastern	3	2.1
American Indian	1	0.7
Latino/Hispanic/Chicano	58	41.4
Total	140	100.0

Descriptive Statistics-Gender

	Frequency	**Percent**
F	67	48.2
M	72	51.8
Total	139	100.0

Descriptive Statistics-Ethnicity & Gender Crosstabulation

Ethnicity	**Gender**		**Total**
	Male	**Female**	
African American/Black	6	7	13
	46.2%	53.8%	100.0%
Mixed	1	2	3
	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
White/Caucasian	24	30	54
	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
Asian Pacific Islander	6	2	8
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Middle Eastern	1	2	3
	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
American Indian	1	0	1
	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Latino/Hispanic/Chicano	28	27	55
	50.9%	49.1%	100.0%
Total	67	70	137
	48.9%	51.1%	100.0%

Descriptive Statistics-Age

Age Range	**Frequency**	**Percent**
22-29	29	20.7
30-39	48	34.3
40-49	34	24.3
50-59	19	13.6
60-65	10	7.1
Total	140	100.0

Descriptive Statistics-Religion

	Frequency	Percent
Unaffiliated (Agnostic/Athiest)	9	6.5
Christian	81	58.3
Jewish	3	2.2
Muslim	1	0.7
No Religion	42	30.2
Other	3	2.2
Total	139	100.0

Descriptive Statistics-Total Years Teaching

Total Years Teaching	**Frequency**	**Percent**
0-3	23	16.3
4-9	45	31.9
10-15	39	27.7
16-20	16	11.3
20-30	14	9.9
30-50	4	2.8
Total	141	100.0

Descriptive Statistics-Time lapse between death event and survey

Think about a specific student whom you know was killed. When did this student die?		
	Frequency	Percent
N/A	31	22.5
In the last month	12	8.7
In the last 3-6 months	2	1.4
In the last 6-12 months	7	5.1
In the last 1-2 years	31	22.5
In the last 2-5 years	19	13.8
More than 5 years ago	35	25.4
Other	1	0.7
Total	138	100.0

APPENDIX G: Descriptive Statistics of Interview Sample

Pseudonym	Region	Gender	Ethnicity	Religious affiliation	Marital Status	Type of teaching credential	# yrs teaching	# of student deaths
Valentino	Central	M	Native Indian	Catholic	Married	Single Subject (SS) Art	Eight	Two
Steve	South	M	White	None	Married	SS English	15	Six
Maya	South	F	Latina	Catholic	Single	SS English	10	Eleven
Karen	East	F	African American	None	Single	SS Biology	16	Seven
Joseph	East	M	Latino	Catholic	Single	SS English	13	Ten
Adam	East	M	Armenian	Christian	In a committed partnership	SS Chemistry	One	One
Jack	Valley	M	White	Christian	In a committed partnership	SS Math	Two	Two
Bill	Valley	M	White	Spiritual	Married	SS English	Two	Four
Dennis	South	M	White	Seventh Day Adventist	Married	Ryan Clear (English)	20	24
Richard	South	M	White	None	Single	SS Social Studies	20	18
Alex	South	M	African American	Christian	Married	SS Math	14	12
Kelly	East	F	African American	Catholic	Single	SS Math	14	23
Jocelyn	East	F	Latina	Catholic	Married	SS Physical Education	19	12
Diana	East	F	Latina	Catholic	In a committed partnership	Special Education	10	Three
Joanna	West	F	White	None	Married	SS English	14	11
Doug	West	M	White	None	Single	Special Education	11	75

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