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Critical Change: A Grounded Theory Study of Teacher Experience Following Involvement in Critical Incidents

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Overarching Abstract

This volume begins with a meta-ethnography which synthesises some documented experiences from teachers who had been involved in 'critical incidents' resulting in bereavement, loss and grief within their school communities. The final synthesis of the experiences from a selection of papers was presented in a line of argument synthesis (LOA) as a model which attempts to illustrate three discrete elements which interacted with one another - the nature of the incident; the psycho-social conflicts negotiated by the teacher and the elements of their professional identity which were drawn out through the being involved in the incident.

The final section of this volume presents a piece of empirical research which was undertaken to either confirm, change or refute the tentative model presented in the meta-ethnography. The initial research from the meta-ethnography suggested that the issue and underlying feelings of how to best support a child or colleague following a critical incident was a powerful but unspoken concern for many teachers. The empirical research used a series of semi-structured interviews to give participants an opportunity to explore their experience of being involved in a critical incident. The data from the interviews was then analysed using the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin (1990) which allowed for a more inductive approach to the participants' data and the tentative model. The new data from the analysis confirmed and changed aspects of the tentative findings of the meta-ethnography model with each of the three elements being renamed Critical Incident Expression, Core Conflict and Core Identity. The empirical data also changed the way that the model functioned, moving from a linear progression to a fluid and interactive one. The model is proposed as tool for facilitating teachers' discussion of their experience of critical incidents.

Between these two sections, I have presented a chapter where the theoretical underpinnings and epistemological decisions of the research are discussed alongside the practical and ethical considerations of undertaking original work.

Table of Contents

CRITICAL CHANGE: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF TEACHER EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING INVOLVEMENT IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Acknowledgements	
Overarching Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Table of Tables	5

CRITICAL CHANGE: A META-ETHNOGRAPHY OF TEACHER EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING INVOLVEMENT IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS/TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Abstract	7
Introduction	8
<i>Critical Incidents</i>	8
Method	8
Results and Discussion	10
<i>Getting Started</i>	10
<i>Deciding What is Relevant to the Initial Interest</i>	10
<i>Defining the Focus of the Synthesis</i>	10
<i>Locating the Relevant Studies</i>	11
<i>Inclusion Decisions and Quality Assessment</i>	12
<i>Reading the Studies</i>	12
<i>Determining how the Studies are Related</i>	15
<i>Translating the Studies into One Another</i>	21
<i>Synthesising Translations</i>	22
<i>Expressing the Synthesis</i>	23
Conclusion	27

BRIDGING CHAPTER

Method, Methodologies, Ethics and Challenges	29
<i>Grounded Theory</i>	29
<i>Choosing Methodology</i>	29
<i>Research Rationale</i>	30
<i>Conceptual Challenges and Ethical Considerations</i>	32
<i>Choosing Critical Change</i>	36
<i>Presenting the Findings</i>	37

CRITICAL CHANGE: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF TEACHER EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING INVOLVEMENT IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS	39
Abstract	40
Introduction	41
<i>Critical Incidents</i>	41
<i>Contextualising Critical Incidents</i>	41
<i>Teacher Identity</i>	42
Research Aim	43
Method	44
Ethics	44
Methodology	45
<i>Analysing and Interpreting the Data</i>	46
<u>Core Identity</u>	46
<i>Reciprocity (RC)</i>	46
<i>Role (RL)</i>	48
<i>Responsibility (RP)</i>	49
<i>Rebuilding (RB)</i>	50
<u>Core Conflicts</u>	51
<i>Education vs Experience</i>	51
<i>Confidentiality vs Communication</i>	53
<i>Impartiality vs Immersion</i>	55
<i>Routine vs Remembering</i>	57
<u>Critical Incident Expression</u>	60
<i>Nature of the Incident</i>	60
<i>Unexpected</i>	61
<i>"The Gap"</i>	62
Discussion	62
References	65
Appendix 1 – Consent Form	72
Appendix 2 – Debriefing Sheet	73
Appendix 3 – Proposed Working Model	74
Appendix 4 – Working Model Example	75
Appendix 5 – Interview 2 (I.2) and Interview 7 (I.7) Samples	76
Appendix 6 – Orbit	81

Table of Tables

Table 1: Completed Grid – Teachers’ Experiences of Critical Incidents	14
Table 2: Completed Grid – Concepts of Teacher Identity	16
Table 3: Second Order Interpretation	20

Table of Figures

Figure 1 – Line of Argument Synthesis – Teacher Identity and Critical Incidents	24
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**Critical Change: A Meta-Ethnography of Teacher
Experience Following Involvement in Critical
Incidents/Traumatic Events**

Abstract

Although recent research has focussed on the efficacy of interventions for children following involvement in critical incidents, it has also revealed that teachers are very often those expected to deal with the incident (Silverman et al 2008; Wetherington et al 2008) though little has attempted to collate and synthesise the teachers' experiences and how this impacts on their professional and personal identity. This paper outlines an attempt at employing meta-ethnography to do so. Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven step approach was employed for conducting the meta-ethnography. The reports selected were suited to reciprocal translation analysis (RTA). Four key concepts were identified through first order constructs which formed the core aspects of identity during the critical incident process, which was devised from the second order constructs. A line of argument (LOA) third order construct was then created which incorporated both first and second order constructs in creating a new theory/stage model that attempted to illustrate teachers' experiences and identity change formation during critical incident involvement. Opportunities for future research are suggested and limitations of the methodology are discussed.

Introduction

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are themselves difficult to define. MacNeill and Topping (2007) define a critical incident as an event “in or involving schools [which may] include shootings, stabbings, other forms of homicide, terrorist activity, suicide, road traffic accidents, major fires and natural disasters, which result or might result in death and or serious injury to students and staff.” Roberts and Everly (2006) focus on those incidents which “range from public events that impact large segments of society...to private events, such as domestic violence, a suicide attempt, death of a loved one, or the onset of mental illness.” Despite the polarisation of events which at one extreme affect entire communities in the most dramatic fashion, to those seemingly small events which are unknown but to a handful individuals, Posada (2008, citing Yates, Axsom, Bickson and Howe, 1989) simply states that such incidents are “rare, sudden events for which people are usually unprepared and with which they have little experience”. It is this definition that this paper will adopt for its simplicity and attention to the effect on the individual.

Method

In order to explore the nature of teachers’ experience of being involved in a critical incident, I decided to conduct a meta-ethnography to synthesise the individual expressions in the existing research. Meta-ethnography is research methodology which attempts to synthesise knowledge in an inductive and interpretive form (Noblit and Hare, 1988). Miles and Huberman (1984) presented a widely adopted method for synthesising qualitative research which includes the use of meta-ethnography popularised by Noblit and Hare (1988) and is well suited to synthesising richly detailed data (Howitt, 2010). The purpose of a meta-ethnographic methodological approach is that it brings together separate parts in an attempt to create a new whole. The creation of this new construct is characterised by some degree of innovation where merely integrating the accounts would not be seen as appropriate (Barnett-Page and Thomas, 2009).

During the course of translating the studies into one another, the synthesis may take the form of a reciprocal translation analysis (RTA) where the themes or ideas in each study are translated into a new overarching concept.

Researchers may also apply refutational synthesis which attempts to explain contradictions between the studies. These processes move beyond the original research and give rise to second order interpretations. These may be combined with, or exist separate to, a Line of Argument (LOA) synthesis to develop a third order interpretation and the creation of a bigger picture or theory with more explanatory power (Atkins et al, 2008).

Noblit and Hare (1988) propose a seven stage process for synthesising the research:–

1. Getting started
2. Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest
3. Reading the studies
4. Determining how the studies are related
5. Translating the Studies into one another
6. Synthesising translations
7. Expressing the synthesis

The procedure has been added to and customised by several research groups (Atkins et al, 2008; Downe, 2008) since it was proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988) but for consistency in approach, this model will most closely follow the examples of Britten et al (2002) and Atkins et al (2008).

In an effort to ensure transparency in interpretation, it may be useful to attempt to identify the epistemological stance of the researcher to help inform later interpretations, theorising and assumptions. In keeping with the exploratory and interpretive methodology of meta-ethnography, the synthesis will adopt a position along the spectrum of epistemological stances as suggested by Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillion (2003). Spencer et al (2003) suggests that the holistic nature of meta-ethnography and the aim of creating a collective explanation lends itself well to a position of *objective idealism* where there is a world of collectively shared understandings, yet based on my own experiences of researching the subject matter, it may be worth moving closer to a position of contextually dependant *relativism* or even *critical realism*, where despite the

synthesis of many experiences, we are still cognisant of how this is shaped by our own beliefs and perceptions.

Results and Discussion

Getting Started

The original starting point in completing meta-ethnography research entails determining a question for synthesis which retains a good fit with qualitative data (Atkins et al, 2008; Britten et al, 2002; Noblit and Hare 1998). The original question about measuring the efficacy of randomised control trials of interventions for children who have suffered psychological harm following a critical incident had been covered substantially by Wetherington et al (2008). Their paper was also only concerned with quantitative data. As comprehensive as their study was, it did not really touch on the fact that many of those expected to deliver the support following the incident would be teachers, a point already alluded to by Holland (2008). With such an expectation, it was decided that an exploration of the effect that dealing with such an incident had on the lives of teachers may add a complementary perspective to the extant data. It was felt that the opinions, attitudes and experiences of the teachers involved in helping students and colleagues following critical incidents, and a theoretical model of how this engagement can change the professional and personal identities of the teachers could go some way to promoting resilience and offering support for those involved in such events in the future.

Deciding What is Relevant to the Initial Interest

Defining the Focus of the Synthesis

An important first decision in selecting studies relevant to the question was whether to include mixed data sets, namely quantitative and qualitative data. It was felt that to perform search for both types of data and perform the subsequent mixed methods analysis would yield a very high number of studies and corroborate existing findings, but may be at the expense of reinterpreting rich, personal data. Despite recovering studies during the search process

which focussed on teacher perspectives on grief, loss and bereavement and critical incident work from a quantitative stance (e.g. Reid and Dixon, 1999; Tracey and Holland 2008), it was decided to focus only on qualitative research as the perception, interpretation and reflexivity of the respondents to the event was deemed to be the primary area of interest. Of the many quantitative studies to be returned during the search, one paper was initially discarded as it employed a questionnaire method, but was later returned to the data corpus of the study as the data had also been analysed qualitatively and the questions offered by the researchers allowed for free, open ended answers from the participants and so allowed them freer expression of their belief and experience than would normally have been expected in a quantitative piece of work (Mahon, Goldberg and Washington, 1999).

Locating Relevant Studies

The second important element of deciding what was relevant to the initial interest was to find those studies which would be suitable for qualitative synthesis. Despite the growth in recent years in advocating qualitative research, finding suitable items for inclusion was still a challenge. Traditional searches were undertaken in autumn 2010 on electronic databases (Scopus, Web of Knowledge and Psych Info) using varying combinations of the following keywords – trauma* OR critical AND event OR incident*AND child* OR school AND teach* AND bereavement OR loss AND qualitative. The search threw up many subject appropriate titles, the majority of which returned studies which reported quantitative data. It did reveal five papers (Mahon, Goldberg and Washington, 1999; Lowton and Higginson, 2003; Greenway, 2005; Bennet and Dyehouse, 2005 and Lazenby, 2006) which were later selected for inclusion in the synthesis. Searches were also undertaken in the WorldCAT dissertation database to identify unpublished academic research with the following search terms– bereavement OR loss and teach*AND qualitative. This search yielded eleven titles of which unsuccessful attempts were made to obtain two which would have appeared relevant. An abstract found during this search led to an ERIC search and subsequently successful requests to the author directly for a copy of their PhD research (Moore, 2002). Correspondence was entered into with three of the authors in an attempt to find any further suitable papers.

Atkins et al (2008) correctly identifies one of the challenges in finding qualitative literature due to the descriptive titles used by researchers in naming their work which may result in incorrect attribution of relevant keywords.

Inclusion Decisions and Quality Assessment

The studies that were finally chosen for selection were done so by firstly reading the abstracts to see if the research was relevant and then by reading the paper to see if the research had attempted to convey the experience of the teachers involved. Many of the papers found in the initial searches were scanned to see whether they were eligible for inclusion in the synthesis. Again, many topic relevant studies were found. To ensure validity, the papers were discussed with another researcher so consensus was reached that they were sufficiently qualitative in their methodology to be included.

There is debate over the application of quality criteria towards qualitative research (Atkins, 2008). Some feel that particular epistemological stances will dictate the extent to which the research is assessed (Barnett-Page and Thomas, 2009) where others note that several sub-sections in different quality criteria must be met before becoming eligible for inclusion in the synthesis (Spencer et al, 2003). For the studies selected for synthesis in this paper, the CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme Tool – Qualitative Research, 2006) was used as a broad guideline to keep informed of the research's aims and satisfy the basic inclusion criteria of being relevant to the topic and having employed an appropriate qualitative methodology.

Reading the Studies

This part of the study involved the extensive reading and re-reading of each of the papers in an attempt to become as familiar as possible with them and their contents. The six papers selected were Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999); Moore (2002); Lowton and Higginson (2003); Greenway (2005); Bennet and Dyehouse (2005) and Lazenby, (2006).

The first course of action under this heading was recording the demographic information for each paper. To do this, the model of Britten et al (2002) was broadly followed, thus it was decided to include information such as sample size, method of data collection, the setting where the study took place and who the critical incidents being reported involved. This information is summarised in Table 1 (see below). Although the papers selected differed in elements such as the sample size and whether the accounts recorded were first or third person, Doyle (2003) acknowledges this as an opportunity to draw out strong units of analysis despite the apparent contrast.

Table 1: Completed Grid – Teachers' Experiences of Critical Incidents

Methods and Concepts	Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999)	Lazenby (2006)	Greenway (2005)	Moore (2002)	Lowton and Higginson (2003)	Bennett and Dyehouse (2005)
Sample	189 Teachers; 139 Teaching students	13 Teachers	7cases, various school personnel	4 Teachers	13 Teachers	1 Headteacher
Data Collection	Survey – 8 Open ended questions	1 to 1 interviews	Interviews; first hand observation	3x 1 to 1interviews over 18months; group interview	1to 1 interviews	First hand Observation
Setting	School based	School based	Schools across local authority	School based	School based	School based
Critical Incident	Child/Parent/Teacher	Child	Child/Teacher	Child	Child/Parent/Teacher	Child

During the reading process, it was hoped that the main themes present in the papers would be evidenced in each other's research. As can be seen above, the papers differed in several ways, for example, with some having relatively large sample sizes of teacher accounts to some only recounting one single experience in detail and some being retold by the researcher and others being first person accounts. This difference is highlighted by Atkins et al (2008) who note that many of the accounts in qualitative work which are reported will have already been subject to the interpretive lens of the researcher and, despite the researcher's best intentions, may not be truly reflective of the experience. Despite this concern, the synthesis presented in this paper has strived to preserve the spirit and tone of the experiences reported in each of the individual papers.

Determining how the Studies are Related

At this stage in the process, the studies were examined to pull out any recurring and overlapping themes or metaphors which arose. Noblit and Hare (1988) suggested creating a grid to represent the inter-relationship between the different papers which can be seen below. Through reading the papers, many themes became apparent very early on, with examples of guilt, perseverance, optimism, hope, support, impotence and religious belief to name but a few being observed in many of the papers. Rather than approach each of these thematic occurrences as something to translate between papers, it was decided to look for concepts which bridged each of the many themes in a more encompassing term. Using the term 'concept' to describe these comprehensive terms felt a better fit as in some papers for example, the expression of the teacher's experience was delivered through the use of metaphor or simile and re-interpreting this as another metaphor may have served to either dilute or concentrate the original meaning so as to be hyperbole. To that end, the term 'concept' allowed for the inclusion of passive language of accounts as well as the richer, figurative language of metaphor without favouring the language of one over another.

Table 2: Completed Grid: Concepts of Teacher Identity

Methods and Concepts	Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999)	Lazenby (2006)	Greenway (2005)	Moore (2002)	Lowton and Higginson (2003)	Bennett and Dyehouse (2005)
<i>Reciprocity</i>	Responses to students divided into proactive and reactive actions	Teachers use the opportunity to support students as an outlet for their own grief	Teachers may internalise blame projected towards them by pupils if they do not address this “nameless dread”	Students organised themselves. By communicating their grief, teachers recognised as “fellow griever”	Teachers who were believed were those who disclosed their feelings on the situation to the children	Staff grief acknowledged through attendance at funeral
<i>Role</i>	Implicit cultural/societal assumption teachers will know how to deal with incidents – TRAINED/EXPERT	Participants indicated students were “like their own child” – SURROGATE PARENT	Not just to children, but to all staff; massive emotional cost – SURROGATE PARENT	Assumption of teachers as experts. Expert position through experience rather than training – EXPERIENCED	Looked to as experts; CI demands teachers take on multiplicity of roles – Colleague, friend, leader, parent...	
<i>Responsibility</i>	“If not me, then who?” mentality	Teachers put their own grieving on hold to protect parents and children though an internalised notion of “being strong”	Act as a “good father/mother” figure to those who do not have the internal resources to do so.	Believe the need of the pupils is greater than their own.	Own distress sidelined to be strong for the students	Responsibility to establishing normal scholastic routines.

Methods and Concepts	Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999)	Lazenby (2006)	Greenway (2005)	Moore (2002)	Lowton and Higginson (2003)	Bennett and Dyehouse (2005)
<i>Rebuilding</i>	Inevitability of the scenario "it's a part of life/it's going to happen" mediated by collegiate support	Fear of being unable to "fix" the problem	Opportunities for collegiate support should be provided as emotional triggers may still exist within the school.	With opportunities to talk about their loss, teachers are more likely to respond in a more appropriate manner to future CI		

The key recurring concepts in the papers were chosen as *Reciprocity*, *Role*, *Responsibility* and *Rebuilding* under which many of the other identified themes could be placed. A detailed exploration of this is beyond the scope of this paper but would provide an interesting development of the ideas presented herein. *Reciprocity* represents the change in either behaviour or attitudes expressed by staff and the student body as a result of the critical incident. One of the important aspects about *Reciprocity* is that it could conceivably be an unspoken understanding where behaviours and attitudes change when everyone in the school community shares in this incident. Traditional power roles and dynamics are set aside which in turn leads into the second concept of *Role*. *Role*, although closely linked to the concept of *Responsibility*, is perhaps best defined as what the teacher 'is'. It explores the personal qualities and experience of being a teacher but through the nature of the incident, this traditional role may be superseded by other roles, identified through the reading of the papers as 'expert', 'surrogate parent', 'colleague', 'friend' and 'leader'. The next concept, *Responsibility*, could be simplified into what the teacher 'does'. This may involve their responsibility to the wider social world, namely their classroom, school and the community that they work in. Here the teacher will be involved in collaboration and communication with the family and colleagues to provide support for those whom they engaged with in whichever role they may currently be favouring. The final concept that arose through the reading of the papers was that of *Rebuilding*. Where, in the event of a critical incident the first three concepts may all interact and influence one another at the same time, the concept of *Rebuilding* may indicate the closing stages of experiencing the incident. Examples of the *Rebuilding* concept were documented in the literature as instances of offering support for other colleagues; beginning to establish routines in classes as they were before the loss of a pupil or teacher or the incident itself and providing memorials within the school community.

These broad categories formed the basis for the reciprocal translation analysis (RTA) and attempted to follow the ideas of first and second order construction as suggested by Schutz (1962) and employed by Britten et al (2002) and Atkins et al (2008). The first order construction refers to the participants' understandings of the research and is incorporated into defining each of the aforementioned concepts. The second order constructions are the

interpretation made of this data by the authors of the papers and are found in Table 3.

Table 3: Second Order Interpretation

Methods and Concepts	Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999)	Lazenby (2006)	Greenway (2005)	Moore (2002)	Lowton and Higginson (2003)	Bennett and Dyehouse (2005)
Explanation/ Theory	Teachers would not introduce (be proactive) in introducing discussion of bereavement, but would be willing to support (be reactive)	Teachers rely on their faith and support from colleagues while simultaneously extending support to the deceased's parents and friends	Reactions and responses to death vary on the nature of the death itself and the individual's experience with death	Teachers created time and space to facilitate – not direct – discussion about bereavement	Ecological model and 'ripple effect' from the immediate family to the society at large was a significant influence on the ways teachers interacted with students	No particular model was followed, but events were responded to as they arose. Staff were available to children and enabled their questions and contributions

It was decided that the studies were similar enough to allow them to attempt a RTA. This process is outlined by Atkins et al (2008) by arranging the papers chronologically and attempting to identify similar concepts. In their method, they arranged papers 1 and 2 together and with the synthesis achieved from this, compared it to paper 3 and so on. Although this was beneficial in light of the subject matter studied by Atkins et al (2008) where responses may have differed as a result of policy changes, it was not so relevant when exploring the more personal nature of the participants' responses to critical incidents in the papers selected for this synthesis. Rather, once a particularly striking or resonant concept presented in one paper, it was memo-ed and then tested against a similar concept in the other papers. Often, it transpired that some of the concepts found in the other papers would lend themselves better to being sub-categories of a major concept and so the final four concepts were chosen. In an effort to promote transparency, it is worth acknowledging that the strength of some of the major concepts, such as *Reciprocity* and *Role* may have directed the researcher into looking for examples to include and preserve them, rather than collapsing the concept into smaller themes.

As the papers were translated into one another, spaces in the grid were allocated to keep parallel ideas next to one another. In Table 2, the statements from each paper that were felt to illustrate the concepts were placed next to similar examples from other papers. Thus, with regard to the concept of *Role*, for instance, the attributions of the families, school and wider society made teachers feel that they were acting as a surrogate parent, expert and leader – all different roles but an expression of the concept which was found in each of the papers. Similarly, in some papers where the idea of *Role* may not have been as relevant (the Bennet and Dyehouse (2005) paper is primarily concerned with the sole account of a head teacher who had acknowledged this in her account) the cell was left empty.

This process allowed the researcher to begin translating the individual papers into something that encompassed the major concepts which arose through the translation. In doing so however, concerns and critiques about the process raised by Doyle (2003) are worth addressing where we should consider at what point the translation becomes interpretation and whether this is done to achieve understanding on the part of the translator, rather than the audience.

Synthesising Translations

Downe (2008) states the difference between *qualitative metasummary* where the information from all the accounts is presented and *qualitative metanalysis*, where the accounts are integrated is that in the process of performing a meta-ethnography, something should result which is more than the sum of its parts. Other authors such as Atkins et al (2008) explain that researchers may come to their final Line of Argument synthesis (LOA) in a variety of ways and that the process cannot be reduced to a series of mechanistic tasks (Britten et al, 2002).

It became clear during the coding and reading stage that the concepts arising worked as RTA and that these four key concepts may form four distinct and interacting aspects of teacher identity during the experience of the critical incident. These concepts were created from *first order constructs*. As these four concepts interact with one another, they do so following a potential series of events interpreted by the paper's original authors which became known as *second order constructs*.

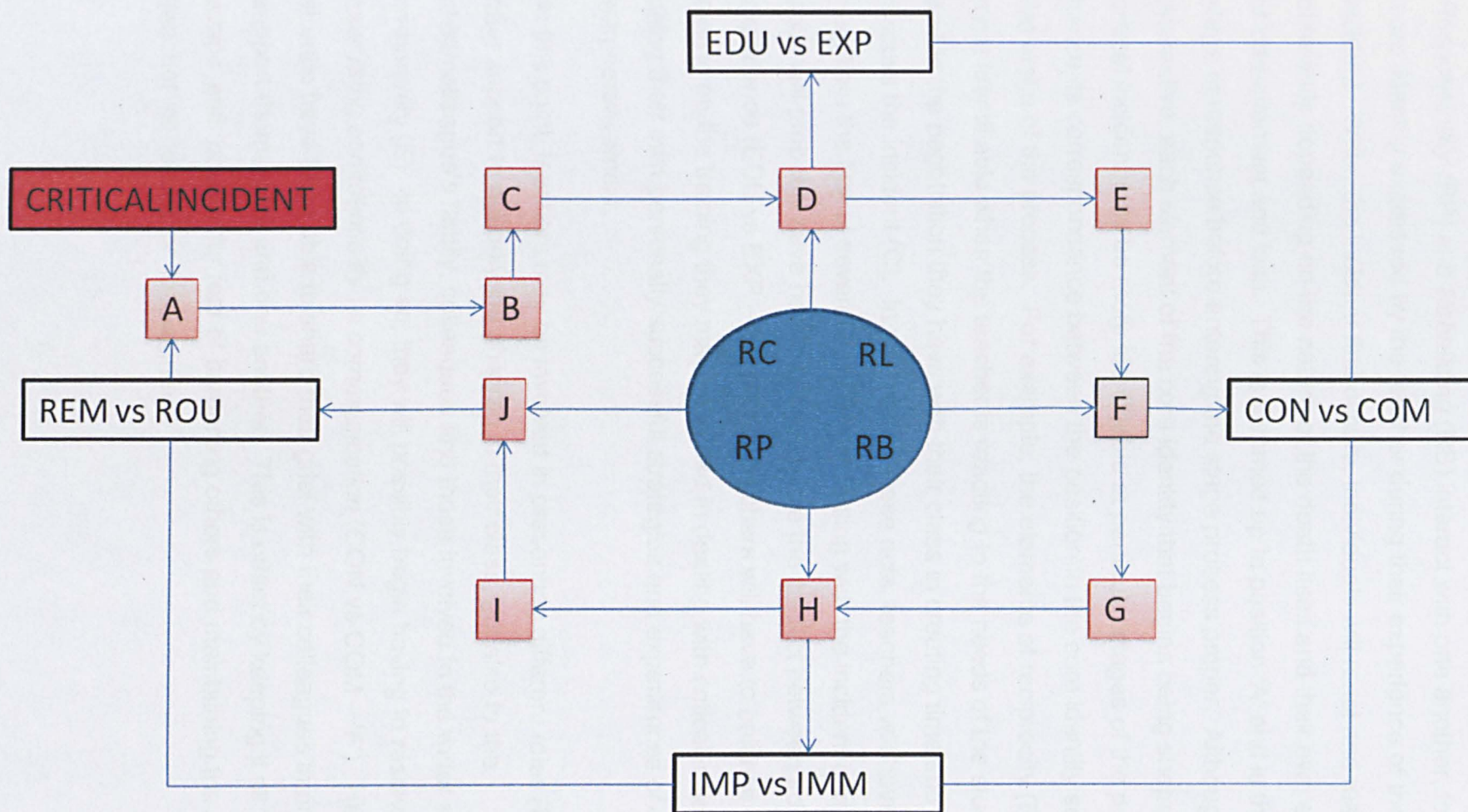
As the papers were synthesised, it was possible to identify the potential internal conflicts that a teacher will have to resolve in the course of the incident and thereafter which this paper suggests will change their professional and personal identity. This interpretation of the data presented in the papers and which arose from the first and second order constructs became *the third order constructs*.

Synthesising the Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999), Greenway (2005) and Moore (2002) papers, revealed that teachers may experience the conflict between EDUCATION and EXPERIENCE. This synthesis gave rise to synthesising the papers by these authors and Lazenby (2006) which created the conflict of CONFIDENTIALITY vs COMMUNICATION. These syntheses were then synthesised with the Lowton and Higginson (2003) paper which gave rise to the conflict of IMPARTIALITY vs IMMERSION. This synthesis was then finally synthesised with the Bennett and Dyehouse (2005) paper which gave rise to the final conflict of REMEMBERING vs ROUTINE.

Expressing the Synthesis

Miles and Hubermann (1988) and Britten et al (2002) both indicate the possibility of expressing the LOA as a conceptual framework, with Atkins et al (2008) indicating that such an expression should allow the data presented to be more accessible to a wide audience. The diagram on the following page is one attempt to express this synthesis.

Figure 1 – Line of Argument Synthesis – Teacher Identity and Critical Incidents



In the centre of the model, the four key concepts of *Reciprocity (RC)*, *Role (RL)*, *Responsibility (RP)* and *Rebuilding (RB)* interact with one another, forming a 'core' identity expressed by the teacher during their experience of the critical incident. When the incident first occurs, individuals will react and respond differently depending on the nature of the death itself and their own experiences of bereavement and loss. This is summed up in position 'A' and is the initial stage of response before entering the stage process proper. Although interactive, each element of the core identity that begins being shaped by the critical incident may be more identifiable at particular stages of the process, hence its correspondence between the position in the core identity section and the stage of the process. For example, the elements of reciprocity (RC) may be most identifiable when the teacher is reacting to the needs of the students (B) and in the negotiation they have with their class in creating time and space to discuss the incident (C). In performing these acts, teachers will have had to negotiate the first of several conflicts in dealing with the incident and by this point will probably have had to acknowledge the conflict between *education and experience (EDU vs EXP – 'D')* where teachers will have to balance using and relying on the training they may have had in dealing with critical incidents with using their own personally successful strategies and experiences of dealing with bereavement.

At this point, teachers may be involved in presenting different roles (RL) as they offer support to not only the children in their class, but also to the child/colleague's family, colleagues and those involved in the wider school community (E). In doing so, they will possibly begin having to resolve exercising *confidentiality vs communication (CON vs COM – 'F')*. Here they will at once have to be able to share their grief with their colleagues in order to support themselves and one another. This is offset by keeping it all 'under wraps' and 'private' for fear of burdening others and maintaining the role of 'teacher' or 'leader' or 'fellow griever'.

Following the stages round, the teacher may then be able to identify the differing responsibility (RP) that is placed on them by the different systemic stages they work in. They may have different responsibilities to the children in their class; to their colleagues and to the wider community who are all affected by the incident (G). Although similar to the core element of RL, this stage is characterised more by what the teacher 'does' than 'is'. The following stage from this is *impartiality vs immersion* (IMP vs IMM – 'H') where, through the teacher's various actions at such different levels, the teacher will have to decide how involved they want to be.

The next stage, 'I', corresponds with the beginnings of the Rebuilding (RB) element of the new, temporary identity that the teacher will be creating. Here, despite the availability of models of choose from, teachers feel that they were able to respond to events as they arose. Similarly, they may not have felt their responses were dictated by the incident, but rather they were able to make more reflective decisions. This may be evidenced, for instance, by the creation of a memorial with the bereaved family, but is also balanced with the need to re-establish the routine of scholastic life before the incident giving rise to the next stage - *remembering vs routine* (REM vs ROU – 'J').

A this point, the experience of the critical incident will have shaped the teacher's perception of how to deal with bereavement, loss and grief in the classroom, and as such, they will ostensibly return to point 'A' – where reactions and responses vary on the nature of the death itself and the teacher's experience. This, however, will be a different experience as the teacher will have already gone through the process and will therefore begin the next experience from a qualitatively different perspective.

Conclusion

This paper represents one attempt to express the synthesis of qualitative studies which have explored the teachers' perceptions of their involvement in critical incidents. Although it does not seek to promote a particular standpoint, the synthesis and LOA will hopefully have offered an interpretation that goes beyond the superficial description of the papers' contents and offered a thicker, third-order interpretation which will resonate with practitioners and researchers familiar with the subject area.

As Atkins et al (2008) and Doyle (2003) point out; assumptions are made by the researcher undertaking qualitative work which ought to be acknowledged. Atkins et al (2008) suggest that context should be incorporated into meta-ethnographical research and, in research which deals with particularly emotive and personal data as presented in the papers used in the current synthesis, more detailed scrutiny of the contexts in which the participants' accounts are given may offer a useful interpretive framework. Doyle (2003) goes on to mention that accounts chosen for meta-ethnographic research are not linked by their similarity in research perspective, purposes, ideas and interpretations. She cites that the cases are selected by the researcher's 'opportunity to learn' and that cases are made on conceptual, rather than representative, grounds (Doyle, 2003). The acknowledgement of this assumption, which may be seen by more traditional quantitative researchers as an unforgivable oversight in methodology, is similarly articulated by Britten et al (2002). Britten et al (2002), however, note that the wealth of data that individual studies of qualitative research represent will not have been fully realised unless there is an opportunity to collate and interpret it.

Future research into the field of critical incidents should consider whether the model LOA presented herein stands up to testing. Applying this model in the future in different studies may potentially reveal more concepts than have been observed, synthesised and documented in this paper. This in turn may lead to a revised, more sophisticated theory of teacher identity perception and change following critical incidents.

5081 words

Bridging Chapter

Method, Methodologies, Ethics and Challenges

Grounded Theory

The model presented at the end of the meta-ethnography was an attempt to explain the synthesised findings from existing research. The model itself, though, requires testing. Applying primary data was seen as essential in order to test any validity of the model. The subsequent analysis of the data from the empirical research, therefore, required a methodology that could incorporate data from the meta-ethnography as well as inform the analysis of the new data. To that end, the empirical study was conducted using Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to the creators/ discoverers of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) the method was developed to help bridge the gap between empirical research and qualitative data. Grounded theory established constant comparison, analysis and 'questioning' of the data in order to develop an explanatory theory borne out of a rigorous analytic process demanded of academic research (Kendall, 1999; Howitt, 2010).

Choosing Methodology

The original methodology presented by Glaser and Strauss, however, was neither absolute nor final and, with application and refinement, the method itself began to change. Glaser and Strauss parted company with Glaser holding strongly to the deductive, emergent methodology of the original model and Strauss and Corbin (1990) developing a more inductive approach to their analysis and interpretation. The change has not been an easy one and the issues surrounding the divergence are still hotly debated, most notably in the procedural criteria of Strauss and Corbin's version and in the ongoing discussions around 'emergence and forcing' (Kelle, 2005; Walker and Myrick, 2006). It is widely accepted that the variety of grounded theory approaches available to researchers can be divided into three major groups (Annells, 1997b; Forrester, 2010). For simplicity, I will adopt the terms used by Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) to describe the major methodological versions of grounded theory respectively ascribed to Glaser and Strauss (1967) as *Traditional Grounded Theory*; Strauss and Corbin (1990) as *Evolved Grounded Theory* and Charmaz (2006) as *Constructivist Grounded Theory*.

Although both processes are concerned with the collection, coding and analysis of data and may appear superficially similar, in both traditional and evolved grounded theory, the manner in which these processes take place differs (Walker and Myrick, 2006). As reiterated by Boychuk-Deuschler and Morgan (2004) and Mills et al (2006), the decision made by the researcher as to which methodology they are likely to adopt is directly related to the ontological belief with which they view the world. To highlight the difference in methodologies between traditional and evolved grounded theory, key concepts and actions have been italicised. Annells (1997a) summarises that in Traditional Grounded Theory, the researcher is likely to position themselves within a *critical realist* ontology where a substantive area of interest is studied with the aim of *generating* a theory. Through the use of the evolved grounded theory method, the problem to be studied will *emerge*; the questions used to explore the problem will *emerge* with the aim generating *hypotheses* to inform *theory*. In evolved grounded theory, the researcher approaches a *pre-identified problem* as a *relativist*. The data collected will be in a state of constant scrutiny and *interpretation* from the moment it is collected – a position confirmed by Strauss and Corbin who identify their analysis of data as ‘making interpretations’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) – but crucially, that data will be *developed* into a theory which is *pragmatic* and *verifiable* (Annells, 1997a).

The pragmatism of evolved grounded theory practised by Strauss and Corbin (1990) is attractive in that it provides a way to produce a way of explaining a phenomenon that is relevant to the context in which the data was collected and analysed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Research Rationale

This study was not intended to provide a unifying theory about all human relationships, but rather it was about exploring, articulating and helping to make sense of the experiences teachers have when supporting children, colleagues and families through critical incidents. In keeping with the procedure of evolved grounded theory, therefore, the aim of the present study was not to create a grand theory, but a substantive one which was practical and verifiable (Forrester, 2010).

Corbin and Strauss (1990) contend with the methodological and practical issues of conducting research using evolved grounded theory by providing a procedure to be followed while collecting and coding the data. This particular adherence to a seemingly rigid structure has been criticised by those following the Glaserian methodology as being too prescriptive; a procedure which in turn forces the data and its subsequent analysis, rather than allowing it to emerge organically (Kelle, 2005) yet Strauss and Corbin (1990) rightly acknowledge that the limitations in conducting qualitative research by suggesting that while following the procedure strictly gives a project rigour, the researcher must allow for 'procedural flexibility' during the research process. In acknowledging the flexibility of the research process, Annells (1997b) presents a strong argument for researchers adopting a middle-ground between traditional and evolved grounded theory approaches that utilises the procedures set out by Strauss and Corbin (1990) but not to the exclusion of allowing the data to dictate the direction of future analysis.

This flexibility is perhaps most obvious during the coding process. In evolved grounded theory, the data is coded first through *open coding*, where the transcribed interview is broken down and analysed to bring a new interpretation or perspective of the data recorded from that of the researcher (Hall and Callery, 2001). While there is a strong case to be made for line-by-line coding (Mills, 2010) and the immersive connection this allows the researcher makes with the data, the limitation of time and the constant cross-comparison of the transcribed interview data makes the coding of concepts a realistic place to start and from where later analysis that potentially focuses the word level may take place (Willig, 2008; Forrester, 2010). The concepts which arise from the open coding are then reassembled to become linked elements of categories in *axial coding*. The linked codes are then abstracted and placed under an inductive, overarching code in a process called *selective coding* (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). To illustrate, within the data set collected for this study, the code of "not knowing what to do" arose on a number of occasions in the open coding stage. This was used to draw connections between *Post incident support*, *Being informed and aware* and *Feeling prepared* taken from the axial coding stage which were then all placed under the inductive core category of *Education* which would make up half of the first psycho-social conflict (*Education vs Experience*) which teachers negotiated during their involvement

in a critical incident. Although critics of the axial coding stage argue that the process is overly inductive and forces data into convenient categories for the researcher, there is the acknowledgement from those who have practised both methodologies that the process allows for depth in the description and categorisation of the concepts (Kendall, 1999; Backman and Kyngas, 1999; Mills et al, 2006).

Conceptual Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Backman and Kyngas (1999) note the many challenges faced by researchers using grounded theory. They note primarily the difficulty that Traditional Grounded theorists have in removing themselves completely for the extant research in the chosen area of study. This is done in order to not directly influence the findings of their study, another illustration of the emergence and forcing debate between the methodologies where the subjectivity of the researcher is called into question (Davies and Dodd, 2002). While this may be an issue for proponents of traditional grounded theory, the awareness of the literature through the meta-ethnography, and in the case of this study, how it directly informed the later data collection and analysis within the evolved grounded theory methodology, is a realistic and potentially beneficial process to embark on. Hutchison (1993) posits that it is the review of the literature that can identify the current gaps in knowledge or help provide a rationale for the proposed research while Idrees, Convacelos and Cox (2011) argue a familiarity with the literature is important in establishing a research context. The original search terms which inspired the current study uncovered a meta-analysis of effective interventions with children who had suffered a traumatic event. The authors of that paper, Wethington et al (2009) commented that many of the interventions that had taken place were delivered by teachers but the effect on the teachers delivering support for these children has not been explored. In keeping with some of the central tenets of grounded theory research as advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990) the challenge revealed in the literature search and synthesis will result in a piece of work which aims to be relevant and practical.

The sample of participants used is also an area of difference between the two methodologies. Traditional grounded theorists would argue that the sample should be theoretically driven, with participants chosen in light of the categories that have emerged through the constant comparison of data collected (Backman and Kyngas, 1999; Willig, 2008). Again, such a process adheres to the Glaserian concept of emergence, whereas researchers following the evolved grounded theory methodology will likely embark on selective sampling. For this study, it was felt that selective sampling would be most appropriate given the synthesis of teacher experience in the meta-ethnography and the aim to develop the already theorised line of argument synthesis/model (Annells, 1997b). Although some may suggest this forces the type of data that will be revealed, Cutcliffe (2000), citing Morse (1992) and Baker (1993), argues that the researcher chooses "significant individuals" (Cutcliffe p.1477). These significant individuals are those with the knowledge and experience that the researcher requires, but also with the practical constraints of being able to reflect articulately and be interviewed (Cutcliffe, 2000). In keeping with the relatively modest ambitions of the study, a wide – large spread sample would not have been appropriate; limiting the study to those to whom the study is relevant would be more appropriate in generating a substantive, rather than grand, theory (Cutcliffe, 2000).

The theory that the researcher aims to have presented at the end of the piece of work is also an area that comes into increasing conflict with those more familiar with the more formal quantitative paradigm of reporting (Forrester, 2010). While there is the need to make the feedback of the results of research as relevant as possible, and in this, employing a more formal method may be in the interests of the researcher in disseminating his findings (Willig, 2008), there is no single style that is better than others. Researchers such as Heath and Cowley (2004) and Mills et al (2006) carry this idea further still, but Backman and Kyrgas (1999) rightly argue that because the style may be unfamiliar or novel, this is not to be confused with unreliable.

It is clear, then, that the nature of the evolved grounded theory methodology does not simply allow the data and theory to emerge, but it is facilitated by the interpretation of the researcher (Annells, 1997a). This co-construction of data comes from the interactive interview process where the researcher is active in the construction of the material from the interview and later in the inductive process of developing categories and codes from the interview material (Rapley, 2001; Willig, 2008).

Co-construction of data may be a concern to those within more strictly positivist methodologies where the unpredictability of the researcher cannot be accounted for, but equally, it is encouraging to note that others have found that no single interviewing technique or ideal will result in better data than others (Rapely, 2001). Roulston (2010) outlines six various types of interviewing stance ranging from the neo-positivist to decolonizing but argues that each particular interview must be at once aware of the pre-existing research, a position which would not fit well in traditional grounded theory but is acceptable in evolved grounded theory; and that interviewers should also ask questions which will elicit the best responses from the participants for the research question. Hugh-Jones (2010) draws some simple and practical applications for the researcher to make sure that the very mechanics of the interview go smoothly before considering the wider concerns of the types of data gleaned. The latter point made by Roulston (2010) suggests a delicate balancing act where at the very least researchers should consciously try to make the interview as efficacious as possible in terms of their research goals while at the same time allowing the participant to 'own' the interview as much as possible. Researchers taking part in interviews must be more aware of the local contingencies that they draw on, namely an awareness of the social norms within which the interview takes place and the way in which the interviewer and interviewee position themselves. Both Willig (2008) and Rapely (2001) suggest that an acknowledgement of the position of the researcher, from experience before the interview, during the interview itself and then in the subsequent interpretation of the data is necessary in promoting the rigour and transparency of the research process.

Indeed, Davies and Dodd (2002) suggest that within such an interaction, conventional standards of rigour are impossible to apply but reasonable criteria are suggested by Chiviotti and Piran (2003). Hall and Callery (2001) pursue this issue of ambiguity further by calling for a description of the effects that the interaction between the researcher and participant may have on the data collection and analysis to be incorporated into the grounded theory methodology itself. This accommodation of researcher effects and inclusion into the collection and coding process may be in keeping with the continuous development of the methodology foreseen by Annells (1997a; 1997b).

The development of grounded theory and the different permutations of methodology outlined by Annells (1997b) forces us to consider the question of rigour in research. As it has already been hinted at, traditional grounded theorist may feel that an overly prescriptive protocol will force data to be discovered, rather than allowing it to emerge naturally, and as such, the adherence to a protocol to ensure rigour may be interpreted in the same way, but I believe that it will provide a framework with which to assess data as reliable. In a review of postgraduate research using grounded theory, Idrees, Vasconcelas and Cox (2011) provided a helpful four stage process for researchers to try and acknowledge as they collect, code and analyse their data. Although the nature of their model is perhaps more abstract than novice researchers may prefer, or viewed by traditional grounded theorists as another attempt to force clear stages in what should be a deductive methodology, there is merit in Idrees et al's (2011) attempt to explain the transition the researcher goes through while moving backwards and forwards through the grounded theory methodology. Before even beginning to reduce the stages of analysis into measurable and replicable stages, it attempts to illustrate how we become aware of our limitations, anxieties and strengths of our data and as ourselves as researchers as we attempt to apply a novel methodology.

Choosing Critical Change....

In the eight stage rigour assessment outlined by Chiovitti and Piran (2003), one way in which the researcher can improve the rigour of their study is to articulate the researcher's personal views. In her review of Strauss and Corbin (1990), Annells (1997a) claims "the inquiry process is perceived to include the researcher as an integral interactant in the research process. Personal and professional background, plus experience, provide positive forces for the analysis process, therefore partly providing necessary theoretical sensitivity" (p123). In the interests of transparency, the study was conducted to help offer an explanation or at the very least pay attention to, the experiences of teachers following critical incidents in their schools. I chose this very simply because of my own previous experience as a high school teacher where I provided support for colleagues and children following a series of critical incidents which severely affected the school community and the individuals working and learning within it. According to Backman and Kyngas (1999) it is this personal experience that helps us understand the data and, in respect of the emotive and sensitive content of the interviews, I believe this experience offers an inductive honesty that may not have been available to other researchers. In terms of creating a theory to explain the phenomenon, both Cutcliffe (2000) and Tan (2009) suggest that such experience may lead to a conceptually dense theory; a theory which has embraced the tacit knowledge from the researcher's experience.

Chiovitti and Piran (2003) also call for researchers to specify how and why the participants were selected. As has been alluded to earlier by Cutcliffe (2000), those interviewed were those most likely to be the 'significant individuals' able to reflect articulately on their experience. Selecting teachers who had experienced critical incidents and offered support represented a small, but focussed sample where the concept of critical incidents could be explored within the context of the teachers' experience (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Even within the selective sample, a concern for the researcher is the make-up of the sample and its size. In this study, eight interviews were conducted. A study conducted by Mason (2010) found that in PhD research projects the mean sample size in qualitative studies was between thirty and fifty participants. The author speculated that concept saturation was found within this banding given the nature of a PhD thesis to indulge such a large sample size. A more

recent study conducted by Coldwell, Meddings and Camic (2011) used selective sampling and achieved theoretical saturation with six participants. Hugh-Jones (2010) argues that for smaller scale studies such as the one reported by Coldwell et al (2011) and the research reported in this paper, a sample size of 15±10 is appropriate and practical. After noting some of the existing concepts emerging from the meta-ethnography, eight transpired to be appropriate for achieving saturation in this study. It is quite possible that if a ninth interview was conducted, more novel categories would be found, but Gibbs (2010) reasonably states “you have to stop somewhere”.

Dickson-Smith, James, Kippen and Liamputtong (2007) point out that the challenges that the researcher faces are not only methodological, but personal too. Dickson-Smith et al(2007) assert that in the interests of building rapport with the participant, self-disclosure becomes a means of meeting ‘half-way’ in the co-constructed process of generating and sustaining an interview, concern noted by Roulston (2010). Further, Dickson-Smith suggest that the researcher also be aware of the ethicality of asking participants to reflect on experiences that in themselves were quite difficult, not only to ensure that the participants are not unduly effected, but that the researcher does not become too engaged with the subject matter, echoing Roulston (2010) balancing act between objectivity and criticality in the interview.

Presenting the Findings

There is no universal model by which researchers present the findings of their qualitative study; the study itself is a unique entity and the presentation of its findings is but one attempt to find an expression of the phenomenon (Heath and Cowley, 2004; Mills et al 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that the presentation of the findings can take the form of a storyline; a narrative (Willig, 2008) with accounts of others even offering their explanation as a visual model (Frost, 2011). In closing, Heath and Cowley (2004) sum up the ambition, imagination and pragmatism of grounded theory research well:—

“It is worth bearing in mind that qualitative analysis is a cognitive process and that each individual has a different cognitive style. A person’s way of thinking, and explanation of analysis, may seem crystal clear to someone with a similar cognitive style and very confusing to another person whose approach is different. It is wise to remember, too, that the aim is not to discover *the* theory, but *a* theory that aids understanding and action in the area under investigation.”

(Heath and Cowley, p.149)

3300 Words

Critical Change: A Grounded Theory Study of Teacher Experience Following Involvement in Critical Incidents

Abstract

The following paper presents an original piece of empirical research which explores teachers' experiences of being involved in a critical incident. Using semi-structured interviews, eight teachers were interviewed to explore their experiences of being involved in critical incidents. The data collected was analysed using the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin (1990) with the aim of either refining or changing the model outlined in the meta-ethnography. The new data from the analysis both confirmed and changed aspects of the tentative findings of the meta-ethnography model. The empirical data also changed the way that the model functioned, moving from a linear progression to a fluid and interactive one. The model is proposed as a tool for facilitating teachers' discussion of their experience of critical incidents.

Introduction

Critical Incidents

Interventions targeting children involved in critical incidents and traumatic events involving bereavement, loss and grief are well documented (Dyregov, 1997; Roberts and Everly, 2006; MacNeil and Topping, 2007; Wetherington et al 2008; Cohen, Berliner and Mannarino, 2008; Little, Akin-Little and Guitierrez, 2009; Mallon, 2011). The additional work of researchers like Adamson and Peacock (2007) rightly highlight the concern of educators, parents and children alike that all schools will at some point suffer a critical incident. The need for staff to be aware of the potential effect that such an incident may have on them and on their organisation is important in rebuilding after the event and planning for the future.

Contextualising Critical Incidents

Through the previous Labour government's agenda *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), schools were to take on a more holistic responsibility for the well-being of children and not simply be providers of education. Although thankfully the incidents such as the school shootings at Dunblane or Columbine are infrequent, the threat of the unknown and the desire to ensure a degree of protection for students and preparedness for staff who are involved in dealing with the loss of a student, friend or a colleague has resulted in many schools and many local authorities establishing their own critical incident or management plans. By means of illustration, Hertfordshire County Council's recently updated *Critical Incident in Schools Plan (2010)* outlines the route that action should take following the incident. Within their plan, schools and teachers are given differentiated packs of advice dependant on the nature of the incident. Guidelines and reassurances are put into place for staff who will be involved in this incident and many other local authorities in the UK have adopted similar practice. In America, the American Paediatric Society (2008) found that those schools who were well placed and prepared in dealing with critical incidents involving an individual were better placed than other schools in dealing with large scale incidents. Ultimately, the responsibility for dealing with the critical incident and providing support for the children rests very heavily with

the teachers in the school. Lowton and Higginson (2003) found that teachers, despite wanting to be involved and provide a source of support for the children, were unsure about what to do and whether they were doing the right thing. Advocating some form of training, Holland (2008) suggests that teachers and staff need to be aware of the effect that critical incidents can have on their pupils so to best meet their needs but such a position is perhaps informed by the wider societal expectation that this responsibility is incumbent on teachers (MacNeill and Topping, 2007b).

Teacher Identity

Involvement in a critical incident can change the individual quite considerably (Wells, 2006; DiNigris, 2008). Hypothetically, for the teacher involved in the critical incident and, therefore, the often expected source of support, information and leadership, their traditional identity of “teacher as teacher” will have changed. Taking their lead from recent research into teacher identity, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) highlighted a more post-modern, socio-constructivist stance in their definition of teacher identity where the identity of the teacher is variously defined in research as being made up of a multiplicity of identities; situations where identity is discontinued and one which is defined through interaction with the social world. In this respect, teacher identity is a concept that is fluid and shifts with context (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011) though Gee (2001) suggests that ‘this is not to deny that each of us has what we might call a “core identity” that holds more uniformly, for ourselves and others, across contexts’. Further research by Freeman (1993) and Beijard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) suggested that teachers’ professional identity formation is often presented as a struggle because teachers have to make sense of competing and potentially conflicting “perspectives, expectations and roles that they have to confront and adapt to”, a position similar to that put forward by Erikson (1950).

Research Aim

Akkerman and Meijer (2011) conclude their study by commenting that future research may wish to explore how teachers reflect on the individual struggles that they face in light of changes in their teaching career. There are few that will be as memorable or as potentially challenging as being involved in a critical incident. Within the teacher's involvement in a critical incident, I believe that integrating the multiplicity of sub-identities, like 'teacher' and being a member of a "second family" (Lowton and Higginson, 2003) alongside the resolution of internal conflicts presented by the wider social world the teacher exists in, such as school hierarchy and local community, may make the teacher reflect more on their experience and possibly give rise to a new identity shaped by the experience of the critical incident. Indeed, this integration of individual and social identities is an exciting area of ongoing research (Burke and Stets, 2009; Deux and Burke, 2010) and I believe that the discrete levels of interaction provided by the school ecosystem would be suitable for exploring this fluid and constantly changing dynamic.

The aim of the empirical research project was to confirm, refute or develop the findings from the Line of Argument (LOA) synthesis expressed in the meta-ethnography with the over-arching aim of being able to develop a tool that would help teachers articulate and explain their experience of being involved in a critical incident. The proposed model would allow an opportunity to explore potential changes in the individual's identity that move beyond the professional sphere of being a teacher, but also impacts on their personal life which in turn feeds back into their 'new' or 'changed' teaching identity. This exploration would offer an opportunity to begin supporting those teachers who feel the weight of expectation in supporting their students and colleagues and, in keeping with the aims of grounded theory methodology, provide a tool, model or means of explanation of the phenomenon that was practical and valuable (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Method

This study represents an attempt to utilise the evolved grounded theory methodology of Strauss and Corbin (1990) to offer explanatory power to a contextually specific phenomenon. The study endeavours to further explore the findings from the meta-ethnography and refine a model which aims to provide an explanatory tool for the possible changes in personal and professional identity as well as the potential psycho-social conflicts to be negotiated when teachers are involved in a critical incident.

The data included in this analysis came from eight semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers all currently employed in local authorities in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Gateshead and Middlesbrough who represented a variety of educational establishments (three primary school teachers; three secondary school teachers; two further education teachers). The participants were purposively selected in that they were approached based on their knowledge of the phenomenon being studied and were capable of articulating their experiences in an interview (Cutcliffe, 2000).

Ethics

Given the emotive nature of the subject that the participants were discussing, time was built into the interview schedule to ensure that the participants did not feel emotionally drained from the discussion and had the opportunity to finish the interview should the need have arisen. I was also aware of the role that I would play in this as interviewer, not just in hearing the participants' accounts, but in directing the interview in such a way as to co-construct the data for analysis and the position I held as interviewer (Hall and Callery, 2001). The interviewees were informed both in the consent form and reaffirmed before the interview began as to the purposes of the interview and the information they volunteered. For conducting the interview a schedule was devised from key points from Hugh-Jones (2010) although there was flexibility for following different avenues of discussion if it felt appropriate (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The finished interviews were transcribed using a simple orthographic play-script transcription which concentrated solely on the words said (Howitt, 2010 p.140) and held on an encrypted hard drive in a locked drawer in my office.

Methodology

The methodology employed in performing the analysis was the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin (1990). This methodology differs from the traditional methodology described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is discussed in the bridging document of this volume. For simplicity I have adopted the term *evolved grounded theory* (Mills et al, 2006) used to describe the Strauss and Corbin method.

The nature of the evolved grounded theory method is that it is, at the risk of over-simplification, inductive as opposed to deductive in the traditional methodology of Glaser and Strauss. This broadly means that there is more interpretation of data through the procedures laid down by Strauss and Corbin (1990) than in the traditional Glaserian method. To maintain the rigour of the research process, I made myself aware of several criteria checklists to ensure that the research was being conducted in as systematic a way as possible. Davies and Dodd (2002) discuss more personal qualities that the researcher brings to the research process such as attentiveness and empathy with the data. The authors comment that within the traditional quantitative paradigm of analysis, this makes traditional objectivity with the data more difficult but it is this immersive engagement with the data in the analysis process that gives qualitative research its strength (Davies and Dodd, 2002).

Chiovitti and Piran (2003) outlined eight stages for enhancing rigour which concentrate broadly on the *credibility* of the study where participants guide the process; data is constantly compared; *in vivo* codes are used where possible; and researcher thinking on the study is documented. The *auditability* of the process is observed in the way in which the researcher questions the data; and how and why the participants were selected. The *fittingness* of the research is examined where the research is made relevant to the context in which it was studied; finally, the literature surrounding the phenomenon studied is explored for relevance. These stages correspond closely with the canon and procedure laid out by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and have a practical relevance to conducting the grounded theory research.

Analysing and Interpreting the Data

The data from the interviews and its subsequent coding and interpretation, I believe go some way to confirming the categories that emerged from the meta-ethnography. Examples from the participants (referred to hereafter as I1, I2 etc.) will be used to illustrate and demonstrate the existence of the concepts from the LOA. I will adopt the rationale, pragmatism and relativism of Gilgun (2005a; 2005b) in reporting the findings as clearly and practically as possible. In the interests of clarity, I will attempt to deal with each of the layers of the model in turn, reflecting on the utterances of the participants that confirmed or changed the elements of *Core Identity*, *Core Conflict* or *Critical Incident Expression* (Dickson-Swift et al, 2007). Words and phrases in parenthesis or bold typeface from the interview data are my own, inserted to clarify the meaning for the reader.

Core Identity

Reciprocity (RC)

The meta-ethnography outlined many examples of how the relationship dynamic between the teacher and their pupils changed following a critical incident in the school. Moore (2002) and Lazenby (2006) document the particular bond that exists between teachers and their students. Beijaard et al (2000) notes that those teachers who presented a more balanced view of their professional identity as a teacher were those who felt that their relationship with their students was as important a factor as their experience and subject specific skills.

In this study, the relationship dynamic between teachers and pupils changes to one where the teachers and pupils co-create a safe space to discuss the issues surrounding the critical incident:–

*We end up chatting about all sorts of things. Even in the class they would say “miss can we ask you a question?” So long as they know I’m not going to make a fool of them, **and they know I wouldn’t**, then they’re happy to ask all sorts of questions” (I2.P7).*

*She trusts me; **we’ve established a rapport**. She can rant at me and then she’ll come back and say “I’m sorry”. We got through it... (I3.P4).*

*It was nice we were able to have a conversation about it, **it made me much more aware** of what this wee laddie’s issue is and that’s a big deal (I5.P11).*

*We got through it, **the children** got through it because of the...just the **very nature of the relationships** there are within the building (I7.P2).*

*I didn’t say anything to the children and I didn’t say anything to the staff, **but they knew what it meant** (I7.P10).*

As I2 alluded to, the creation of the space to discuss the topic is not pre-arranged; it arrives organically and there is mutuality in their engagement with one another. An understanding of the reciprocity is a key issue for Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011) where they highlight the importance of the dynamic between teachers and their pupils in determining teacher well-being. In the context of this study, I believe that a key aim of any critical incident intervention should acknowledge the effect that the incident could have on the relationship the teacher has with their pupils and, by extension, on their well being.

Role (RL)

Several of the papers in the meta-ethnography noted the changes in the teacher's role in the critical incident (Lowton and Higginson, 2003; Greenway, 2005; Lazenby, 2006). I noted that the participants reflected very closely to the terms that were used by participants in the meta-ethnography papers – “surrogate parent” and “leader” were both frequently occurring terms in the interviews alongside “social worker” and “mother hen.” Essentially, this element of the Core Identity of the teacher is about what the teacher *is* within the context of the critical incident. “We’re very much **in loco parentis** and I take that very seriously...” (I1.P12) suggests the teacher articulates the role of acting as a child’s parent. Another participant noted that she “[saw her] job as **someone who is there to help them** for the rest of their lives...”(I2.P7) again indicating that the supporting role of the teacher extends beyond the traditional definition of what a ‘teacher’ is. Those interviewees who occupied management positions within the school confirmed the comments made by Bennet and Dyehouse (2005) in their narrative about a head dealing with the sudden death of a pupil. I7 commented on the burden of her role leading not just a class, but a school saying “the calmness and the response of the leader is often replicated by the institution” (I7.13). I7’s comment may be equally applicable at not only the level of leading a school in a community, but for also leading a class within a school.

Multiplicity of identities is well documented in academic literature (Flores and Day, 2002; Burke and Stets, 2009). I2 offered a very interesting take on the role she was to adopt as she dealt with a critical incident:–

I am not a psychologist. I am not a social worker, although teachers are a bit of everything in life...but we’re not paid for that (I2.P6).

I2 acknowledges what Gee (2001) calls the ‘institutional identity’ of being a teacher but more importantly illustrates her willingness to perform roles beyond the one for which people believe teachers are employed.

Responsibility (RP)

If *Role* is what a teacher *is* during the critical incident, then *Responsibility* represents what the teacher *does*. These two elements of Core Identity are very closely linked and statements which offered teacher role such as “surrogate parent” were often illustrated by the responsibilities we traditionally associate parents performing such as comforting and supporting. Similarly, constructions of being a ‘leader’ were accompanied by examples of organisation and remaining stoic, despite the incident’s emotive nature.

Some participants were vehement in what they believed teachers should do during critical incidents, with one saying “I don’t think you can not step in, especially in a primary school. Maybe in a high school there’ll be somebody else doing it, the pastoral support or whatever, but you’re it in a first school or primary school” (I1.P11); a position very much like the ones discovered by Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999) who noted the “if not me, then who?” mentality of teachers.

I7 consolidated the opinion of ‘stepping in’ strongly stating how connected it was to her role as a ‘leader’ by telling me:–

that’s what I get paid for – to make sure the next day the school’s running effectively and the best it can while supporting the other people in it. For the next couple [of] hours, I was mulling over what I could do for ‘S’ the next day and making a couple of decisions on how to support ‘L’, when she needed it (I7.P11).

Rebuilding (RB)

The manner in which teachers recover after supporting those involved in the critical incident was least well documented in the meta-ethnography. Lazenby (2006) reported that teachers relied on internalisations of knowing they were supported by colleagues as well as their own religious beliefs to help them through the demanding process of supporting others. The most striking example of both the need for teachers to be supported in the rebuilding process after supporting others through a critical incident was given by I5:–

You go home at night still caught up in the emotions of the day...but if you don't have somewhere where you can just sit down and offload all this to... that makes you less able to do your job. So ideally someone who is dealing with this kind of traumatic situation with a child, I think it's almost like you should have to have a proper debriefing you know, more counselling type session afterwards to help you deal with it, so you can go back and do your job again and because otherwise you can feel the weight of the world is on you and you know that was [supporting] one child in our year group. It's not unusual to have maybe a couple of kids going through that sort of things and if you've got all of that and everything else that is happening, it is very difficult to be sensible about what is going on. (I5.P9).

The need for collegiate support appears crucial in helping teachers rebuild. Unlike the original model resented in the meta-ethnography which proposed a linear progression through the stages of Critical Incident Expression and sections of Core Identity, the nature of time factored heavily into I5's account. Her time to rebuild was not easy or quick. When I asked her how she coped with the incident, she replied:–

Well for me it would be just talking about it. I would sit down with a colleague and just talk through everything that happened. I'm not sure, because it is still very fresh in my mind that I haven't fully coped with it yet and you know this was six years ago. So you know these things do stay with you and speaking to colleagues that a child has died and absolutely something like that stays with you..." (15.P9).

Other interviewees, such as 17, also expressed their gratitude for colleagues supporting each other and why internal support felt better because "...I felt we had the capacity within us to. Like a family would support each other" (17.P5).

Core Conflicts

Education vs Experience

Amongst the interviewees, there was a keen awareness of the perceived limitations in their ability to support colleagues and children through a critical incident, despite all being able to recount instances where they did offer that support. 11 commented that her lack of formal training "would hold me back from doing things because you don't want to do right for doing wrong" (11.P5). In linking both the conflict of education with the experience life offers in dealing with unexpected situations, 14 speculated that "it's knowing what to do in the right situation and I think age helps with that, but I think the younger staff might struggle with that training".

Others felt that specific training would be beneficial, reflecting on their own initial teacher training and even in promoted posts, saying "there was nothing particularly in the course dealing with this sort of thing and, as far as I'm aware, there is no specific training for teachers for kids who are dealing with bereavement" (15.P5).

In this study, like in the ones reported by Mahon et al (1999) and Moore (2002), staff's active engagement seemed to be based on their own experiences of bereavement. All the participants were very willing to disclose their own personal stories about bereavement, summed up by I1 who recalled the death of her own father:–

just before I started school, so I can identify I think with a lot of the fears I've noticed children that have had a bereavement have suffered, some to a larger extent than others and it's that separation anxiety from your surviving parent and the worry attached around that which I think children have to deal with, and was a huge part of my personal experience...I think the feelings don't subside (I1.P5).

This empathy borne from experience is repeated by 15 who, despite not losing a parent like the child in the situation she was recalling had, was able to draw on her own experience of loss to help support him:–

...round that time my grandmother had died and I did talk about how I still think about [my grandmother] sometimes...I am very careful about not saying 'yes, I know' because I don't know, not even 'I understand' because I don't. I have some understanding (I5.P6).

Within the Core Conflict of Education vs Experience, the teacher must reconcile the difference between lacking the formal "expertise" (I1.P12) in negotiating a critical incident with their personal experience of having been "through several incidents [themselves]" (13.P7). In summary, 14's closing comments allude to the aforementioned Posada (2006) definition of a critical incident when she says "I don't know if there's anything that anybody could give to prepare them, because how do you prepare for death? Some people you know take on bereavement and say "it's a part of life" and just move on" (I4.P12-13).

Confidentiality vs Communication

Lowton and Higginson (2003) reported that many of the respondents in their study commented on the lack of communication that they as class teachers were given regarding the bereaved child's circumstances. In this study, I2 gave a striking example of the confidentiality demonstrated by her senior management surrounding an incident, and by extension, the tacit understanding that she too was to not discuss the details of the incident with her class:–

I.2: The next day we just had to say that we were sorry to announce that this girl wouldn't be back and that was it basically, there was no support whatsoever.

RJ: Nothing? So... sorry, just to clarify, you were told [about the incident] by whom?

I.2: It was word of mouth in the staff room to start with.

RJ: So the school management didn't actually gather the school staff, they didn't disseminate the information through ...

I.2: No, not at that stage, no, absolutely not. I think probably, eventually, that somebody would have come to me personally and said "by the way, that girl will now be removed from your register", except, but no and it took a long time for the details to filter its way out and her boyfriend was in school as well and because it was in a small knit community, it wasn't a city school, small knit community, then it gradually, obviously filtered out, things got mixed up and that's all that really happened basically...it was accepted that that was what would happen. (I2.P2).

The management system of the school, in this example at least, appeared to set the tone of how much – if any – information or opportunity to discuss the incident is shared with the classes. It is clear to see the implications alluded to by I2 that in small communities information will eventually be uncovered but that information will not always be accurate, a concern noted by Greenway (2005). From a managerial perspective, the Bennet and Dyehouse (2005) account of supporting a school through bereavement suggested that those in managerial positions similarly struggled with this sense of confidentiality for fear of burdening others.

In contrast, other respondents spoke of the practicality – hinted at in the statement above by I2 - for information to be communicated. I7, who also occupied a managerial role within her school, recalled how the support, which should have been given to a young girl who had been bereaved during a transitory period between schools, had been neglected, despite information being passed to the new school:–

When [the transition] went wrong her mum phoned me to ring her secondary school – I did and said ‘what are you playing at?’ – I was furious with them. She got a detention on the first day back for not doing her homework! Her dad had died!! I was just horrified, how could that happen to a kid going back to school? (I7.P8).

The nature of the conflict between communication and confidentiality extends not just from the whole school level, but to the classroom as well. Some of the interviewees described how willing they would be to engage in communication with their classes in discussion about the incident. From their study, Reid and Dixon (1999) reported that 75% of staff felt either comfortable or very comfortable in discussing the bereavement with their class. In the interviews I conducted, the general feeling was that staff would be willing to talk to their classes about the bereavement and make themselves available for questions surrounding the incident. Other research has already documented the direct,

curious nature of children's questions (Dyregov, 1997) and the experience recorded by I7 is a good example of this:–

I.7: The questions they asked were so lovely and then staff took them back into their individual classes and asked if they wanted to just sit in the classroom and just chat about [the teaching assistant].

RJ: Can you remember any of the questions they asked about [the teaching assistant]?

I.7: Yes – they asked how old she was, they asked they asked the questions to me and then they went into their classes, then they started reflecting on her as a person more, which was interesting and they actually made a flower with things that she used to say to them, because she was quite an old fashioned lady in her phrases and she read a lot of books, she was a very knowledgeable person and the kids, what really came out was the kids knew her as a person, not just as a Teaching Assistant, but the sort of questions they asked me were:- “was she in pain when she died?”; “how long did she know she was poorly?”; “what did she die of?” Really sensible questions, really sensible...

(I7.P10).

Impartiality vs Immersion

The level to which teachers wished to involve themselves in supporting colleagues and children through the incident differs not only from individual to individual but also by the educational setting in which they practised. Lowton and Higginson (2003) found staff supporting children in primary schools were more likely to become involved in supporting the child's family as well than their secondary counterparts. I believe that was borne out of the interviews

conducted in this study with I1 commenting that following the death of the Mam of one of the children in their school I1 “went along to the funeral...and I was keeping in touch with people who were babysitting her, and I rang on the day to see how things were...”(I1.P1). Further, I1 commented that in another instance she supported the parents of a child who had passed away, saying “I went round to the house to see the family and went to the funeral, and I’ve subsequently been to the cemetery with mum and supported mum quite a bit...”(I1.P9). It is clear here that I1 felt that it was appropriate to become immersed in both situations as this was something she felt comfortable with and was an opportunity to offer practical support to both child and family. This level of immersion in the incident is justified by I7 who said:–

If you haven’t got those relationships where there’s trust or a moral purpose...if you haven’t got that in a school its heartless...if anybody said that their child wasn’t cared for in this building or nurtured, then I would be mortified, because if you don’t do that, if you are not meeting their basic human needs, then you are not going to teach them anything...” suggesting that the need for becoming more involved in the incident is crucial in keeping academic and scholastic success a reality.
(I7.P3).

A distance from being involved in supporting colleagues and children in the incident appeared to coincide with perceptions of professional boundaries and the roles that different teachers re allocated within a school. While colleagues in secondary schools were happy to support individual children in the school setting, this did not extend in the same manner as reported by their primary colleagues. I5 recalled the frustration at not being able to address the ‘basic human need’ (I7.P3) hinted at by I1:–

I remember sitting there and thinking all I want to do is go over there and give you a hug, but I'm not going to do it. I'm thinking 'I'm not going to do it because this is my job and that's not right'. That's not right, I mean, my job is to help kids. (I1.P4).

It appeared that the support that would be offered would be in keeping with clearly defined roles as found by Mahon, Goldberg and Washington (1999) and that the impartiality demonstrated here was in part forced by the wider expectations of what teachers 'should' do. I5 went on to say:—

Even as a guidance teacher [specific pastoral support in secondary school] you always have a kind of professional distance and although...you are often dealing with kids talking about things that are very, very difficult and upsetting for them, it's still a professional difference and you are doing what you can to help but you are doing it as a teacher...and therefore you are not there in that kind of properly caring role (I5.P5).

Tellingly, I5 qualified her statement by concluding with a comment echoing the sentiment of her primary colleagues, “but kids in that situation really do need [mimes hug]” (I5.6).

Routine vs Remembering

Moore (2002), in interviews conducted with teachers following bereavement at their school, followed up the initial interviews with another on the first anniversary of the incident. From these interviews, the conflict of remembering and routine was highlighted by how to remember the child or colleague sensitively while being able to establish a secure, familiar routine (Heath, Leavy, Hansen, Ryan, Lawrence, and Sontag, 2008). In our study, the comments of teachers identified the need to be sensitive to an awareness of the

incident while at the same time offering the security that scholastic routine offers. Commenting on a child who had lost a parent, I1 said:–

...you face the dilemma of wanting to be open and caring and interested in asking and making it obvious that you're there for them if they want to talk about it, but school is the sort of safe part of their life, that's their refuge for some children, and in a sense if things are awful at home and difficult, when they're at school they don't always want to be reminded of that, and at school they're sort of the same, nothing changes...I find it quite hard to convey that sense of "if you need someone to talk to I'm here, but if you want things just the same that's absolutely fine (I1.P2).

I1's comments reflect the delicate nature of being involved in supporting children in a critical incident where keeping a routine may be more in the child's best interests. On reflecting on the loss of a child in their secondary school, I2 similarly commented that, while not ignoring the reality of the loss, the routine of classroom reality itself may allow the children to develop resilience:–

the more we give kids the impression that things should be worse than they are...it's more, you know, the expectation that they should be crying at something. We've got to really make sure we find a good balance there and not over-egg the situation and not make them feel like they should be falling apart... (I2.P15).

When a member of the school community is lost, however, it is important that the loss is acknowledged both collectively and individually. Bennett and Dyehouse (2005) recount the creation of a memorial within the school dedicated to a child, an experience very much like the ones I participated in as a teacher years ago. This is a practice that seems familiar to many of the teachers interviewed in the study.

One girl, who died of cancer in 3rd year, she had been ill right through primary school. She was very fond of dolphins, and so there's a dolphin plaque on the wall, a big wooden plaque in the shape of a dolphin and there's also a trophy with dolphins on it that children can be presented with if they've been high achievers through very difficult circumstances in school. So that was the parent's way of acknowledging their child and the plaque on the wall was the school's way of acknowledging it (I2.P17).

Remembering can be both explicit and subtle. At the funeral for a colleague, I7 said "the staff decided, [she] loved sunflowers, so sunflowers would remind us of [her], so some of the kids grew some flowers, we all bought a sunflower for the funeral"(I7.10).

While conducting the traditional awards ceremony at the end of the year, I7 illustrated reciprocity:– the unspoken, changed dynamic between the staff and pupils – to remember the same colleague who died at the start of the year:–

We had our celebration assembly... I didn't want to mention [the colleague], although we are going to have an award for her and we are going to have a little remembrance garden...so that's a concrete thing you can do, but I wore a sunflower for the assembly. I didn't say anything to the children and I didn't say anything to the staff but they knew what it meant when I was giving the prizes out without me having to make it a sad occasion, but it's also not saying she never existed and she wasn't with us at the start of the year... (I7.P10).

I2's example shows how such a memorial is not created exclusively by the school, but with the parents as part of the wider community and, in this instance, also a way of acknowledging individual circumstances in the future. By doing this, the act of remembrance continues, as it does with the subtle, unspoken acts like those described by I7, long after the traditional scholastic routines have been established following the initial incident.

Critical Incident Expression

This part of the model was the most significantly changed from the LOA presented in the meta-ethnography. The original LOA attempted to explain the progression as linear, with one 'expression' leading onto another and each point corresponding with a particular Conflict or element of Core Identity. From conducting the empirical research, however, it emerged that the way that the incidents expressed themselves was more thematic. The interviewees did not consider the way they worked through the incident to be a progression of steps. Rather, a particular element of the incident was the catalyst for them to begin considering a potential internal conflict and how this impacted on their personal and professional identity. Then, another element of the incident would trigger further utterances about different types of conflict and identity and so on. Interviewees would comment on themes like "The Suddenness" of the incident and "Anniversaries". The model appeared to be far more fluid and dynamic than linear as previously hypothesised. I felt that it would no longer be appropriate to use the aggregation of terms from the LOA to describe teacher's experiences recorded in this study. The Critical Incident Expression now became particular repeated elements of the incidents described by the teachers which gave rise to the discussion in areas which would become Core Conflict and Core Identity. The following are not intended to be exhaustive but illustrative of some of the key Expressions commented on by the interviewees.

Nature of the Incident

The nature of the incident was something which had prompted many of the interviewees to re-explore their experience. This was referred to specifically by different interviewees as 'suicide' and 'murder' but in each interview, the circumstances of the death they were describing were dramatic. The dramatic circumstances of some of the incidents recalled during the interviews seemed to have a greater impact on the teacher, a finding noted by both Greenway (2005) and Lazenby (2006). I2, in this study, recalled how the nature of the child's death in her school affected her:–

Unbelieving really, because I just couldn't believe that somebody could do that. I mean she was a quiet girl who came in and out and the courage that that must have taken to [shoot herself]; just seemed unbelievable...and desperate. It wasn't even as if she was a very terribly trendy girl, she was fairly plump, old fashioned dresser in appearance as well, sort of short curly hair. She didn't appear to be the sort of girl that would be so desperately keen on a guy that she would go on to do that, so yes, it was an unbelieving situation. (12.P11-12).

Tied into the dramatic nature of the incident which I2 found herself in was the comment surrounding the teacher's perception of the student. The references to student popularity within the school were echoed by another of the interviewees who commented that the death of a popular secondary school student following a car accident created a far greater impact on the local community than the death of a primary school pupil following an illness that same year (16.P3) and another older student who had been killed on a motorway waiting for breakdown assistance (13.P5).

Unexpected

The unexpected nature of the incident also appeared to be an area which elicited further discussion. I7 commented on a member of staff who had been well and healthy, with no indication of being sick and the speed with which her death occurred forced the entire school into dealing with the effect of bereavement, not just the management staff:–

In school, just before Christmas, [the teaching assistant] came in with backache, she thought she'd pulled a muscle shovelling snow, I went to see her in hospital in the New Year and the prognosis was no survival chance at all, so we went from school to dead within three months (17.P2).

"The Gap"

By far the most powerful Expression to resonate with me was the concept of "The Gap". Although alluded to briefly in the Lazenby (2006) study, the interviewees in this study were able to give a far more reflective and personal account of what that meant. It serves to remind us again that the process of rebuilding after experiencing a critical incident is not an easy one for those who are expected to offer support. Even without anniversaries of death or memorial in schools, there are still echoes of the loss:–

I've still got a paper register to tick off with the kids, but you are in such a routine that you are just sliding off the names, one after the other, stop and then hesitate and then go 'oh' or whatever... but it's still an impact, you go down and you go to call their name and you know, and of course the students, the students know that gap was for that person, so again - I think it's just a constant reminder. (I4.P10).

Discussion

The study offers an inductive exploration into the experiences of teachers following involvement in a critical incident. The aim of the research was to confirm, refute or change the model presented in the meta-ethnography. I believe that the study, from the conducted and analyzed interviews and the expression of data in the current model, supports the hypothesis presented in the meta-ethnography that teachers rely on particular core elements of identity during a critical incident while simultaneously resolving individual psycho-social conflicts. Unlike the model presented in the meta-ethnography, however, the expression of the critical incident was specific to the teachers' experience and that that expression may be the catalyst for resolving particular conflicts or relying on particular elements of identity. I have presented an interactive model which shows, relative to the teacher's experience and context, how particular elements of *Identity*, *Conflict* and *Expression* can align to illustrate the teacher's experience of a critical incident. The model attempts to apply the suggestions

from other research that social influences, such as a critical incident, and identity can be integrated (Burke and Stets, 2009 p.220; Deux and Stets, 2010).

The model presented is an attempt to illustrate the teacher's experiences using an evolved grounded theory methodology (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). In doing so, the model is presented as an inductive, substantive theory. Corbin and Strauss (1990)' criteria for evaluation states that the theory must be generalisable. More importantly, the theory must be directly applicable and pragmatic, summarised by Annells (1997a) as 'problem management'. I believe that the model would be a suitable and practical tool for facilitating or exploring discussion round other teacher's experience in a contextually similar situation, but I say this advisedly; consideration must be given to the dissemination of the model to avoid making it a catch-all tool or claims that it provides 'the answer'.

In keeping with the relativist ontology through which the research was conducted, further research could be conducted to examine the dynamic nature of the model, particularly in the *Expression* element; the varied experiences of teachers might redefine the model and this information may be re-interpreted by other researchers. Wasserman, Clair and Wilson (2009) recount the apocryphal story of a researcher who, after presenting their research and receiving numerous critiques on it, responded simply with "how can I make it better?" (Wasserman et al, 2009,p.357). Subsequent research and revision may ultimately give rise to a formal theory and model surrounding teacher experience, identity and critical incidents.

Within this field of research, there will, unfortunately, always be the occasion to explore the phenomenon. Backman and Kyngas (1999) again suggest that there is no single style of presenting findings but add the caveat that there must be an element of testing before the substantive theory can be used for predicting, another marker of rigour requested by Chiviotti and Piran (2003). The model presented in this paper was taken to a teacher in a local primary school who had, without prompting or knowledge of the study, asked to talk through the difficulties he was encountering supporting a child in his class who had recently lost a parent. The model was used as a tool to facilitate discussion with the teacher around the subject of supporting the young person. The teacher later commented that it had been "cathartic" and "useful". While this is but one tentative approach to explore the usefulness of the model presented in

this study, a clear aim of the evolved grounded theory methodology, it also encourages us to find ways to improve it if it is truly pragmatic and verifiable (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Sbaraini et al 2011). For researchers and practitioners supporting schools, children and communities, there is, therefore, the need and responsibility to make any intervention as useful, relevant and helpful as possible.

5106 words

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Consent form for persons participating in research projects

Name of Participant: _____

Project Title: *Critical Change: Exploring the development in professional and personal identities in teachers following involvement in critical incidents/traumatic events*

Name of Researcher/s: Richard Jack

Name of Supervisor/s (if applicable): Billy Peters

1. I consent to participate in the above project. It has been explained to me that my participation is voluntary and that I will be participating in an interview to explore the issue raised in the project title.
2. I authorize the researcher (Richard Jack) to use a semi-structured interview to gather the data needed for the project.
3. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) the possible effects of the interview have been explained to me to my satisfaction;
 - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied;
 - (c) the project is for the purpose of research and developing future practice within teaching and psychology;
 - (d) I have been assured that any information I present in the interview will be kept completely confidential, subject to any legal requirements, and will be kept securely for a specified period before being destroyed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
 (Participant)



Debriefing Sheet

Critical Change: Exploring the development in professional and personal identities in teachers following involvement in critical incidents/traumatic events

Thank you for participating in this study.

One of the main aims in this study was to examine the extent to which the way teachers think about themselves changes during and after being involved in a critical or traumatic event in their school.

We used a method called the semi-structured interview which will hopefully have allowed you to communicate your experience of the incident in as free a way as possible while still directing you towards talking about things like your relationships with your colleagues, students and the wider school community.

The study was designed to explore how being involved in critical incidents changes the way we look at ourselves as professionals and as individuals.

Your contribution to this study is therefore very valuable and very much appreciated. Your responses will be used to help create and refine a model that will attempt to explain the changes we go through when involved in events that we may feel are out of our control. Hopefully, this information will be used by psychologists to help teachers and local authorities work with students and other teachers involved in critical incidents in the future.

If, for whatever reason, you later decide that you no longer want your responses to be part of this study, then please contact me, Richard Jack (see details below) to have your data removed from the study and destroyed. As a final point, all data collected in this study will be analyzed alongside interviews from other teachers— your responses will not be singled out. You will remain anonymous.

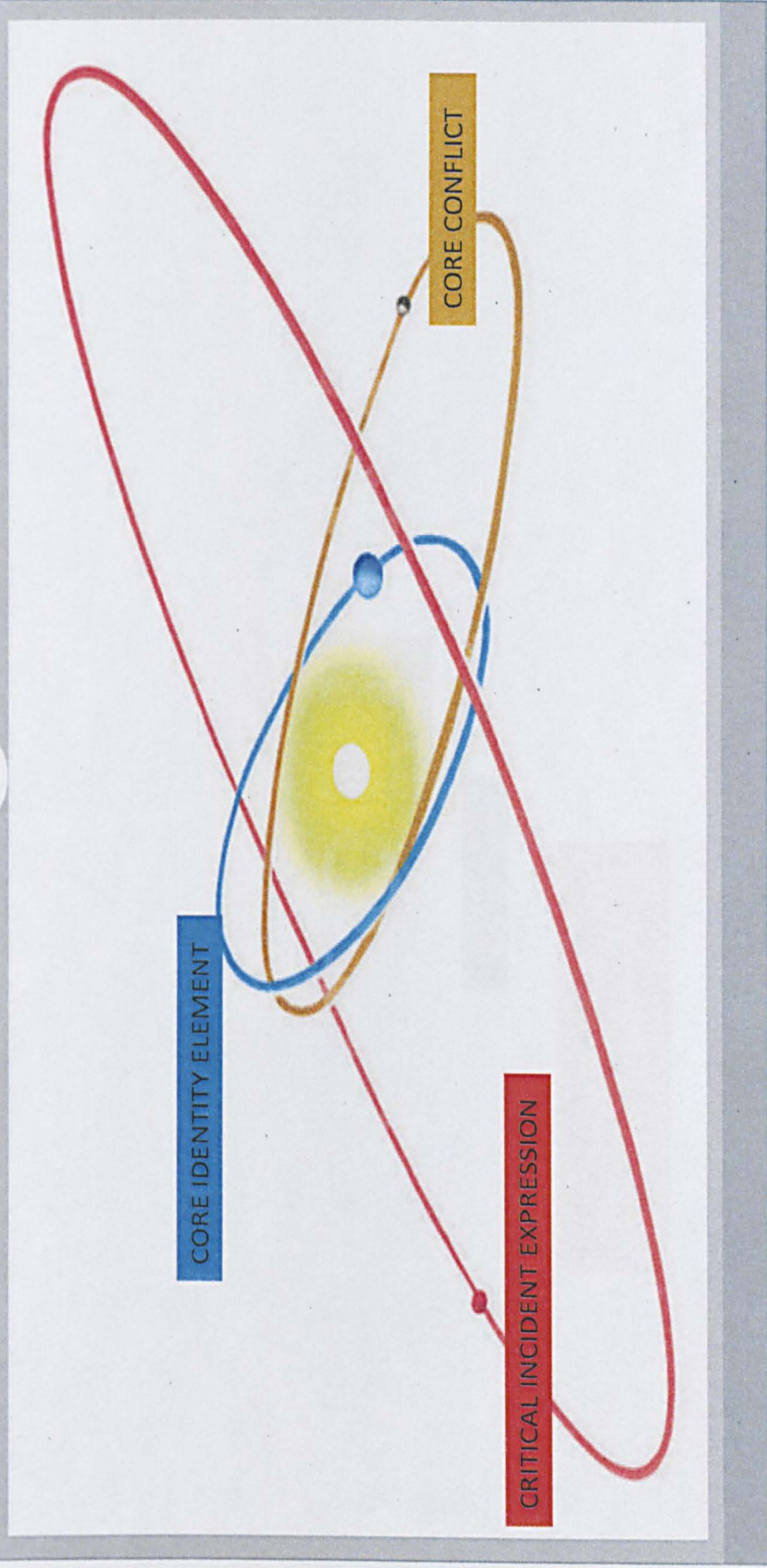
If you would like more information, or have any further questions about any aspect of this study, then please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you again for participating and helping with this study. Thanks!

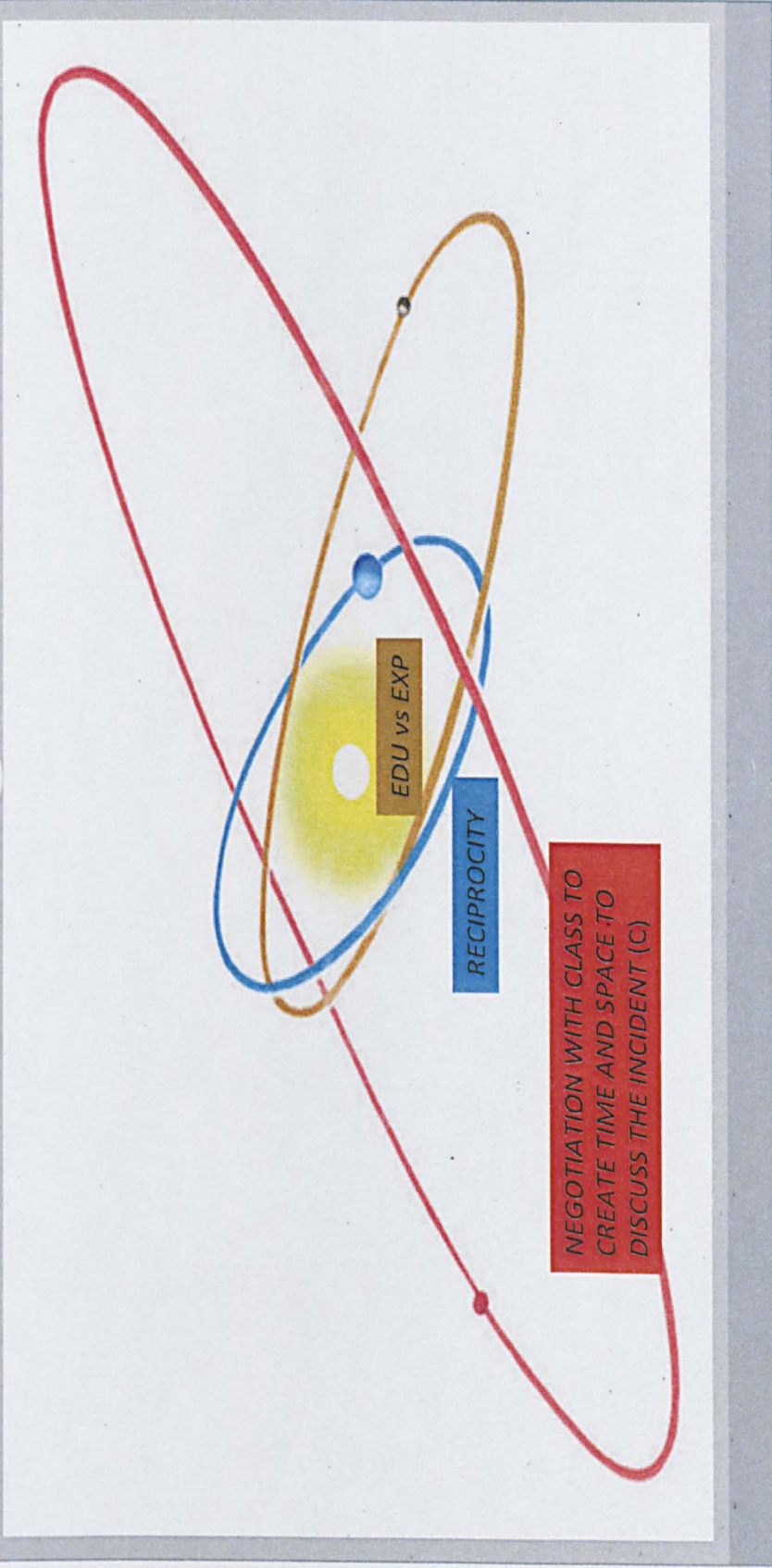
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 Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology
 School of Education, Language and Communication Sciences
 Newcastle University

This study is being completed to fulfil the requirements of the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology

Proposed Working Model



Working Model Example



51 I.2: No, not at that stage, no, absolutely not. I think
52 probably, eventually, that somebody would have come
53 to me personally and said "by the way, that girl will
54 now be removed from your register", except, but no and
55 it took a long time for the details to filter its way out.
56 and her boyfriend was in school as well and because it
57 was in a small knit community, it wasn't a city school,
58 small knit community, then it gradually, obviously
59 filtered out, things got mixed up and that's all that really
60 happened basically. There was no support given and
61 there was no suggestion either of pupils or the staff
62 could be given any support, and having said that, it was
63 accepted that that was what would happen.

64
65 RJ: Uh huh.

66
67 I.2: Nobody sat back and said "Oh I need to get counselling
68 here, nobody said that I am traumatised and that I need
69 this, that and the next thing".

70
71 RJ: Uh huh.

72
73 I.2: I would think that the people who would have needed
74 the counselling might have been the policeman that
75 attended her and the family in whose house she did this,
76 because she did all this in her boyfriend's bedroom, so
77 in those days there was absolutely no support
78 whatsoever.

79
80 Now things have changed dramatically. I work in a
81 place now where this year alone, there has been 3 more
82 deaths in the town.

83
84 RJ: And these are murders which have affected the school
85 community?

86
87 I.2: They've affected the school community again in that it
88 is not a city school it's a large town school, so everyone
89 knows every else and if they're not related to them
90 directly then through all sorts of co-habiting
91 relationships, people know exactly who, what and so
92 on.

93
94 RJ: Uh huh.

95
96 I.2: So, yes it has affected all of the people, as far as I know
97 it's not anybody directly in school at the moment that
98 have been accused of it, she was a pupil two years ago.
99 But again, the guidance staff will now see to it that,
100 people in the background and teachers themselves

- For fear of upsetting children
- COMMUNICATION IS CRUCIAL "Need to know"
- NOT INSTANTANEOUS DEPENDENCE. COPING STRATEGY?
- Not remembered. Framed. Routine as usual.
- Not minimum. Need to know. Truth comes out
- COMMUNITY OF SCHOOL AND HOME
- community as rural.
- the truth comes out
- marginal obligation.
- Culture of dealing with it internal community
- Given suggests that the support skills need to be
within the school.
- Accepted culture within the school

- "Getting on with it"
- Professional and Personal strength

- anyone involved outside the school community
- professional identity
- breaking etiquette?
- safe place

How?
- Frequency of Events? Support offered?

- School community as related to wider community
- school as extension of community.
- No secrets. through blood
- inter-mingling of discrete family units. Not good?
- everyone knows. EXTENDED FAMILY?

- RIPPLE EFFECT
- EVENTS BEYOND SCHOOL.
- Still connected even after leaving. Sibling relationship not
limited to time in school // responsibility of particular staff
- Perception that teachers are also in the background.

wouldn't get involved in this. There have been instances, obviously every year as it's a big school so there are children every year whose parents die or whatever, and so we would be giving e-mails out each day in relation to any of these children.

- Frequency that still happens. Health numbers matter?
- Inconvenience? Information disseminated by appropriate staff

We had one this week where a child's grandmother has just died through kidney failure, his father is being treated for kidney failure and this wee lad is now going for tests for kidney failure and he feels he can't cope with school work, homework, with very much all and we have all been asked to look out for this wee lad in our classes and we've got to give him as much support as we can, either with his work in class, be understanding of him not getting his homework in. We've got to be understanding of his mood swings and I would imagine ... he hasn't been given one at the minute, but he probably will be given a "get out of class" card.

- Frequent occurrence now. Routine events.
- Everyone but not directly involved. Obvious.
- Is "BEING UNDERSTANDING" the euphemism for tolerance to having to deal with the young persons - distress

RJ: Sure.

I.2: So he can just show me the card and go off when he feels he can't cope anymore. Now that's you know, a concept that has come into play over the last maybe 10 years, its not something that I've been used to having through all my teaching career.

- Strategies changing. New means of dealing with BGL
- change as unnecessary? Unpleasant?

RJ: Yeah.

I.2: And it does mean that pupils when they get really stressed, when they can't cope with a situation, whether its a bereavement or whether its because they're autistic, we've got more and more of those children around, then they have got this little card that they can show you and they can go and let steam off somewhere else before they end up doing something they shouldn't.

- Demands placed on them by the school/teacher
- Trauma and pathology on the same in the eyes of the teacher. Should they be isolated?
- All behaviour as release?
- The child as beholden to their behaviours that is central of it

RJ: How do you feel about pupils having them having access to the cards?

I.2: The cards are fine, provided they are not overplayed.

- Conditions of intervention. Teacher retaining power. Reciprocity not important?

RJ: Right.

I.2: And I keep a note of the usage?. Its a wee bit similar to toilet passes and you normally find that kids who have toilet passes, are the also the children who don't want to be in your class very often and so they overplay them and I suggested that I take away these, so that I could

- intervention only as when it appropriate. Release of class squeezed only for a short period
Teacher control

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RJ: Trish was?

I.7: A Teaching Assistant in school, in Year 5. In school, just before Christmas, she came in with backache, she thought she'd pulled a muscle shovelling snow, I went to see her in hospital in the New Year and the prognosis was no survival chance at all, so we went from school to dead within three months, and that was the time when I was having OfSTED at the other school, that was the time when it made me really, really realise quite how strong the ethos support structure mechanism within the school really worked, that we got through it, the children got through it because of the just the very nature of the relationships and support networks there are within the building.

- Time of year - Signature of occasions
- Highlights the suddenness of the situation.
- Sudden nature. No time to prepare
- Additional stressors/pressure
- Strong collegiate support. COMMUNICATION
- relationships + support networks between staff / between children

RJ: So what did you feel was special about the relationships that allowed that to happen? Was there anything in particular that your staff were able to offer? That you maybe, asked your staff to deliver?

I.7: I think that you as the Head, you set the tone for how people deal with things that are traumatic and no matter and I do share with my staff my emotions, you know, I'm not afraid to cry in front of them you know, I'm not saying I'm cool with them, I'm not, but I think you set the tone, so its being able to, in the same way that you differentiate when you are a teacher with different needs of different pupils in your class, I think as a Head, if you've got the emotional intelligence to support the staff in a discriminatory way, whether its with just the situation or the very nature of their personalities, then that kicks in at times like that, so with for example - actually, there are two situations going on at the moment - Gary, the teacher who had been working with the TA, with Trish, is very much a sarcastic, defence mechanism type of guy, he's ?? actually and he's really a strong, strong teacher - very nothing phases him - he was knocked sideways by what happened to Trish and ironically his wife ended up being her doctor when she was in palliative care and we went to see her together and he was the strong one for me when we went, but at the same time, as his boss, I knew how much he desperately missed Trish in the classroom, because he'd worked with her for years, so I put in one of my strongest TA's to work with him, to keep an eye on him and she's continued with him because I knew he wouldn't be able to cope with somebody who didn't know Trish or wasn't able to support him and his needs as well. Its about as a leader, its staff support first, then its what you say to the children, and I think we did that. We didn't tell the

- ROLE - Leader. RESPONSIBILITY to lead.
- RECIPROCAL change in relationship. Not afraid to look vulnerable.
- teacher setting example
- necessary internal quality for teachers?
- what's right for staff. Differentiated support
- situational support
- personally tailored support
- Collegiate support
- Support through reciprocity. It's not a one way thing. It's a two way thing. It's a reciprocal relationship. It's a reciprocal relationship. It's a reciprocal relationship.
- ROLE - leader
- Staff as priority

107 younger children, we told we sent a letter out to the
108 parents, which you can have a copy of if you like,
109 which for the first time ever, I think I was not the
110 first time, but I think the note of the letter really said it
111 all and it was about we'd lost a friend and so giving
112 them some advice about what to say to children and
113 etc., but please don't ask the staff about this because its
114 too close to home and just respect that.

- COMMUNICATION

- relationships were than professional
- RESPONSIBILITY: is part of the whole
school community.
- 'recognising fellow grievers'

116 But when we told the children it was really well I
117 told the children. We took the Year 5's and 6's because
118 the Year 5's had her as a TA and she'd left and died
119 and the Year 6's had the year before with her and they
120 were very, very close to her, but the questions they
121 asked and they way they were in the hall and I took
122 them to a hall that I don't have to go back into to
123 associate that with it, it's a sports hall, so it's a fun
124 place, its not you know, I didn't take them anywhere
125 where its sombre. The questions they asked were so
126 lovely and then staff took them back into their
127 individual classes and asked if they wanted to just sit in
128 the classroom and just chat about Trish.

- CARE + RESPONSIBILITY as leader

- consideration of potential triggers. Sensitive
to the future circumstances

- creating space. Routine changed and
RECIPROCITY - change in teacher-pupil dynamic.

130 RJ: Can you remember any of the questions they asked
131 about Trish?

132
133 I.7: Yes - they asked how old she was, they asked they
134 asked the questions to me and then they went into their
135 classes, then they started reflecting on her as a person
136 more, which was interesting and they actually made a
137 flower with things that she used to say to them, because
138 she was quite an old fashioned lady in her phrases and
139 she read a lot of books, she was a very knowledgeable
140 person and the kids, what really came out was the kids
141 knew her as a person, not just as a Teaching Assistant,
142 but the sort of questions they asked me were:

- change in routine. REMEMBERING

- REMEMBERING - Memorial. Allowing children
to construct their own, individualised
memorial to teacher.

- RECIPROCITY. Relationships more than simple
Teacher/pupil.

- 143 - was she in pain when she died?
- 144 - how long did she know she was poorly?
- 145 - what did she die of?

146
147
148 Really sensible questions, really sensible and the other
149 thing that struck me from that day when we kind of told
150 people what had happened was then when the letters
151 went out, I'm not defying our ?? but you know what its
152 like, I'm ??. I have the letter and they stood and read it
153 in the playground, the parents and it was quiet and I
154 heard one little girl say to her mum, she was about Year
155 1 - she said, because I was just seeing what the reaction
156 was to it and the little girl said 'mummy what's the
157 letter about?' and she said its something Mrs Wendy
158 needs to tell all the mum's and dad's, I'll talk to you
159 about when we get home'. And I thought 'oh my

- Need to know: addressing the issue honestly

- Discretion and sensitivity to the needs of
the school. RECIPROCITY

160 goodness me, that's exactly what I wanted you to say'
161 and obviously they were deeply upset by it but they - Respecting the school's loss
162 didn't do a 'Lady Diana'. It wasn't about them, it was
163 about us as a community, breathing, you know what I - school as community (communication)
164 mean?

166 Ooh our kind do love a good funeral, that sounds awful - not authentic grief - hysteria
167 doesn't it, but they do, but this was genuine, this was
168 genuine emotions and afterwards and that's why I
169 said being in the school, I felt I was like in the wrong - RESPONSIBILITY - 'to be there.'
170 place at that time, because I felt like I was leaving my
171 staff to deal with something a lot of the time I wanted to
172 be here for. I did spend more time in the building those - Comfort from being busy. Need to be
173 weeks and whether that was to meet my needs or to there. Keeping busy...
174 meet the needs of the school, I'm not really sure, it was
175 probably my needs as well.

177 RJ: Was there anything that prepared you for doing these
178 kind of things? For having to deal with supporting your
179 staff, for having to tell the children, for having to
180 engage with the community, how large - was there
181 anything?

183 I.7: I don't know if its something in my personality
184 Richard, but I don't know if it helps your study, but
185 some people are more resilient to trauma than others and
186 I had, personally had a huge trauma in my life when I - Resilience. Personal qualities
187 was quite young and I think that without being maudlin, - Experience of bereavement when young
188 for me as a child, the worst thing that could happen to
189 me happened when I was 12 - I lost a parent and I think - Losing a parent
190 that's made me more resilient to other incidences in the - Learned from and strengthened by
191 future. I think if you've always led a life where its
192 swum along nicely - your parents live to be 80, if
193 you've never had a divorce, you've never lost a child
194 you know - life doesn't touch some people, but I - without experience, bereavement is more
195 almost think it makes it harder for them when devastating; no opportunity to learn
196 something does happen and I don't think that's a
197 psychologically sound theory, I don't know, but I have
198 observed people who had to cope with trauma early, it - Strengthens or destroys
199 either sends them one way or the other. You either
200 realise that, I don't know, I think with my with the
201 support I got when I was a little girl when my father
202 died and how my mum was about it - she was - Time as a factor. can affect for years
203 destroyed by it for a few years, but I think we coped - Coping through support
204 with that, it makes you more able to cope with other
205 things and I think as a Head you've got to have that
206 more emotional strength for the times when and it - leader - emotional strength to lead others.
207 is reciprocated within this school, that's the big thing
208 because that's how I am when I have a trauma, a
209 personal trauma, not a school trauma, the staff rally - RECIPROCIATE !! SCORE !! Even though she's
210 round and do the same for me. Though when I went the head, they also support her. No longer
211 through a divorce a couple of years ago, they kept me leader and staff, but colleagues recognizing
212 sane, because they were so it was just little things - and responding to personal need.
- colleague support; friendship.

