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'Stayers'

A qualitative study exploring why teachers and headteachers stay in challenging London primary schools.

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**'Stayers': a qualitative study exploring
why teachers and headteachers stay in
challenging London primary schools.**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Emma Towers

King's College London

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Abstract

For some time in England, concerns have been expressed about high levels of teacher turnover. In response, a great deal of research has focussed on what compels teachers to leave the teaching profession (Bubb and Earley, 2007; Smithers and Robinson, 2003, 2005). However, much less is known about why teachers choose to stay. This thesis examines teacher retention from an alternative perspective by exploring how long-serving teachers, or ‘stayers’, account for why they choose to stay teaching in challenging London primary schools. Identity and motivation theory are utilised as analytical tools to illuminate the reasons *why* a group of London primary teachers and headteachers stay and what it is about *who* they are that influences their decisions to stay.

The study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the professional lives and career decisions of 24 London primary school stayers using in-depth semi-structured interviews. While the concept of a ‘stayer’ is contested, this study interprets the stayer as a teacher who has taught in the same school for five or more years. Participants consist of serving class teachers and headteachers who work in disadvantaged London primary schools. A small number of former stayers, who have now left their London primary schools, have also been interviewed in order to invite a retrospective discussion of stayers’ motivations.

The findings indicate that because staying is contingent on a number of personal, professional and situational factors related to identity and motivations, staying is a multi-layered process. Most stayers express a firm commitment to stay in the

future, but some ‘unsettled’ stayers voice doubts about staying in the years to come. The study concludes that closer attention should be paid to the reasons why teachers stay in challenging schools to counterbalance the focus on teacher turnover. This is so that, at the very least, supportive structures can be put in place to encourage more teachers to stay and contribute to the success and wellbeing of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Chapter 1

Researching Stayers

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain why I chose to research ‘staying teachers’ in disadvantaged London primary schools. I outline the background to my research on teachers’ motivations for deciding to teach and, crucially, for remaining in their jobs. I then turn to examine the London context in which my research is located and discuss the specificity of the context in which the stayers work. Following this, I set out the research questions which provide the direction and focus for my study. Finally I provide a brief overview of the chapters contained in my thesis.

This study is inspired by my own experience as a long serving teacher in one disadvantaged inner London primary school. Having been offered a financial ‘recruitment and retention’ incentive at the start of my career (in 2002), I was keenly aware of the need to retain teachers in London’s primary schools, particularly those located in disadvantaged communities. I observed that there was a handful of teachers who had remained in my school for a significant period of time, while others moved on.

Many teachers, with whom I worked, regularly came face to face with the significant social inequalities within the city where they lived and worked (Maguire, Wooldridge and Pratt-Adams, 2006). Those who stayed exhibited

strong commitments towards ‘making a difference’ to the lives and learning of children who were experiencing sometimes chaotic and complex pressures in their lives. These teachers recognised that their commitment towards the children in the school, reflected in their staying, would make a difference. A high teacher turnover can impede a school’s capacity to support and extend the learning of children, particularly in disadvantaged circumstances. Therefore, the retention of teachers in disadvantaged schools becomes a matter of social justice. If high-needs schools located in deprived areas have to struggle to recruit teachers, who then leave at a disproportionate rate, children attending these schools are more likely to experience poor educational progress (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Lyons, 2004). This observation fuelled my MA dissertation (Towers, 2011) where I researched the reasons why a small number of teachers remained teaching in one challenging school.

This study, which builds on my previous research, uses *identity* as a theoretical lens through which to extend my understanding of why teachers choose to remain working in their challenging London primary schools. Later in this chapter I argue that it is essential to explore teachers’ motivations through the lens of identity, if we are to gain a comprehensive understanding of why teachers stay.

1.2 Background to my research

1.2.1 Teacher recruitment and retention

Recruiting and retaining teachers in London’s challenging inner London schools has always been problematic (Lupton and Sullivan, 2007). In recent times, the recruitment and retention of teachers in many parts of the UK has reached crisis

point (Hallgarten, 2015; Ward, 2015; Wilshaw, 2015). Apart from London, areas where teacher recruitment and retention present significant problems for schools are those which are located in deprived coastal towns and rural regions (Ofsted, 2013). Those schools are particularly hard to staff for a number of contextual, social and professional reasons and further research into the retention of teachers in deprived and isolated rural areas is warranted. However in disadvantaged areas in London, schools continue to experience significant problems recruiting teachers due to a number of reasons: schools which have a high proportion of children from deprived backgrounds may be less attractive to potential recruits; disadvantaged schools in certain areas have to compete for teachers against independent and selective schools; and the costs of living in the city can be prohibitive for many teachers (Howson, 2016; Rice, 2015).

The financial pressures of living in London are greater now than ever before. Housing, transport and childcare costs are higher in London than elsewhere in the UK and is therefore unaffordable for many public sector workers such as teachers (Skapinker, 2015; Trust for London, 2015). Although London teachers are compensated in part by an additional payment called the ‘London weighting’ allowance, for many this is not sufficient. A survey by the National Association of Head teachers (NAHT, 2015) of over two thousand schools in England and Wales, found that 63% of schools in inner London reported their recruitment problems were ‘because of high housing and living costs’ (NAHT, 2015, p.4).

In terms of teacher retention in London, it is difficult to pinpoint precise up-to-date statistics on how long London teachers stay in one school. However, the

most recent statistics (from 2011) for teacher turnover in inner London schools show that just over 40% of inner London teachers and headteachers remained in their posts between 1 and 5 years. Between 5 and 10 years, nearly 25% of teachers and headteachers in inner London remained teaching in their schools. Just over 20% of teachers and headteachers in London stayed in their posts for over 10 years (Allen, Burgess and Mayo, 2012). However, this data was collected in 2011 and costs have risen since then while salaries have remained the same.

Fears of teacher shortages in the UK (including London) have been compounded by recent warnings from some of the country's current high profile educational figures such as Sir Michael Wilshaw, the current Chief Inspector of Schools and Head of Ofsted, as well as leaders of the UK's main teaching unions. They caution that unprecedented high numbers of teachers are leaving the profession in the first few years of teaching (Bousted, 2015; Blower, 2015; Wilshaw, 2015). Over the years, many studies have examined teacher retention problems by focusing on the reasons why teachers leave their schools and the profession (Ingersoll, 2001; Jacob, 2007; Smithers and Robinson, 2005; Struyven and Vanthournout, 2014). More recently, a number of teaching union surveys as well as media reports have explored the reasons why teachers are currently leaving the profession in high numbers (for example: *The Guardian*, January 2015; *The Telegraph*, October 2015; NASUWT, 2016; NUT, 2016). A clear picture has been constructed about the reasons why teachers leave their jobs; the main reasons being: a burdensome workload; weak school leadership and management; lack of work-life balance and poor student behaviour (for example: NUT, 2016; Smithers and Robinson, 2005; Struyven and Vanthournout, 2014). However, relatively

little is known about why a teacher chooses to *stay* in his or her post. Therefore, in my study, I address the retention issue from a different angle and pose the question: *Why do teachers stay, particularly in hard-to-teach schools?*

1.2.2 Motivations and Identity

Much can be gained from examining teacher retention by focusing on teachers' motivations for staying in their schools, rather than solely relying on data from those teachers who leave. As previously mentioned, studies on teacher retention have provided a clear picture of the reasons why teachers leave. The same is true for why urban teachers leave challenging inner city schools; the most significant reasons given being: poor discipline/student behaviour; and lack of appropriate support from leadership and management (for example: Freedman and Appleman, 2009; Guin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2004; Smithers and Robinson, 2005). However a far richer and more comprehensive understanding of urban teacher retention can be realised if teachers' motivations for *staying* are illuminated, and then added to what we already know about why teachers leave. Furthermore, understanding motivations for staying could have significant implications for urban teacher recruitment and initial teacher education specifically geared to teaching and staying in hard-to-teach schools. In addition, understanding teachers' reasons for staying in challenging schools may influence aspects of continuing professional development designed to support teachers who work with urban children; and may also influence the school structure and organisation (Freedman and Appleman, 2009; Lyons, 2004; Tricarico, Jacob and Hoppey, 2015).

Teachers' motivations for staying cannot be examined in isolation. The stayer's professional (and personal) life needs to be explored in order to make sense of the reasons he or she gives for staying. A stayer's *identity* is influenced by a number of structural elements, such as their gender, social class and ethnicity. Teachers' identities are influenced by their backgrounds and biographies; their values and beliefs, which in turn shape the ways they teach and the kind of teachers they become (Dillon and Maguire, 2011; Olsen, 2010). As a result, much can be learnt from exploring teachers' reasons for staying through the theoretical lens of identity; it offers the opportunity to unearth a rich, rounded and holistic picture of the teacher retention issue.

1.3 The London context

All urban areas share similar problems and issues such as extremes in poverty and wealth, high levels of immigration, and high levels of crime. However, London differs from other UK cities not least because it is the biggest city in the UK and continues to grow and expand at a rapid rate (Brighouse and Fullick, 2007). London is the most unequal city in the UK; it has the largest gap between the richest and poorest people in the country (Lupton et al., 2013). It differs from other cities in that it has a more transient population which is growing and changing more quickly than other UK city with a 'more rapid increase in the proportion of its population born outside the UK or Ireland' (Lupton et al., 2013, p.14). London is a draw for a 'wide range of consumers, entrepreneurs, investors, artists, workers, refugees and asylum seekers' (Maguire, 2016, p.2) and is by far the most ethnically diverse city in the UK: London is characterised by its 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007). All of these factors mark London out from other UK

cities to make ‘London a unique setting in the UK’ (Maguire, 2016, p.2). London’s unique character is also reflected in its schools.

1.3.1 Education and London’s schools

Historically, educational policies directed at urban schools were based on a deficit view of urban communities, families and children. As Maguire et al. (2006) argue, ‘policy responses to these schools have frequently been couched in a problems-oriented approach’ (p.15). Indeed, throughout history successive governments have attempted to tackle the ‘problems’ facing urban schools, by introducing a range of programmes to improve educational achievement in urban areas. It could be argued that these policies were shaped by the belief that urban children were ‘‘deficient’ in some way’ (Maguire et al., 2006, p.12). The New Labour governments (1997–2010) oversaw substantial investment directed at the UK’s more disadvantaged schools. Programmes such as the Education Action Zones (EAZs) and the Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme were set up to provide support for schools in socially deprived contexts and in challenging circumstances (Bubb and Earley, 2007). Certainly much of the political discourse was preoccupied with the notion that London needed to provide a ‘world class’ education system to compete in a competitive global market (Brighouse, 2007). A London-specific approach to tackle disadvantage and raise standards of teaching and learning began with the introduction of the ‘London Challenge’ initiative in 2003 which invested in schools and local authorities (Brighouse and Fullick, 2007). As part of the initiative, the Chartered London Teacher (CLT) programme was introduced which, ‘sought to create a pan-London identity for the work and professional development of London teachers’ (Brighouse et al., 2007, p.318).

The CLT state that, ‘For London to be a world leader in education, London teachers must be recognised as among the best in their profession’ (CLT, 2015).

Over the last 15 years, progress has been made in raising levels of achievement in London’s schools. A 2013 report on London’s poverty profile states that in terms of education: ‘London performs better than the rest of England, particularly for children on free school meals and children from ethnic minority backgrounds’ (Aldridge et al., 2013, p.71). The reason for the success of London’s schools is contested. One argument is that the schools’ success is a result of government policies and the introduction of initiatives like the London Challenge, Teach First and the Academies programme (Baars et al., 2014; Hunt, 2013). On the other hand, such policies, which may have had an effect on the success of London’s schools, cannot alone be credited for their success, as improvement in pupils’ performance can be charted back to the mid-1990s before the policies were implemented (Blanden et al., 2015). In this case, according to Blanden et al. (2015), other educational initiatives directed at primary schools (not specific to London) such as the introduction of the numeracy and literacy hours in the mid-1990s could have been, at least partly, responsible for the achievement in London’s schools. Another reason for London’s success is attributed to the diversity of London’s schools where, it has been argued. ‘the children of immigrants typically have high aspirations and ambitions, and place greater hopes in the education system than the locals do’ (Burgess, 2014, p.16).

Measuring the success of London's schools, including those in the most disadvantaged communities, through exam results is one way to determine the achievement of children in such schools. At the moment, many London children from disadvantaged backgrounds are making good educational progress. However, London's schools' current exam successes do not necessarily predict continuing future achievements, particularly if London's schools suffer further serious teacher shortages in the coming years (Howson, 2016). Meanwhile there are many other aspects of a child's life and experience at school which cannot be solely measured by academic outcomes. Families continue to live in deprived neighbourhoods and still face daily challenges and difficulties. Inevitably this leads to emotional and psychological stress for many children attending the most disadvantaged London primary schools. Although London's schools may be presented as an educational success story, there are numerous untold stories of instability, chaos and hardship of children in these schools. One way in which children can be supported in their schooling is through the continuity of committed, caring and capable teachers. Teachers who 'stay the course' can build relationships with the children, with their families and with the community and make an impact beyond the classroom (Brunetti, 2006, p.813).

1.3.2 The London children and their schools

In this thesis, I examine stayers in schools which have intakes that 'reflect higher levels of social deprivation, poverty and disadvantage' (Maguire et al., 2006, p.17). Throughout the thesis, I use various terms to describe these schools: 'disadvantaged', 'hard-to-teach', 'challenging' and 'inner city' schools. While I refer to 'inner city' schools, it is important to make the distinction between those

schools ‘*in the inner city*’ and those ‘*of the inner city*’ (Maguire et al., 2006, p.5). The schools I am focused on are those ‘*of the inner city*’. The crucial distinction here is the disadvantages experienced by the children who attend these schools *of the inner city*. In the last decade, London has seen changes to the geographic locations of economic and social deprivation. Some inner London areas have become increasingly gentrified which has pushed poverty to parts of outer London as families on lower incomes have, by necessity, migrated. In addition, the effects of the recession have been felt more profoundly in outer London areas (Aldridge et al., 2013).

I have chosen to examine London primary school teachers who work in schools that have certain characteristics which can be true of disadvantaged urban schools anywhere in the UK. Urban schools tend to have higher than average levels of children on Free School Meals (FSM); lower levels of attendance; a higher than average proportion of children who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as learning difficulties; and a higher than average turnover of staff (Pratt-Adams, Burn, and Maguire, 2010). Despite many London’s schools’ academic success, for teachers, these schools remain emotionally, socially and personally challenging places to work for a range of reasons which this study will examine.

In London’s disadvantaged schools, there is a greater diversity of children; a significant proportion who speak English as an additional language. Disadvantaged children in London are more likely to live in ‘deprived neighbourhoods’ than disadvantaged children outside of London (Blanden, 2015,

p.22). In many of London's disadvantaged schools, the transient population (of asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants) is reflected in those schools located in more deprived communities, of which many have a high mobility of pupils. Furthermore, more children in London live in poverty than elsewhere in the UK (End Child Poverty, 2016). Due to the high costs of housing, poorer children (who attend London's more disadvantaged schools) are more likely to live in temporary housing thus contributing to some children's sense of instability and insecurity. Thus one argument presented in this thesis is that teachers who *stay* can contribute to a greater sense of continuity and security for children in those schools (Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma, 2011).

1.4 Research Questions

My study explores three research questions which help me understand why teachers remain in their schools. The three main research questions I examine are:

RQ1: Stayers. What is a 'stayer' and who are stayers?

The 'Stayer' is a complex and contested concept (McKinney et al., 2007; Smithers and Robinson, 2005) as there is no general consensus as to how long a teacher must serve to qualify being a stayer; or whether a stayer may be someone who has returned to teaching after a career break and/or maternity leave. Furthermore, there is no agreement as to whether a stayer is a teacher who has remained in one school, or has stayed in the profession and has taught in a number of schools over a period of time. There is, however, *some* agreement that stayers serve at least 5 years in one school (Bubb and Earley, 2007; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003). Stayers, who are uncommon in urban schools, generally demonstrate resilience if they remain teaching in challenging schools, for they need to 'recover strengths or

spirit quickly and efficiently in the face of adversity' (Gu and Day, 2007, p.1302).

My study theoretically explores what is meant by, and involved in 'staying' itself.

My second research question explores the stayers' motivations.

RQ2: What motivates stayers (or has motivated them in the past) to stay in disadvantaged inner London primary schools?

Rising teacher shortages in many OECD countries (Watt and Richardson, 2008) have led to an increase in research by academics as well as policy makers on the motivations of those choosing to teach. In my study, I draw on research from a number of studies on teacher motivation (for example: Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Moran et al., 2001; Purcell et al., 2005; Watt and Richardson, 2008). Many of these studies explore a variety of different factors under three main categories of reasons: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. For the purposes of my study, I draw variously on these categories of reasons to explore why teachers remain in their schools. Although I acknowledge that such categories are not necessarily exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, they act as a valuable starting point and useful theoretical frame in my study when examining my participants' motivations for staying in their schools.

My third research question considers the concept of identity:

RQ3: How, and in what ways, does a stayer's identity (professional and/or personal) influence their decisions to stay?

Aspects of identity influence teachers' motivations, commitments and job satisfaction (Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma, 2011; Day, Elliot and Kington, 2005; MacLure, 1993). In order to delve deeper into the reasons *why* teachers

remain in their challenging schools, it is crucial to understand *who* these teachers are. I have therefore taken identity as a critical lens towards refining my theoretical approach towards ‘stayers’ and staying. Research into teacher identity shows that identity is dynamic, fluid and shifting (Day et al., 2007). Research also demonstrates the ways in which the teacher’s professional and personal self can become integrated over time (Nias, 1989). This study explores to what extent identity factors influence ‘staying’, and whether ‘stayers’ have integrated their personal and professional selves. These aspects of a stayer’s identity will be further examined in the thesis.

1.5 Overview of thesis

This chapter has set out the background for the thesis with a particular focus on the London context in which I research my participants’ reasons for remaining in their hard-to-teach schools. I have also provided a rationale for the thesis’ guiding research questions.

My thesis is structured in the following way. The following two chapters (chapter 2 and chapter 3) examine the research literature on teacher motivations and teacher identity. As discussed previously in this chapter, teachers’ motivations for remaining in their schools are interwoven with dimensions of their professional and personal lives and identities; influenced by various emotional and social factors. As a result, stayers’ motivations cannot be examined in isolation, but need to be considered through the lens of the stayers’ identities. In this way, a richer and comprehensive picture of the reasons why teachers stay in their schools can be unpacked. The chapters link the theoretical frameworks of motivation and

identity to an examination of the wider research on teachers' motivations and identities. These two chapters address the topics of motivation and identity in the following ways.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for my study in which I explore the concepts of identity and motivation. It examines what is meant by identity before focusing more specifically on personal and professional identities and how these contribute to shaping teacher identity. The chapter considers some of the main factors which influence teacher identity: emotional factors; personal biographies and narratives; contextual and social factors. The chapter also examines motivational theory in relation to teachers' career decisions. It employs the categories of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as a theoretical framework for analysing teachers' motivations. It concludes by considering how these theoretical frameworks of motivation and identity can be used to understand why teachers stay in challenging London schools.

Chapter 3 examines how the stayer is constructed and why they stay. The chapter considers the 'stayer' as a contested concept and examines the issues involved in being a stayer. Drawing on a wide range of research, the chapter focuses specifically on why teachers choose to work and stay in challenging urban schools and how stayers' motivations can be understood through the perspective of identity. It also explores the concept of resilience and self-efficacy as key aspects of a teacher's identity and motivation to stay.

Chapter 4 provides a methodological framework for my data collection and analysis. As I conducted semi-structured interviews for my research, the chapter will critically review the arguments for and against using a qualitative approach in empirical research. It also examines how the sample was constructed, how the literature has been used to construct the interview questions and how the coding process and data was managed. The chapter also focuses on the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present analyses of the data drawn from the participants. Chapter 5 examines the relationship between motivation and identity by considering the identities of my participants, prior to becoming teachers. It explores how the stayers 'early beginnings' influenced them to become teachers; then to decide to work in disadvantaged primary schools in London. The chapter explores how the stayer's identity has influenced his or her reasons for staying in the same school. Chapter 6 focuses on the headteachers in my sample. I dedicate a chapter to the headteachers in order to focus fully on the reasons why they choose to remain in challenging schools. I consider their motivations and identities and in doing so, discuss what impact they have on the teachers in their schools. Chapter 7 focuses more closely on the personal and professional identities of the stayers in my sample; it considers how the stayers construct and manage their personal and professional identities in the challenging contexts in which they work, and how they sustain this over a period of time.

Chapter 8 draws together the key findings from my study, and examines these findings in the light of the research questions posed in this thesis. Following this

in chapter 9, I present a summary of the findings from my study; discuss the implications of my study and then consider its wider contribution to research for the future.

Chapter 2

Identity and Motivation: theoretical frameworks

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a theoretical framework for my study in which I explore and deploy two concepts: identity and motivation. Research suggests that aspects of identity influence teachers' motivations and commitment to their jobs (Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma, 2011; Day et al., 2005; MacLure, 1993). Thus, my argument is that identity and motivation are inextricably linked in the context of teachers and their careers, and one cannot be examined fully without taking into consideration the role of the other. This chapter examines the theories which underpin both identity and motivation in the context of teachers' career decisions, specifically the decision to stay in the profession.

The concepts of identity and motivation are complex to navigate. To date, research from a wide range of disciplines has theorised interpretations of identity and motivation. Research in the fields of psychology, philosophy and anthropology has examined what is meant by identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). Similarly, theories of motivation have been examined from the perspectives of philosophy, psychology and social science (Steers, Mowday and Shapiro, 2004). It is not within the scope of this study to examine these concepts from such a wide range of perspectives. Instead, this study focuses specifically on identity and motivation as they are explored in educational literature and in particular within the context of teachers' career decisions. Even within the field of

educational literature, there are many different and contrasting interpretations of identity and of motivation. However, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a workable theoretical framework for my study. The aim of a theoretical framework is to anchor my study and support my data analysis as well as highlighting salient aspects of ‘staying’ as a teacher.

For the purposes of clarity, when discussing teachers’ professional lives, I shall examine these concepts separately. In the first part of the chapter, I begin by exploring interpretations of identity in the context of teachers and teaching. I consider more specifically how both personal and professional identities contribute to shaping teacher identity. I then turn to discuss personal and professional identities separately in order to highlight their differences and also to show the ways in which they are linked. Although there are many elements which influence the shaping of a person’s identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009) in this chapter I focus on three key factors affecting teacher identity: personal biographies and narratives; the role of emotion including how vulnerability affects teacher identity; and the influence of context and social relations. These are the key factors which I have identified from the literature and which merit further discussion and analysis in this chapter.

In the second part of the chapter, I examine the concept of teacher motivation. Theorists such as Herzberg (1964;1987) and Vroom (1964) have researched what motivated (and de-motivated) employees in the workplace, and have constructed theories to explain people’s motivational behaviour. To some extent, their theories can be used to explain teachers’ motivations for staying in their schools.

These theories can be applied when considering the role which salary plays in retaining teachers. Also their theories can be used to help explain the relationship between what urban teachers value in their work and their motivations for doing that work. However, this chapter will concentrate mainly on research on teachers' motivations. Indeed over the years much of this research has focused variously on three categories of motivations: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (for example: Brookhart and Freeman, 1992; Heinz, 2013; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2001; Purcell et al., 2005). Research has also examined motivations outside of these categories (for example: Huberman, 1993; Watt et al., 2012). In this chapter, I frame my theoretical discussion of teachers' motivations in the context of people's motivations for choosing to embark on a teaching career. When examining teacher motivations, I also consider what is known about teachers who choose to teach in challenging urban schools.

2.2 Identity – a theoretical framework.

The term 'teacher identity' is frequently used interchangeably with 'professional identity' (Day et al., 2006b). However, teacher identity encompasses more than just professional identity. Rather, it is a combination of multiple identities (ibid). Unsurprisingly, research has found that there are a number of school-located influences which contribute to the formation of teacher identity. These school factors include the teacher's teaching and social experiences; the teacher's unique relationships with his or her students and colleagues; the teacher's role as a subject expert (particularly in the case of the secondary teacher); and the teacher's professional role or responsibility in the school (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt, 2000; Day et al., 2006a). There are other education related factors

which are external to the school site and school structure that also influence the formation of teacher identity, such as policy directives and educational reforms. Added to this, teacher identity is also influenced by public and cultural projections of what kind of person a teacher 'should' be (Alsup, 2006; MacLure, 1993). Such influences have a significant bearing, not only on the professional identity but, on the personal identity of a teacher. Teacher identity involves a combination of a teacher's personal and professional identities (Nias, 1989; Pearce and Morrison, 2011). A teacher's 'significant personal investment' (Day et al., 2006a, p.603) in their work infers that the personal identity of a teacher is intimately connected to that of their professional identity. As a result, 'teacher identity' incorporates a teacher's multiple identities that are continually constructed and reconstructed in response to a variety of ever-changing influences.

2.2.1 Defining Teacher Identity

The concept of identity has been applied in a substantial body of educational research as a lens through which to examine a range of educational issues in respect to teachers (Day et al., 2006a; Flores and Day, 2006; Pearce and Morrison, 2011). Such literature aids the understanding of what identity is, yet definitions of identity are more difficult to reach (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). Taylor and Littleton (2006) suggest that identity can be viewed from two perspectives: on the one hand, the focus is with the individual in creating themselves and presenting themselves to the world; and on the other hand, the individual is a creation of what the 'world makes them and constrains them to be' (Taylor and Littleton, 2006.p.23). Many researchers have attempted to

incorporate these two perspectives when constructing their interpretation of identity. For example, Day and Kington (2008) suggest that identity is ‘the way we make sense of ourselves to ourselves and the image of ourselves that we present to others’ (p.9). Similarly Beijaard (1995) suggests that identity is ‘who or what someone is, the various meanings someone can attach to oneself or the meanings attributed to oneself by others’ (p.282). Meanwhile Spillane (2000) suggests that identity is ‘an individual’s way of understanding and being in the world’ (p.308). MacLure (1993) claims that identity is how people ‘make sense of themselves in relation to others, and to the world at large’ (p.311).

The literature on teacher identity often refers to the concept of the ‘self’ in place of, or along with, various concepts of identity (Day et al., 2006a). It is, however, not within the scope of this chapter to analyse philosophical and psychological writings on the complex constructs of identity and the self. Certainly though, earlier understandings of identity tended to centre on the argument that a person’s identity was static, that there was an unchanging ‘self’ (Beijaard et al., 2000). When exploring the concept of identity, Day et al. (2006a) suggest that historically the ‘self’ was seen to be a ‘singular, unified, stable essence that was little affected by context or biography’ (p.602). More recently, however, there is common consensus that identity is not static, it is multi-faceted and shifts over time (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). Kelchtermans (2005) suggests that he would rather use the phrase ‘self-understanding’ rather than ‘identity’ as ‘identity’ is in its essence seen as ‘static’ (p.1000). According to Kelchtermans (2005), ‘self-understanding’ suggests a ‘dynamic and biographical nature’ which

develops over time (p.1000). This is exemplified by Sachs (2001) who writes that a teacher's identity is:

... mediated by their own experience in schools and outside of schools as well as by their own beliefs and values about what it means to be a teacher and the type of teacher they aspire to be (Sachs, 2001, p.154).

Giddens (1991) talks about identity as being a 'reflexive project' (p.75): we are what we make of ourselves. He uses the term 'self-identity' for this purpose and argues that a key aspect to the structuring of a person's identity involves 'reflexively organised life-planning' (p.5), making choices and decisions about lifestyle. Similarly Zembylas's (2005) work on emotion and identity in teaching, asserts that individuals manage their own identity construction. Drawing on a Foucauldian perspective, he suggests that 'the self is continuously constituted, never completed, never fully coherent' (p.938). This approach is highlighted in MacLure's (1993) study of 69 secondary and primary school teachers in the UK, where she found that teachers' identities appeared to be fragmented and not coherent. She found that teachers had a much less secure sense of identity when they struggled with various cultural projections of the type of person a teacher 'should' be. Thus the teachers in her study were preoccupied with shaping and reshaping their identities to work out their place in relation to others, as well as who they desired to be and become. MacLure (1993) added that teachers' biographical stories were central in making sense of their identities. Similarly, when discussing the notion of the 'self', Zembylas (2005) suggests it is constantly 'negotiated and reshaped through discursive practices' (p.938). However, other researchers (for example: Gee, 2000; Nias, 1989) argue that a person still maintains a stable and immovable identity against which other multiple identities

are shaped and reshaped according to contextual, social and other influences. I will examine these ideas about core and relational aspects of identity in the following section in relation to the personal identity of the teacher.

The general consensus appears to be that a person's identity is dynamic and shifting and constructed and reconstructed by a number of factors: through emotion (Day and Leitch, 2001; Zembylas, 2005); through discourse, including personal biographies and narratives (Alsup, 2006; Giddens, 1991; Sfard and Prusak, 2005); and through cultural and social contexts and relationships with others (Beijaard et al., 2000; MacLure, 1993). These are key factors in helping to understand the notion of identity.

2.3 Teacher identity

2.3.1 Personal and professional identities

Many studies suggest that the formation of a professional identity is also a dynamic process which involves the integration of both personal and professional identities (Alsup, 2006; Day et al., 2006a; Nias, 1996). In these perspectives, personal and professional identities are inextricably linked; a teacher's personal experiences are 'intimately linked to the performance of their professional roles' (Day et al., 2006a, p.603). Nias (1996) offers, what I find to be, a convincing argument for this connection. She suggests that the nature of teaching requires teachers to 'invest their 'selves' in their work' (p.297). Therefore certain aspects of their personal identities and professional identities merge over time and thus, any discussion of professional identity cannot avoid the inherent role played by personal identity. Despite the difficulty in clearly distinguishing between

professional and personal identities, I will attempt to arrive at a workable understanding of the teacher's personal and professional identity before continuing with further discussions about how teacher identity is shaped and influenced.

2.3.2 The personal identity of a teacher

According to Nias (1989), the values and beliefs which make up the personal identities of teachers, as opposed to those occupations where 'a person can be easily separated from the craft', are particularly significant because teachers tend to have such a heavy personal investment in their 'craft' (p.203). Therefore, she claims that understanding what is involved in the make-up of a teacher's personal identity is key to understanding their professional identity. As previously suggested, both professional and personal identities are entwined, and thus a teacher's personal identity is as central to a teacher's motivation and commitment as their professional identity (Day, 2002; Van Veen, Slegers and Van de Ven, 2005). Personal identity can be seen to embody a person's 'basic beliefs or assumptions about self' (Nias, 1996, p.297) and is linked to a sense of personal agency. However, as I have already argued, while acknowledging the importance that personal identity plays in the shaping of a teacher's professional identity, some still regard the two as distinct (Day and Kington, 2008; Pearce and Morrison, 2011).

Day and Kington (2008) argue that a person has multiple personal identities which are linked to a variety of social and family roles outside of the work context. Similarly, Gee (2000) suggests that people have multiple identities but

that these do not pertain to a person's 'internal state'. Rather, Gee believes this internal state is a person's 'core identity' (p.100) which is relatively stable and unchanging. Similarly, Nias (1989) argues that a teacher's personal identity is central to what she suggests is a 'stable sense of identity' (p.297). The core identity or 'substantial self' (Nias, 1989, p.20) of which she speaks is generally stable and more impervious to change. Nias (1989) places an emphasis on the concept of the 'self' which is 'simultaneously, socially constructed (the 'me') and autonomous (the 'I')' (p.203). It is the 'I' which equates to the core identity and which cannot be fully articulated. On the other hand, the 'me' is created through self-reflection and as a result of various influences. These concepts are important to Nias's (1989) understanding of how personal and professional identities of teachers interact. Presenting a similar case for a stable sense of personal identity Pearce and Morrison (2011) draw on the work of Bullough (2005) to suggest that personal identity 'persists' behind changing public identities, of which there can be many (p.49). One argument may be that if a teacher's personal identity (made up of the teacher's closely held values and beliefs) is, as Nias (1989) argues, impervious to change, this personal identity may be a key influence on the teacher's decision to remain in a school. In other words, if a teacher's personal values and beliefs have influenced him or her to choose to teach underprivileged children in a challenging school in the first instance, then those very beliefs and values will remain steadfast in the teacher's decision to stay in teaching. In the following chapter, I will discuss how a teacher's personal identity can influence their career decisions in more detail.

2.3.3 The professional identity of a teacher

The concept of professional identity has also been conceptualised in different ways (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). Some studies focus on professional identity in the context of the teacher's personal identity and sense of self (Alsup, 2006; Canrinus et al., 2011; Nias, 1989). Other studies discuss professional identity in terms of the teacher's role and their practice (Beijaard et al., 2000; Sachs, 2001). Further research suggests that professional identity is made up of multiple identities or sub-identities (Day et al., 2006a; Sachs, 2001). I turn to discuss a selection of key studies to explore different interpretations of a teacher's professional identity.

Canrinus et al. (2011) examine professional identity from the point of view of the teacher's image of themselves. They argue that a teacher's professional identity is how the teacher sees him or herself 'based on their interpretations of their continuing interaction with their context' (p.594). In their study of over 1000 secondary school teachers in The Netherlands, Canrinus et al. (2011) found that the key areas in which a teacher's sense of professional identity were shown included: their satisfaction with the job; commitment to their profession; their sense of self-efficacy and a change in their level of motivation. They concluded that a teacher's professional identity is not the same for all teachers, but is unique to each individual. Similarly Lasky (2005) argues that a teacher's professional identity is how 'teachers define themselves to themselves and to others' (p.901). However, for Nias (1989) the professional identity of a teacher grows over time. Once teachers are being 'themselves' in the classroom, they arrive at a point where they are 'prepared to identify [themselves] as teachers' (p.204). At this

stage teachers have managed to negotiate a 'fit' between their professional and personal identities or between their 'situational and substantial selves' (p.78). According to Nias, in cases where there is a 'good fit', teachers are more likely to remain in the profession and continue teaching.

Other studies see professional identity in terms of roles. For example, Sachs (2001) who draws on Wenger (1998) suggests that 'identity and practice mirror each other' (p.154). She is of the opinion that teachers may have multiple identities due to the different roles they have in a school. In Sach's (2001) argument, significant others have clear expectations of a teacher's role. Professional identity is something which is 'imposed' on teachers by 'outsiders or members of the teaching fraternity itself' (p.153). Beijaard et al. (2000) do not see professional identity in terms of something externally imposed by others, but they do see professional identity in terms of the teacher's role. In their study of 80 experienced secondary school teachers in The Netherlands, they examined the teachers' sense of professional identity in terms of being a 'subject matter expert', a 'pedagogical expert' and a 'didactical expert' (p.750). They found that most teachers saw their professional identity in relation to all three expert categories and that they could express how they saw themselves professionally using these categories.

Some of the key literature on teacher identity constructs its professional component as a struggle and an ongoing process which has to be continually renegotiated (Beijaard et al., 2000; Canrinus, 2011; Day et al., 2006a; Sachs, 2001). Day et al. (2006a) highlight this continuous flux in the construction of

professional identities by arguing that professional identities can become both stable and unstable at various points in teachers' lives depending on situational factors. As Sachs (2001) puts it, it is too much of a challenge to establish a 'fixed' definition of professional identity in the same way that the concept of identity itself cannot be understood in a linear way. If it is agreed that professional identity is a dynamic and ongoing process, it must interact with different aspects of identity. Professional identity cannot be easily understood in isolation. This point is discussed by Day et al. (2006b) who suggest that there are three dimensions to a teacher's identity: the professional dimension, which includes social and policy influences as well as the teacher's concept of what makes a good teacher; the personal dimension, which features life outside of school; the situational dimension which involves environmental influences. They argue that it is the 'interplay of these three dimensions which constitute [the teacher's] identity' (Day et al., 2006b, p.xiii). It is important to note that these dimensions frequently overlap and influence each other. For example, in an exploration of the role of emotion in constructing identity, Day et al. (2006b) found that teachers' narratives and personal biographies featured strongly, just as when examining contextual and social influences on identity, emotions also played a role. It is this interplay between the different aspects or dimensions of professional identity to which I now turn.

2.4 Discourse and Identity

2.4.1 Biographies and narratives

According to some researchers such as Giddens, 1991; Pearce and Morrison, 2011; Sfard and Prusak, 2005, identity is constructed through discourses which

includes dialogue with others about oneself, personal narratives and biographies. Indeed, much work has been done on teachers' biographies in order to understand the personal and professional dimension of their lives (MacLure, 1993). MacLure argues that taking a 'biographical attitude' (p.311) to research teachers' lives helps in understanding how they construct their professional identities. Giddens (1991) highlights this point when suggesting that a person's identity is tied to the biography which they present about themselves. He emphasises that a person's identity, rather than being found in a person's behaviour or in others' reactions, lies in 'the capacity to keep a particular narrative going' (p.54). Pearce and Morrison (2011) suggest that the function of maintaining a particular personal narrative is crucial for teachers, in particular to 'overcome dissonance' (p.55). For Pearce and Morrison, the stories which teachers tell themselves and others are most important for building teacher resilience in difficult times. However, if a teacher cannot overcome experiences of dissonance in this way, then his or her resilience may well be adversely affected and result in that teacher leaving the profession.

Taylor and Littleton (2006) take a narrative-discursive approach to their study on the biographical talk of post graduate Art and Design students. They state that biographical talk is how people 'construct accounts of both their previous experience and the possible future trajectories of their lives' (p.24). In this way they present a similar argument to MacLure (1993) who suggests that teachers' 'biographical accounts are inescapably explanatory, moral and justificatory' (p.320). Moreover, she claims that people use their personal histories to justify their place in relation to others.

For teachers, biographical accounts can be used to justify why they have decided to teach, as seen in Olsen's (2008) study with six newly qualified teachers in California. He found that their reasons for entering the teaching profession were bound by their biographical histories. Most of the teachers recounted childhood histories which involved school stories, including 'playing school', to explain their decisions to enter teaching. The key role which biographical histories play in headteachers' decisions to work in certain schools is similarly highlighted in Pratt-Adams and Maguire's (2009) study on urban headteachers. The majority of the headteachers spoke of their backgrounds in attending similar disadvantaged urban schools and this biographical narrative appeared to influence their decisions to 'make a difference' for the disadvantaged children in their schools.

For Giddens (1991) identity is closely tied up with the stories we tell about ourselves. He suggests, however, that a person's biography may be 'fragile' (p.55) as it is just a single 'story' among many others that a person tells about themselves. For this reason, though a person's sense of identity may be fragile, it can paradoxically be robust in nature as the person withstands the tensions which arise from changes in environments (Giddens, 1991). The robust nature of a person's identity can be seen in studies on teacher resilience as will be discussed in chapter 3.

Narrative is used by teachers and about teachers in understanding teaching and teachers' lives. Narratives enable people to 'construct and reconstruct themselves and their world' (Day and Leitch, 2001, p.406). Sfard and Prusak (2005) present a

similar argument but emphasise that a person's identity isn't just influenced by their narratives because they *are* their narratives. They see the individual as a storyteller and, in their study, they present several different models of an individual's identity depending to whom the individual is telling their story. By framing a person's identity through these models, Sfard and Prusak (2005) conclude that the stories which individuals tell themselves have the most profound impact on their actions and thus on their identity. In contrast, the stories individuals tell others have the least impact on their actions and shaping their identities.

Alsup (2006) is also a strong advocate for the importance of discourse in shaping a teacher's identity. In her study of six student teachers and the development of their professional identities, Alsup (2006) uses the term 'borderland discourse' (p.6) to confront teachers' ideas about themselves and their profession. She claims that 'borderland discourse' takes place on the 'borders' of other discursive forms. These other discursive forms involved the discourse of the students' university experiences; discourses relating to their own past experiences or 'narrative memories' (p.37); discourses involving the students' personal and private lives and the discourse of the schools where they taught. Alsup (2006) argues that a teacher's identity is shaped through different discursive forms, such as the ones described, as they express the various understandings a teacher has about his or her 'self'. In her study, Alsup showed the power which these discourses had to shape and extend the students' personal and professional identities as they became teachers. Indeed Alsup (2006) showed how engaging in 'borderland discourse' can result in the merging of a teacher's personal and professional identities.

As for teachers or school leaders who are established in their roles, personal narratives play a significant role in their understanding of themselves. In Crawford's (2009) work on emotions and school leadership, she argues that memory plays an important part in the construction of a school leader's professional identity. By drawing on work on memory and narrative (for example, Singer and Salovey, 1996), Crawford (2009) discusses how memories can be vehicles by which people define and understand themselves. For the school leader, positive memories or past goals can have a considerable bearing on a school leader's motivation and thus their future decisions. This act may even involve 'repressing painful memories or re-orientating them' (Kirk and Wall, 2010, p.631) in order to ensure that the decisions they make, and who they believe themselves to be, fit better into their current context. This argument can be applied to all teachers whatever their role and responsibility in their schools.

2.5 Emotion and Identity

The role of emotion has received much attention in research on the identity of teachers (Day and Kington, 2008; Van Veen et al., 2005; Zemblyas, 2003). Nias (1996) also emphasizes the important role emotions play in the formation of a teacher's identity. She claims that teachers' emotional reactions to their work are tied in to how they see themselves as well as how they see others. Nias (1996) argues that teaching involves a strong 'emotional dimension' (p.296) due to teachers' strong personal investment in their work. A teacher's work involves intense personal interactions with large numbers of pupils. Teachers are responsible for children's progress as well as their behaviour and general conduct.

This is particularly acute for the urban headteachers in Pratt-Adams and Maguire's (2009) study where they claim that in disadvantaged urban primary schools, 'the emotional charge is high, the costs are high but so are the rewards' (p.123). They argue that high cost emotional investment by teachers and headteachers (particularly in challenging contexts) can yield highly rewarding results for teachers. However, the higher the emotional investment, the stronger the reaction when a teacher's practice, ideas or values become threatened and they become more at risk of leaving (Nias, 1996). There is a strong case to claim that teachers' emotional investment in their work has a significant influence on their identity as teachers and on their motivations to stay or leave the profession.

Expressing and feeling a range of emotions is an inescapable aspect of teaching (Van Veen et al., 2005). Thus it follows that emotion plays a key role in shaping a teacher's identity (Zembylas, 2003). Crawford (2009) suggests that the emotional aspect of a person's life, 'glue[s] together chunks of experience to provide meaning to what's happening' (p.43). In this way a person's emotions help shape their understanding of themselves and relationships with others and their place in the world (Day and Leitch, 2001). In Crawford's (2009) work on emotions and school leadership, she argues that school leaders have to attend to 'social-emotional narratives' (p.130) about who they *were*, who they *are* and who they wish to be in the future. Drawing the past, present and future into understanding teacher identity is highlighted in other work on biographical talk where past, present and future identities are intimately related (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). Crawford (2009) argues that for school leaders, emotion features at the foreground of their personal narratives. Drawing on Fineman (2008), Crawford

(2009) presents a convincing argument that the emotional aspects of headteachers' lives and work are critical in shaping their identity. Indeed, research shows the same is true of class teachers (Day and Kington, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2005).

Hargreaves (1998) attests to the key role which the emotional aspect of teaching and school life plays in teachers' understanding of themselves and others. He suggests that in some schools, 'a lack of closeness in relationship or of similarity in identity threaten the bases for effective emotional understanding' (Hargreaves, 1998, p.968). Such relationships or the lack of them shape teachers' 'social-emotional narratives' (Crawford, 2009, p.130) which in turn can have a profound impact on teachers' professional identities and how they fit into the culture of a school. Unsurprisingly, the extent to which a teacher fits into their school culture impacts on their motivation for remaining in teaching (Gu and Day, 2007). It is the teachers who have learnt to develop emotional resilience who are most likely to remain in their jobs and this is particularly noticeable in school environments that are considered 'challenging' (Day and Kington, 2008).

Where emotions are involved, the issue of vulnerability is certain to exist. In Lasky's (2005) study on professional vulnerability among secondary school teachers, she argues that vulnerability is a 'multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience' (p.901) which people can feel in a variety of contexts. For the teacher, it is the classroom; for the headteacher, it is the school. These spaces become sites for an array of emotions including feelings of vulnerability. Lasky (2005) presents two scenarios where vulnerability is manifested in teachers'

work: one is positive and the other negative. The first scenario is where a person may open themselves up to potential emotional pain. But this is done for the benefit of his or her development or for the benefit of another, such as a pupil. For a teacher, this could mean that they are willing to recognise a professional weakness they may have in order to improve their practice. However, for this to 'work', the environment must first be one in which the teacher feels safe, supported and encouraged and would therefore be willing to take the risk to show their vulnerability (Lasky, 2005). Showing vulnerability in this way can bring about a necessary transformation (Zembylas, 2005). Indeed, the consequences of showing vulnerability in this way can lead to improved teaching practice and thus have a positive effect on the lives of students (Kelchtermans, 2005). Such a transformation can in turn lead to a positive sense of professional efficacy which results in the positive emotions of 'joy, excitement, exhilaration and deep satisfaction' (Nias, 1996, p.297).

On the other hand, the emotion of vulnerability can result in more negative consequences. For example, if teachers have to act against their beliefs and values, this can negatively affect self-esteem, leading to feelings of anger or fear (Lasky, 2005; Nias, 1996). In these situations, rather than being open to change, a teacher may act more defensively, unwilling to take risks for fear of failure. The consequences of such vulnerability can result in such a negative sense of efficacy that teachers can eventually leave the profession. The experience of vulnerability in a school situation is influenced by its context, whether that be its social or cultural environment, or the policy climate of the school (Kelchtermans, 2005). The 'high cost/high reward' aspect of showing vulnerability undoubtedly has

consequences on teachers' sense of self and is 'directly linked to teachers' identity' (Kelchtermans, 2005, p.997) as well as staying or leaving the profession.

2.6 Context/ social relations and identity

Many definitions of identity focus on how identity formation is mediated through social relationships and interactions (for example: Day et al., 2006a; Pearce and Morrison, 2011) therefore an important aspect of identity is understanding where a person 'fits' in relation to other people. A teacher's personal identity is shaped by the influence of relationships with friends and family which also make up their personal histories and which they use to help frame who they are. Once becoming a teacher, their professional identity is influenced by colleagues - who either share or do not share a new teacher's values, beliefs and practices - and pupils, who can affirm or destroy a teacher's emergent professional identity (Nias, 1989).

School cultures embody sets of values and norms which can lead to specific ways of working (Nias, 1989). Such school contexts, teaching cultures, and the relationships with colleagues influence how teachers shape their professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2000). A teacher will often evaluate the structure of a school, its management, its practices, values and colleague influences. By positioning themselves in relation to these structures, a teacher actively constructs and reconstructs their identity (Coldron and Smith, 1999). The school culture must, therefore, have some influence as to whether a teacher leaves or remains in that school.

The emotional responses of a teacher have a significant effect on how the social context of a school influences their sense of self-esteem and in turn their sense of identity. Nias (1996) suggests that often primary school teachers have very strong feelings in regard to their pupils, their colleagues and school structures and that is reflected in their emotional responses. In her study on primary school teachers, Nias (1989) found that ‘in-school reference groups’ (p.51) were important to a teacher’s sense of professional identity. A supportive and encouraging school reference group can validate a teacher’s sense of self; equally a teacher working in a school where the majority of their colleagues hold different values, would seek alternative ways to maintain their sense of self. This is highlighted in the experiences of the teachers in Flores and Day’s (2006) study.

In their longitudinal study on early career teachers’ identities, Flores and Day (2006) found that contextual influences played a central role in the development of teachers’ identities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they found that schools which were supportive, encouraging and fostered a culture of collaborative learning had a positive effect on teachers’ attitudes to their work. However, schools which did not offer encouraging environments in which to work and learn led to ‘balkanization and competition amongst teachers’ (Flores and Day, 2006, p.229). Unsupportive work environments generally led to negative attitudes in new teachers. Yet, in their study the context alone was not solely responsible for how teachers shaped their identities. Rather, the researchers found a particularly powerful connection between the teachers’ personal biographies and contextual influences. The teachers’ personal biographies functioned by ‘making sense of teachers’ practices and their beliefs about themselves as teachers – and in

reshaping teacher identity' (Flores and Day, 2006, p.230). This is shown in some (minority) examples from their data where teachers worked in school cultures which were at odds with their personal beliefs and values, yet those very personal core values and beliefs about teaching took precedence and thus they continued to be inspired and motivated by their profession. In contrast, Nias (1989) found that maintaining a sense of self within a culture hostile to a teacher's beliefs and values, often ended in a decision to leave the school, or the profession. Flores and Day (2006) focused only on early career teachers and therefore we do not know if these teachers decided to remain in their schools over time. Their study illustrates that teacher identity is influenced by context but is also mediated by the teacher's personal history.

Overall, it is clear from the literature that identity is dynamic and changing; it is influenced by a wide range of factors including a teacher's personal and professional relationships; social and professional contexts; and teachers' life experiences, including their emotional life. However, a teacher's sense of self-efficacy and sense of resilience are other factors which can influence (and in turn are influenced by) identity. I examine these factors in the next chapter, when discussing identity in the context of stayers. This theoretical frame goes some way to understanding what is meant by identity, which is essential for my use of this concept as a lens to examine teachers' motivations later in this study.

2.7 Motivations – a theoretical framework

2.7.1 Motivations for why people choose to teach

Much of the research literature on teacher motivations examines pre-service teachers' reasons for choosing to teach; indeed there is a substantial body of literature from all over the world focused on why people choose a career in teaching (for example: Fokkens-Bruinsma and Carrinus, 2012; Heinz, 2013; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Watt and Richardson, 2012). Such studies are commonplace for two key reasons. First, having a comprehensive overview of beginning teachers' motivations help policy makers design effective recruitment strategies. Second, it helps educators identify what aspects of the teaching profession provide job satisfaction, which may influence whether people are likely to stay in the profession (OECD, 2005). As such, researching pre-service teachers' motivations not only provides an understanding of the factors which attract people to teaching, but also may influence teachers' subsequent career decisions (Heinz, 2015). It is difficult to examine motivational theory in isolation without rooting it in the context that I need to interrogate: teachers' career decision making. Therefore when exploring theories of motivation, I do so primarily in the context of people's motivations for choosing to teach. As my study is concerned with teachers in urban schools, I also position motivation in the context of teachers' reasons for wanting to teach in challenging urban schools and to remain in these schools.

The terms 'altruistic', 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' dominate the research literature that explores the reasons why people enter a career in teaching (Bastik, 2000; Brown, 1992; Heinz, 2015; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Moran et al., 2001;

Purcell et al., 2005). Because researchers employ these categories of motivations variously and in different ways, there are different perspectives on how such categories are interpreted. As Watt et al. (2012) suggest:

... various operationalisations of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations have resulted in a lack of definitional precision and overlapping categorisations from one study to another (p.792).

Indeed, there is a distinct blurring between these forms of motivations, in particular between altruistic and intrinsic motivations. While I acknowledge that these interpretations are indeed just a starting point in understanding teachers' motivations, nevertheless they provide a useful framework for the purposes of this review. In the remainder of the chapter, I examine the different interpretations of these categories and indicate how I will interpret these categories in my study.

2.7.2 Altruistic Reasons

Watt et al. (2012) claim that researchers exploring people's motivations for choosing to teach have not always agreed on interpretations of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This difficulty appears to be even more pronounced when it comes to understanding what is meant by 'altruism' in teacher motivation. The fact that altruistic motivations and intrinsic motivations are often used interchangeably has meant that altruistic motivations are seldom distinct from intrinsic ones in the literature (Bielby et al., 2007; Bruinsma and Jansen, 2010; Moran et al., 2001). This lack of clarity has led to various differences in researchers' understandings of what the altruistic and intrinsic reasons are for choosing to teach. However, here I will attempt to arrive at a general understanding of altruistic reasons.

Although altruistic motives are mentioned frequently in the literature on teacher motivations and they tend to score high in motivations to teach, the literature reveals some very different interpretations of what they involve (Brown, 1992; Heinz, 2015; Huberman, 1993; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Moran et al, 2001). For example, altruistic reasons given for entering the teaching profession include the enjoyment from having ‘contact with young people’ (Huberman, 1993, p.114), the ‘desire to help society improve’ (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000, p. 117) and having ‘a love of children’ (Moran et al., 2001, p.21). All these reasons are described as being altruistic and all of these feature in other studies on teacher motivations (Bielby et al., 2007; Thornton, Bricheno and Reid, 2002). For example, Bielby et al.’s (2007) report on the recruitment and retention of new teachers found that they most frequently gave altruistic reasons for teaching. These included: ‘having a high regard for the teaching profession’ and ‘wanting to work with children’ (Bielby et al, 2007, p.4). Similarly, in a report on teaching graduates in the UK, Purcell et al. (2005) found that the majority of graduates had pronounced altruistic reasons for entering the teaching profession. This finding is also echoed in Moran et al’s work. (2001) where they argue that ‘the reasons for choosing the teaching profession as a career have been predominantly altruistic and intrinsic’ (p.19). Brookhart and Freeman (1992) even go so far as to say that:

Altruism and a desire to work with children are the primary reasons people enter teaching. The message is clear enough that no more research to establish this fact is needed (Brookhart and Freeman, 1992, p. 20).

However, I am less convinced that the subject of altruism is so easily understood or that no further research is needed. Unlike Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000),

other literature in the field does not differentiate specifically between intrinsic and altruistic reasons (Bielby et al., 2007; Moran et al., 2001). Moran et al. (2001) refer to the 'love of children and sense of vocation' as well as 'intellectual fulfilment' (p.21) as intrinsic reasons for teaching. In terms of understanding teachers' reasons for entering teaching, I believe it is important to make a distinction between the 'love of children' and 'intellectual fulfilment': these are two distinct areas. Certainly, in Kyriacou and Coulthard's (2000) definitions, 'the love of children' would be undoubtedly altruistic. Indeed this interpretation of altruism is reflected in accepted descriptions elsewhere where an altruistic act means to behave with selfless concern for the wellbeing of others (Kerr, Godfrey-Smith, & Feldman, 2004). This is particularly evident in studies which examine the reasons why teachers choose to work in urban schools (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Freedman and Appleman, 2009).

In terms of choosing to teach in challenging urban schools, teachers' motivations can be varied, but they are more often than not inspired by altruistic reasons (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Olsen, 2010) and the desire to 'make a difference' (Maguire et al., 2006). This altruistic motive for teaching in disadvantaged urban schools is also highlighted by Freedman and Appleman (2009) who reported that graduates had a 'sense of mission' (p.330) to teach in urban schools. Freedman and Appleman (2009) undertook a study focusing on a cohort of 26 secondary school English teachers in California who participated in a Masters programme designed to provide beginning teachers with specialised training in urban education. Their study focused on charting the students' careers into their fifth year of teaching, but they also discussed the reasons these students joined the

programme. Students reported that they had a ‘kind of calling’ (Freedman and Appleman, 2009, p.330) to teach in an urban setting. Similarly Nieto (2001) echoes this (altruistic) language of commitment to suggest that teachers choose to work in urban schools because they have ‘a solid faith in the capability of students to learn’ (p.11). It would appear that altruistic motivations for urban teachers can be interpreted as a teacher’s desire to address social inequalities; to improve society; and to demonstrate a steadfast commitment to disadvantaged children.

Another reason for how different interpretations of altruism can affect our understanding of why individuals choose to become teachers, is seen in how teachers’ comments are interpreted. For example, Purcell et al. (2005) suggest in their study of teaching graduates, that altruistic reasons given for entering teaching could well be a ‘post-facto rationalisation and a conception of the ‘right’ answer’ (p.20). Brown (1992) also questions whether beginning teachers have solely altruistic motives for teaching. In her study of more than 100 first year teachers in the Caribbean, Brown (1992) concluded that the majority of those questioned cited ‘wanting to help children’ (p.194) as a reason for teaching. However, in her analysis of her data, she questions whether some of the participants’ desire to ‘help’ children was indeed an altruistic motivation or if, in fact, it meant ‘disciplining’ or ‘moulding’ children (p.194). Rather than being altruistic, Brown (1992) suggests these reasons could be regarded as selfish, answering the teachers’ own ‘personal growth needs’ (p.194). This is a point taken up by Huberman (1993) in his seminal work *The Lives of Teachers*. In his longitudinal study of 160 Swiss secondary school teachers Huberman (1993)

suggests that motives which fall under the altruistic category may indeed be ‘problematic’ (p.113). Altruistic motives such as the enjoyment of helping children could actually mean ‘pleasure in directing others’ (p.113).

Although in some cases the reasons for entering teaching may not be entirely altruistic, nonetheless it is important *not* to underestimate the value of teachers’ initial altruistic motives. There are undoubtedly overlapping interpretations of what altruistic motives are, and interpretations of these motives differ from person to person, depending on cultural and educational contexts as well as experiences and personal interpretations. However, much of the literature does reveal a common interpretation of altruistic motivations to mean the ‘love of children’ and a ‘desire to make a difference’. It is these interpretations of altruistic motivations which I will use as a guide in my study when examining teachers’ motivations for staying in their schools.

2.7.3 Intrinsic Reasons

As has been discussed, while some studies appear to blur the lines between altruistic and intrinsic motives (Bruinsma and Jansen, 2010; Moran et al., 2001), other studies make explicit references to what they see as intrinsic motivations. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) suggest that intrinsic reasons ‘cover aspects of the job activity itself’ (p.117). This refers to the ‘activity’ of teaching the children. Similarly, Bielby et al. (2007) refer to the actual activity of teaching and ‘helping children’ (p.4) as an intrinsic motivation. However, Nias (1989) suggests that it is not only teaching activities with children which are intrinsic to the nature of teaching, but that the ‘work itself includes [the teachers’] involvement in the

school as a social system, and thus their interactions with their colleagues as well as with their pupils' (p.236). She argues that because the daily life of school 'affects the lives of pupils and staff' (p.245), it is very much intrinsic to the nature of the job. I have highlighted this point in my previous study (Towers, 2011) where I found that teachers highly valued their interactions with colleagues.

Many studies attest to the importance attached to the effective leadership of a school (Bielby et al., 2007; Purcell et al., 2005; Smithers and Robinson, 2005). In their report on teacher turnover in the UK, Smithers and Robinson (2005) suggested that without clear leadership and management structures in place, a school was unlikely to attract or retain staff. In terms of motivations for teachers to become leaders, Margolis and Deuel (2009) suggest that the predominant reason for teachers to aspire to leadership is to create a better working environment for teachers and students. Thus, it appears that the leadership of a school will have a bearing on teachers' intrinsic motivations to stay.

Another factor which is linked the intrinsic value of teaching is a teacher's self-belief in his or her ability to teach well. Richardson and Watt (2006) designed a framework to assess the reasons for people's decisions to teach. The Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT Choice) scale examined a range of motivations which did not necessarily fit neatly into the three categories as used by other researchers (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Moran et al., 2001). One of the motivational categories included in the 'FIT Choice' scale was that of a person's perceived teaching ability. When the 'FIT Choice' scale was used in research on student teachers in Australia, USA, Norway and Germany (Watt et al., 2012), it

was found that for a person to feel they can succeed in teaching, the task of teaching must first hold an intrinsic value for them. Without this, the teacher cannot feel successful in what they do. Watt et al. (2012) concluded that among the highest rated motivations for becoming a teacher in these four countries was an intrinsic valuing of teaching coupled with self-belief in teaching ability.

The idea that intrinsic motivation includes teachers' self-belief is echoed in Olsen's (2008) work. He discusses how the majority of the teachers in his study, of high school English teachers in urban schools, perceived teaching as being an intrinsically worthwhile activity and they described 'specific talents or capacities they possessed that they believed suited them well for teaching' (p.31). This concept of teacher self-efficacy is inextricably linked to teacher motivations (Gu and Day, 2007) and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter where I explore the concept of identity and motivation in the context of why teachers stay in their urban schools. However, what emerges from the research which I have examined is that intrinsic motivations tend to relate to: the activity of the job itself, which involves the joy of teaching children; the enjoyment of working and collaborating with colleagues; and working in a positive school environment with effective leadership. When referring to intrinsic motivations for the stayers in my study, I will use these interpretations as a guide in exploring teachers' reasons for remaining in their schools.

2.7.4 Extrinsic reasons

Extrinsic reasons for teaching cover the areas of salary, holidays and job security (Bielby et al., 2007; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Thornton et al., 2002). For

example, a significant factor for entering the profession is the flexibility that a teaching career allegedly affords for teachers who have families or who wish to start a family. Purcell et al. (2005) suggest that this factor is particularly significant for female teachers. Olsen (2008) also discussed the importance that female teachers placed on the benefit a teaching career has on raising a family. However, early career teachers interviewed in a study by Olsen and Andersen (2007) in Los Angeles, revealed that because the pressure of teaching in an urban school was so intense, they believed it would be incompatible with raising a family.

Although the literature generally agrees that the overriding reasons for teaching tend to be altruistic and intrinsic, extrinsic reasons sometimes take precedence (Moran et al., 2001). According to Huberman (1993) initial motivations which fall into the extrinsic category tend to indicate a short term commitment. Nevertheless, extrinsic reasons do play a role in the motivations of those deciding to teach. Indeed Brown's (1992) study on teacher motivation in Jamaica found that extrinsic motivations such as salary and career status were particularly significant motivations for choosing a career in teaching. Similarly, in a study on student teacher motivations in Brunei, Yong (1995) found that student-teachers had predominantly extrinsic reasons for choosing teaching including a good salary and job security. Likewise Bastik's (2000) study comparing motivations of student teachers in developing countries with other countries, found that extrinsic reasons scored the highest in reasons to enter teaching. It would appear that the economic situations of the student teachers' countries evidently play a significant role in their decisions to become teachers.

In developed countries which do not have such acute economic considerations, extrinsic reasons such as salary may play a lesser role in decisions to teach. This was highlighted in a study by Imazeki (2005), who examined the effects of salary on teacher attrition in Wisconsin in the United States. She argued that while salary can make a difference as to whether a teacher stays in their profession, it may not necessarily attract someone into teaching. However, the issue of salary appears to be an important factor in people's decisions to teach during times of economic instability. During a period of economic uncertainty in the UK, particularly after 2008, there were more applicants to teaching courses because 'teaching is seen as offering secure employment at a time of rising unemployment' (Hutchings, 2010, p.15).

When examining teachers' motivations for choosing to teach in challenging urban schools, extrinsic reasons also feature in the related research. For example, several government initiatives of a pragmatic nature were put in place for London teachers under the Labour government (1997–2010) which would suggest teachers can be attracted by a good salary (Bubb and Earley, 2007). In London, financial incentives were introduced to attract and retain teachers in the profession. Furthermore, money for housing in the form of a key worker living loan was made available for London teachers in order to attract them to London schools. For those wishing to teach in London, this is a major consideration as they have to shoulder the financial burden of living in an exceptionally expensive city (Bubb and Earley, 2007).

As Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) suggested, extrinsic reasons also include job security. Thus, having professional development opportunities which would lead to career advancement may be another extrinsic motivation for wishing to teach or indeed may become one later on in a teacher's career. In Dornyei's (2001) work on motivational theory, he refers to professional development opportunities as being extrinsic and suggests that they need to be in place for a person to persist in teaching. Some teachers could well be attracted to the profession because of opportunities to progress their career. For example Maguire et al. (2006) and Bubb and Earley (2007) suggest that people may be motivated to teach in urban schools because of opportunities for swift career progression and career advancement.

Other extrinsic motivations cited in the literature on teachers' decisions to work in urban schools include the teachers' desire to remain in an area where they either trained or grew up and with which they were familiar (Hunter-Quartz et al., 2003; Maguire et al., 2006). Indeed, Frankenberg et al. (2010) suggested that teachers who had grown up in urban areas were more likely to teach there. However, such extrinsic motivations can overlap with more altruistic motivations. For example, living in urban areas, even where in some cases the experience was a negative one, can act as a motivator to remain working in the same environment. This is seen in a report on urban teacher retention by Hunter-Quartz et al. (2003) who found that students were determined to 'make a difference' in the urban environments where they lived, thus reflecting Frankenberg et al.'s (2010) finding in their study that student-teachers possess an 'urban commitment' to teaching in disadvantaged urban schools (p.313).

The general consensus in the literature on what constitutes extrinsic motivations tend to centre on job security and salary and, in the case of London teaching, extrinsic motivations also include financial support with housing. As such, I will use this interpretation as a guide for my study when examining teachers' extrinsic motivations for remaining in their schools.

2.8 Chapter summary and conclusions

This chapter has sought to provide a theoretical account of motivation and identity. It has examined a range of interpretations and understandings of these concepts; and has showed how inextricably linked identity and motivation are in the context of understanding teachers' career decisions. Indeed student teachers' motivations for choosing to teach are linked to their identities, which are in turn influenced by their personal histories and previous educational experiences (Flores and Day, 2006; Olsen, 2010). In this chapter I have discussed motivations for choosing to teach, using the categories of altruistic reasons, intrinsic reasons and extrinsic reasons. However, there are examples given where reasons for teaching do not fit neatly within these categories (Huberman, 1993; Olsen, 2008; Purcell et al., 2005).

For example Purcell et al. (2005) argue that 'pull' factors for choosing to teach (such as the motivations discussed in this chapter) may not provide a complete picture of why people choose to teach. Instead 'push' factors can be involved too; such as dissatisfaction in a previous career or failure to find employment, reasons that lie in the personal histories and biographies of teachers. Watt et al. (2012)

argue that teaching is sometimes seen as a ‘fallback’ career (p.795), while others may have ‘defaulted’ to teaching (p.794). Some may have followed a teaching path which has been ‘already laid out for them’ (Huberman, 1993, p.117). By contrast, other more positive motivations for choosing to teach can lie in the influence of a person’s friends and family (Brown, 1992; Purcell et al., 2005; Olsen, 2008). These close friends and family members may be teachers themselves, thus they inspire a person to enter a teaching career (Brown, 1992; Olsen, 2008). The guidance and support of friends and family has also been found to enhance a person’s belief that they would make a good teacher (Brown, 1992). Again here, there is a case of motivation being shaped out of biographical experiences (Gu and Day, 2007).

What is clear from the literature I have reviewed is that identity is a fluid and shifting concept; it is an ongoing process which is constructed and reconstructed as a result of multiple influences. Aspects which influence a teacher’s identity are linked not only to their biographies but to their narratives – the stories they tell about themselves to themselves and to others. Teachers’ emotions, including feelings of vulnerability, impact on their sense of identity. Furthermore the social and professional context of teachers, as well as their social relations, also have a profound influence on their identity. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that teachers’ identities influence their career decisions (including motivations to teach) and their overall sense of purpose and commitment to their work (Day et al., 2007; Nias, 1989; Schepens, Aelterman, Vlerick, 2009). Indeed, as Bullough (1997) states, ‘teacher identity [... is] the basis for meaning making and decision making’ (p.21).

Much of the research on teachers' motivations draws variously on the categories of motivations when considering teachers' career decisions. In this chapter I have addressed the ways in which teachers are motivated to choose (and perhaps to stay) in teaching. Motivations to teach can be influenced by a person's beliefs and values (Heinz, 2013); by their relationships with others, including family members (Olsen, 2012); as well as influenced by their previous educational experiences (Watt et al., 2012). Motivations for choosing to teach, and choosing to stay, in a teaching career are strongly influenced by both the teachers' personal and professional identities (Flores and Day, 2006). This is because a teacher's identity is a key lever in influencing the individual's career decisions. The identity of a teacher is changing constantly and is being changed by the teacher's experiences, histories, personal and professional contexts as well as by other people (Olsen, 2010). The teacher's dynamic and shifting identity 'dialogues' with different aspects of their own identity (such as their personal and professional identities), as well as with multiple and sometimes complex influences (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Olsen, 2010). Viewing a teacher's identity from this perspective can help in understanding the ways in which identity plays a central role in a teacher's reasons for either leaving, or staying, in the profession or in their school.

By analysing motivations to teach along with a teacher's identity and what that involves, I have highlighted some key issues to which I will return when analysing my data in later chapters. For the purposes of this study, I have separated the concepts of motivation and identity as a heuristic device because in

the social world of the teacher, it is less possible to isolate motivation and identity; they are complex, overlapping and shifting concepts. A teacher may choose to enter a teaching career for one set of motivations and once in place, their new commitments and values may mean their motivations change. For example, over time, a long-serving teacher may develop a commitment towards the community they serve.

The theoretical discussion in this chapter on motivations can be seen as a starting point to understand the reasons why teachers choose to stay in urban schools. Furthermore, a teacher's identity cannot fully explain the motivations of why a teacher chooses to teach, and to stay, in an urban school. Motivations and identity can work differently for different people, and although identity and motivation are linked, they are not connected in a straightforward way. While this chapter has addressed identity and motivation in a distinct way, it is useful to be mindful of the complexity, fluidity and hybridity of these concepts. Indeed, the theoretical exploration of identity in this chapter provides a useful base in helping understand teachers' career decisions. In the case of urban teachers, studies show how teachers' ethnic, religious and political identities can influence their decisions to teach in high-poverty settings and fuel a commitment to work with underprivileged children (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Freedman and Appleman, 2008; 2009; Stanford, 2001). In the chapter which follows, I focus on those teachers who have committed to a career in one school: stayers. I examine who the stayers are and explore their motivations for choosing to remain in their urban schools. More specifically I shall consider how and, in what way, teachers' identities influence those very motivations.

Chapter 3

Urban Stayers: Examining the role of Identity and Motivation in Staying

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to build on the theoretical concepts of identity and motivation discussed in the previous chapter in order to examine the ‘stayer’ teacher more closely, with a particular focus on the *urban* stayer. In this chapter I explore what I understand by the stayer and examine why some stayers remain in hard-to-teach urban schools. I take two approaches to examine the stayer. First, I interrogate how the concept of the stayer is constructed and I examine different interpretations of staying. I focus on how the stayer’s length of service and commitment to the same school contributes to my construction of the stayer. Second, throughout the chapter, I employ aspects of identity theory (as detailed in chapter 2) to probe the ways in which the stayer’s teacher identity is constructed and how a stayer’s identity influences their decisions to stay in challenging urban schools.

I also examine the literature that considers the key motivations which long-serving urban teachers describe to account for remaining in their schools. Specifically, I explore these reasons for staying within the framework of the three categories of motivations (altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations) as discussed in chapter 2. Following this, I consider the concepts of resilience and self-efficacy: two key factors which, according to the literature, influence and are

influenced by stayers' identities and motivations to remain in the profession. In particular, I examine how the concepts of resilience and self-efficacy are worked out in the context of stayers' teacher identities and career motivations. I conclude with a summary and discussion of the themes explored in this chapter.

3.2 What is a 'stayer'?

The concept of a stayer is problematic and difficult to define. This is in part because, as Yee (1990) argues, much of the research on teacher retention tends to simply categorise teachers into 'leavers' and 'stayers' which, she asserts, are 'gross categories that mask important nuances' (p.110). In terms of 'leavers', much of the research I have examined generally distinguishes between 'leavers' and 'movers' (Elfers, Plecki and Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll, 2004; Kukla-Acevedo, 2004; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Smithers and Robinson, 2005). 'Leavers' are understood to be those teachers who leave the profession altogether, while a 'mover' is a teacher who moves from one school to another. However, within the relatively limited literature on 'stayers', there does not appear to be a general consensus as to what constitutes a stayer (Bubb and Earley, 2007; Cohen, 2009; McIntyre, 2010).

A stayer may be described on the basis of the number of years he or she remains in one school, although there is no consensus on how many years this should be. Added to this, there is the concept of a 'veteran' teacher who has served a significant number of years in the profession (McIntyre, 2010). Where do they feature in the stayer category? Furthermore, does a stayer need to have remained in one school for a set period of time, or can they still be a stayer if they move to

another similar school in the same district? For example, in the context of London stayers in hard-to-teach schools, can a teacher be considered a stayer if he or she moves to another challenging school in London, or to a less challenging school? In what follows, I will address these and other related questions and discuss different aspects of the teacher's life which will provide an interpretation of how the stayer is constructed. I then turn to discuss how I interpret the term 'stayer' and how I will use this term for the purposes of my study.

3.2.1 Length of service

It is useful to reflect upon how many years a stayer must serve in order to be considered a stayer. As previously mentioned, although there is no consensus in the literature as to how long a stayer should serve, several researchers are of the opinion that a stayer is someone who remains in the profession for more than three years (Bubb and Earley, 2007; Huberman, 1993; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Wilhelm et al., 2000). For example, in Huberman's (1993) work, a long serving teacher was regarded as one who was still in the profession after 7 years. Bubb and Earley (2007) referred to school workforce statistics to show that, as of 2006, over a third of all London teachers had 'less than 6 years' service' (p.149). Though they do not use the term 'stayer', there is an assumption that six years' experience corresponds to what might be called a stayer. In an Australian study by Wilhelm et al. (2000), teachers who left within the first five years of teaching were not regarded as stayers. However, a stayer in Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) study of 50 teachers in Massachusetts was a teacher who had taught for three years or more. Thus it would appear that a stayers' duration of service can range from three years' service upwards. Even in terms of length of service, the

stayer does not neatly fit into one 'stayer' category. Indeed, such is the span of a long-serving teacher's professional life, it is worth noting the various gradations of stayer before I suggest how long a teacher for the purposes of my study must serve to be considered a stayer.

3.2.2 Stayers or veterans?

McIntyre's (2010) study explores the lives and experiences of 20 long serving teachers in disadvantaged schools in England. In her study she suggests that 'the term 'long-serving' refers to teachers who have worked in the same (disadvantaged) community for 20 years or more' (p.596). McIntyre (2010) referred to these teachers as 'veterans'. Also in a study on veteran teachers, Eilam (2009) is specific about the time for which a veteran must have taught. They are typically 'in their middle to late careers, who have taught in school for over 10 to 15 years' (p.494). However, the long serving teachers in Marston, Courtney and Brunetti's (2006) American study were not referred to as veteran teachers, but as experienced teachers. Yet to qualify as an experienced teacher in their study, teachers needed to have served at least 15 years.

In terms of the length of service a teacher must serve to be considered a stayer in my study, I draw on UK based research which suggests a stayer is a teacher who has taught for at least five years (Bubb and Earley, 2007; Smithers and Robinson, 2005). For the purposes of my study, I choose to research London primary teachers who do not fall into the category of those teachers (approximately 40%) who leave within the first five years of teaching (Allen et al., 2012), but who have

already demonstrated a commitment to stay teaching in an urban school (Frankenberg et al., 2010).

3.2.3 Staying in the same school

In this study, I focus on those teachers who have decided to remain teaching in the *same* school for at least five years. The key reason for examining stayers in the same school centres on the fact that hard-to-teach urban schools have a higher rate of teacher turnover than less disadvantaged schools (Frankenberg et al., 2010). Such high levels of turbulence in the urban school workforce can result in a number of negative outcomes. Most significantly, research shows teacher turnover has a detrimental impact on children's wellbeing and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Freedman and Appleman, 2009). In addition, high levels of staff turnover affect the school's relationships with children's families as well as the wider community in which the school is located (Riddell, 2003; Stanford, 2001). Furthermore, staff turnover can de-stabilise a school's organisation and structure, which in turn can influence a teacher's decision to leave the school (Guin, 2004). As a result, I am keen to examine the perspectives of those teachers who stay despite the challenges they encounter teaching in their hard-to-teach London primary schools.

Nevertheless, it is useful to note that some of the literature on teacher retention considers a stayer to be a teacher who remains in the teaching profession and not necessarily in the same school (Hunter-Quartz et al, 2010; Rinke, 2014). For example, according to Elfers, Plecki and Knapp (2006), writing of the teaching workforce in Washington, a stayer is a teacher who stays in their school *or* district

for 5 or more years. It could be that a teacher who remains teaching in different hard-to-teach urban schools can still be considered a stayer. On the other hand, there is evidence from the USA to suggest that urban teachers who leave their school, tend to go to more affluent schools (Frankenberg et al., 2010; McKinney et al., 2007; Olsen and Anderson, 2007). As Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found, one of the most significant features of ‘movers’ in their study was that teachers who moved did so from racially diverse schools to more homogeneous ones. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) suggest that this was less to do with teachers wanting to teach wealthier students, but more to do with them wanting to work in well organised and managed schools. This finding is reflected to some extent in Olsen and Anderson’s (2007) study that found that teachers would leave disadvantaged schools for those which provided greater teacher support. However, McKinney et al. (2009) found that teachers often opted to move to more affluent schools for an increased salary. In the UK, data from Smithers and Robinson’s (2005) report suggested that it was predominantly secondary school teachers who chose to leave disadvantaged schools to take up a post in more successful and less disadvantaged schools. The reasons for moving to such schools was to teach students who were less challenging and who achieved better exam grades. However, in terms of primary school teachers in the UK who moved from schools in disadvantaged areas, no particular pattern emerged. Thus this seems to suggest that their reasons for moving are somewhat different from secondary teachers.

For the purposes of my study, a teacher who has remained in the same school for at least 5 years, will be considered a ‘stayer’ whether the teacher has moved there

from another school or if they have remained there from the beginning of their career. In both cases, it would be of value to ascertain if the teachers' initial motivations to become teachers sustain them in their decisions to remain in their school or if other motivations emerge. I now turn to what motivates stayers to remain in their urban schools.

3.3 Motivations of urban stayers

In this section, I focus specifically on the reasons why stayers remain in disadvantaged urban schools. For the purposes of structure and clarity, I use the three categories of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic reasons as a framework to examine in more detail the specific motivations given by stayers in the research literature. However, it is important to note that teachers' motivations for remaining in their jobs can be numerous and varied (Huberman, 1993) and can change and shift depending on the teacher's situation, context and stage in their career (Day and Gu, 2010; Heinz, 2013).

Research is clear that teachers who choose to stay in schools serving disadvantaged communities do so predominantly for altruistic or intrinsic reasons (for example: Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Tricarico et al., 2015). This finding may be unsurprising, given that motivational theorists such as Vroom (1964) have argued that employees in a workplace will choose behaviours which will result in valued work-related outcomes or rewards. In the case of urban teachers, those valued outcomes tend to be altruistic and intrinsic in nature, such as the joy of seeing children from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve well and the desire to continue to 'make a difference' (Johnson, Berg and Donaldson, 2005; Tricarico et

al., 2015). In addition other intrinsic factors need to be in place to motivate urban teachers to remain in their schools. In the following section, I discuss the importance of professional (and often personal) relationships with colleagues and school leaders, including the headteacher. However, there are also extrinsic reasons for remaining in schools; opportunities for professional development; job security and a salary which provides financial stability.

3.3.1 Altruistic Motivations

3.3.1.1 Making a difference

The research which exists on teachers in urban schools is generally in agreement that the predominant reason for staying is altruistic (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Marston et al.; McKinney et al., 2007; Stanford, 2001). Indeed empirical studies on urban teachers have cited the phrase ‘to make a difference’ when explaining why teachers stay in challenging urban schools (Freedman and Appleman, 2008; Maguire et al., 2006; Nieto, 2003; Tricarico et al., 2015). As Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) claim, altruistic reasons cover ‘seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job, a desire to help children succeed, and a desire to help society improve’ (p.117). It is these desires to help society and make a difference to children’s lives which sustain stayers’ commitment to their job.

Although Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) referred to the ‘activity’ of teaching children as intrinsic, in terms of the urban teacher, I suggest, this could also be considered as an altruistic reason. This is because the job of teaching inner city school children, many who have very particular educational needs, present a teacher with significantly greater challenges than teaching children in less

disadvantaged communities where children's needs are not as acute (Haberman, 1994). Haberman (1994) even suggests that providing children in poverty with a good education is 'not merely a public service but literally a matter of life and death' (p.164). While this may not necessarily be the case for all children who come from disadvantaged communities, nevertheless the activity of teaching such children, ensuring they learn and achieve success, is part of an urban teacher's 'sense of mission' (Freedman and Appleman, 2009). Therefore, teaching children from disadvantaged backgrounds can be seen as driven by altruistic reasons in the context of urban teachers' motivations to stay in their schools.

This motivation is highlighted in McKinney et al's. (2007) study which found that teachers placed high importance on educating children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In their study of 32 teachers in high-poverty primary schools in Southeastern USA, they discovered that the main reason that teachers gave for remaining in their schools was the immense satisfaction they derived from working with these children. The researchers claimed that the teachers 'hold a deep and abiding belief about the potential within each child' (McKinney et al., 2007, p.3). Nieto (2003) used very similar language when referring to teachers' commitments to children in disadvantaged schools in the USA, describing their 'deep and abiding care for their students' (p.91).

The language of love and commitment to underprivileged students is also reflected in Stanford's (2001) study on 10 African American stayers in urban primary schools in Washington. Stanford (2001) concluded that the main reason for the teachers' resilience in their disadvantaged urban schools was 'their love of

and commitment to children, especially “these” children’ (p.81). Thus, research on urban teachers appears to reflect a particular type of ‘urban commitment’ where teachers are dedicated to teaching in schools where there are ‘high percentages of low-income students and students of colour’ (Frankenberg et al., 2010, p.313).

Hunter-Quartz et al. (2010) have suggested that increasing numbers of urban teachers in the USA identify themselves as ‘change-minded educators’ (p.12). It would appear that from the studies examined, teachers who cite altruistic reasons for remaining in hard-to-teach schools appear to have strong identities as ‘change-minded’ teachers who wish to address the social inequalities of society: to make a difference. What is particularly striking about the commitment to working with disadvantaged urban children is that this commitment is distinct from having a commitment to teaching as a craft (Firestone and Rosenblum, 1988).

It is not only class teachers who cite their love and commitment to children as a prime motivator for staying: headteachers also give similar reasons for staying in schools (Crawford, 2009; Maguire and Pratt-Adams, 2009). In their study of 16 headteachers in England, Maguire and Pratt-Adams (2009) found that all the headteachers claimed that the learning and progression of the children in their schools was ‘one of the key rewards for their personal commitment [...] in urban schooling’ (p.122). The headteachers also had a ‘sense of mission and commitment towards the school and the community’ (Maguire and Pratt-Adams 2009, p.121). It may be that it is this commitment to children which drives many urban teachers and headteachers to continue teaching in challenging schools year

after year. This could be one compelling reason why, in a study on urban teachers by Hunter-Quartz et al. (2003), it was found that ‘with each year in schools, urban teachers become increasingly rooted in their profession’ (p.109).

3.3.2 Intrinsic Reasons

3.3.2.1 Relationships with colleagues

Many studies attest to the importance of forming good relationships with colleagues in schools as they influence a teacher’s decision to remain working in a particular school (for example: Dinham and Sawyer, 2004; Gannerud, 2001; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003). Indeed research shows that collaborative and cohesive school cultures play a key role in enhancing teachers’ commitment to their jobs (Gu and Day, 2007; Tricarico et al., 2015; Yonezawa, Jones and Singer, 2011). This is particularly the case in disadvantaged urban schools where teachers’ resilience and commitment to the job is more ‘persistently challenged than others’ (Day and Saunders, 2006, p.268). Wilhelm et al. (2000) suggested that successful teachers rely on a ‘high level of social interaction [and] positive social feedback’ if they are to sustain being effective teachers (p.292). In the context of the urban teacher, good relationships with colleagues score highly in teachers’ reasons for staying (Eslinger, 2012; McIntyre, 2010). As previously mentioned, Nias (1989) believes that relationships with colleagues may be viewed as an extrinsic motivator in other jobs, but that these connections are intrinsic to a teacher’s job as the ‘work itself includes their involvement in the school as a social system’ (p.236). Indeed Crawford (2009) asserts that ‘social interaction [...] is at the core of life as lived in schools’ (p.133).

The positive influence of a supportive and dynamic social system in a school is borne out elsewhere in studies on urban teachers. For example, in his study of 9 experienced high school teachers serving a high poverty and ethnically mixed area of California, Brunetti (2006) found that the support which teachers received from other colleagues helped them tackle problems they encountered and played 'an important role in the teachers' satisfaction with their work and their decision to remain at the school' (p.820). This point is echoed by Stanford (2001) whose teachers in her study reported that their school had a 'family atmosphere' (p. 83) and they relied on this 'family' to get through the many challenges which their jobs presented them with. It follows, then, that urban teachers' relationships with their school colleagues most likely influence their sense of their professional and, in many cases, personal identities (Gu and Day, 2007; Hunter-Quartz et al., 2010).

As part of Hunter-Quartz et al.'s (2010) longitudinal study of urban educators in Los Angeles, they found that in-school social relationships have a powerful role in shaping teachers' actions and decisions about their careers, particularly whether they choose to stay or leave their schools. They suggest the urban teachers in their study may be 'rooted in a shared identity and common experience' which, they argue, 'is a powerful reason to stay' (p.97). This point is echoed by McNulty (2005) writing of his experience as a headteacher of a particularly challenging English urban secondary school. He talked about the special bond amongst the staff which, he found, 'is rarely found outside of challenging schools' (McNulty, 2005, p.191). School leaders and, in particular, headteachers are in large part responsible for creating the culture and ethos of their schools (Wood, 2005). Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that urban teachers frequently cite leadership

(and their headteachers) as a key factor in their decision to remain in their schools (Eslinger, 2012; Guin, 2004; Hong, 2012; Towers 2011).

3.3.2.2 School leadership and headteachers

Teachers holding a positive view of the leaders in their schools is a key factor in why teachers remain in their schools (Heinz, 2015; Smithers and Robinson, 2003). Although much of the success of all schools (both secondary and primary) lies in the quality of the wider school leadership, in primary schools this responsibility mainly rests with the headteacher. Crawford (2009) found that headteachers are responsible for setting the emotional agenda for a school. She argues that the ‘emotional context [of a school] is crucial for sustainability particularly in primary schools’ (p.136). Similarly, Gu and Day (2007) found that headteachers who demonstrate ‘acts of care’ (p.144) towards their teachers can profoundly influence a teacher’s sense of wellbeing and sense of belonging. Research on urban teachers such as Eslinger, 2012 and Guin, 2014 also highlights the importance of trust between the headteacher and individual teachers in a school. Trusting professional relationships between headteachers and staff contribute to teachers’ sense of professional autonomy and agency – factors which contribute to teachers’ commitment and motivation (Day, 2005a). Indeed Gu and Day (2013) found in their longitudinal study of teachers’ lives, that ‘school leadership matters in sustaining a sense of resilience, commitment and effectiveness among the staff’ (p.38).

School leaders and headteachers (particularly in the case of primary schools) are responsible for leading ‘the development of school cultures that are supportive of

the learning and wellbeing of staff and students' (Pearce and Morrison, 2011, p.260). Primary school headteachers influence the ethos of a school and a positive and collaborative school culture is integral to how a school is structured and organised. According to Olsen and Anderson (2007, p.24), a 'healthy' urban school fosters a collaborative professional culture and nurtures positive relationships between staff and children. Supportive heads and school leaders also provide quality professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to grow in their profession. The headteacher and, often, the school leadership team are responsible for cultivating a school environment which encourages teachers to stay (Ingersoll, 2004; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003).

If we are to believe that headteachers are responsible for fostering the culture (Wood, 2005) and the 'communal identity' of a school (Day, 2005b, p.580), then it can be argued that the school culture also impacts on teachers' professional identities. Indeed Beijaard et al. (2000) argue that school cultures 'determine – probably to a large extent – [...] the way [teachers] perceive their professional identity' (p.753). By contrast, a weak headteacher, or poor school leadership, create school cultures which do not allow teachers to flourish. These school cultures can have detrimental effects on teacher identities, as Flores and Day (2006) found in their study on teacher identities. They concluded that poor leadership resulted in a shift in teachers' professional identities from being creative and idealistic to a point where teachers' identities were characterised by 'conservatism and compliance' (p.229). A key feature in being a professionally supportive headteacher is recognising when and how teachers need opportunities to develop their professional practice (Le Cornu, 2013). Thus, it would appear

that building positive personal and professional relationships with school leaders and headteachers is a key factor in the decisions of teachers to remain in their schools.

3.3.3 Extrinsic Reasons

3.3.3.1 Professional Development

Having strong intrinsic motives for entering a teaching career does not always mean that a teacher will remain in the profession. In her study of nearly 100 teachers, Nias (1989) examined how certain extrinsic factors of the job such as, salary and working conditions, had to be 'adequate' for a teacher to be satisfied in their job. Although a teacher's motivation to enter the profession may be predominantly altruistic and intrinsic, if those extrinsic 'satisfiers' are not present, then teachers are more likely to leave the profession. Indeed this point is echoed in literature on teacher attrition (for example: Buchanan et al., 2013; Smithers and Robinson, 2003) where workload and salary can be among the reasons why teachers leave the profession. Indeed, Purcell et al. (2005) suggested that once teachers have embarked on their career, extrinsic factors become a 'plus point' (p.22).

This point is also highlighted in Dörnyei's (2001) work on motivation. He argued that teachers who have been 'fuelled primarily by intrinsic motives' may suffer a 'motivational crisis' if their extrinsic needs are not met (p.165). Dörnyei (2001) suggests that among the extrinsic factors which need to be addressed if a teacher is to persist in teaching, are opportunities for adequate career development. This issue is echoed in a number of studies on urban teacher retention (Cochran-Smith,

2004; Jacob, 2007; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003). For example, Cochran-Smith (2004) in the United States claimed that to encourage teachers to stay there needed to be ‘a variety of career trajectories with multiple avenues for leadership roles and advancement during the career span’ (p.391). Similarly Jacob (2007) found in his study examining the challenges of staffing American urban schools that one in five teachers who leave ‘high-poverty urban schools’ (p.143) reported that further opportunities for their career progression may have encouraged them to stay in teaching.

For stayers, professional development opportunities where they provide mentoring and training to others can be as important as receiving further training themselves (Patterson, Collins and Abbott, 2004) This experience gives teachers a sense of ‘mastery and control’ (Gu and Day, 2007, p.1308), and contributes to why teachers stay in their schools. It would appear therefore that teachers need to be satisfied with their career trajectories in order for them to persist in teaching.

3.3.3.2 Salary

Financial considerations do not feature highly in teachers’ decisions to work in urban schools, neither in their reasons to stay (Freedman and Appleman, 2008; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Marston et al., 2006; McIntyre, 2010). This was reflected in my earlier study (Towers, 2011) where none of the 11 teachers, who were interviewed in a small scale study on long serving urban teachers, claimed that the salary was an initial motivating factor for entering the teaching profession. However, the topic of salary is worth considering because the lack of

a decent salary can act as an inducement to leave the profession (Towers, 2011) or move out of high-cost urban settings (McKinney et al., 2007).

The role of salary is a complex and often contradictory one as it can act as both a push and pull factor in the decision to remain teaching (Purcell et al., 2005; Smithers and Robinson, 2003). When referring to reasons why teachers stayed, Smithers and Robinson (2003) found that salary was not so much a 'push' factor for teachers in England and Wales, but it did remain a 'pull' factor (p.52). They suggested that an acceptable salary would influence teachers' decisions to stay and 'put up with the other hassles' of teaching (p.65). Salary and concrete benefits are what Nias (1981b) terms as a 'hygiene' factor drawing on Herzberg's work (1964) on motivation to stay in a particular occupational setting.

Herzberg's (1964) work which was based on interviews with American accountants and engineers, presented a 'two factor theory' of motivation in the workplace. His theory was based on the idea that there are certain factors in the workplace which cause satisfaction; and there are other separate sets of factors which cause dissatisfaction. Nias (1981b) utilised Herzberg's 'two factor theory' to distinguish between motivating factors which are 'intrinsic to the nature of the work', such as fulfilling challenging work and responsibility, and those factors such as salary and job security which he had termed 'hygiene' factors (Nias, 1981b, p.236). Although these 'hygiene factors' do not give positive satisfaction as such, dissatisfaction can result from their absence. This is evidenced in a study by Imazeki (2005), which examined the effects of salary on teacher attrition in the

United States. She found that generally speaking, ‘higher salaries for more experienced teachers also reduces attrition’ (p.439).

In the case of teachers in London, extrinsic factors such as salary (as well as housing) can act as key levers as to whether a teacher remains teaching in their school or leaves to another area where the cost of living is not so high (Howson, 2016; Ofsted, 2015). Certainly, the extrinsic motivation of salary is more complex than at first glance and requires careful analysis when examining the reasons why stayers remain teaching. As discussed in chapter 1, living costs in London remain the highest in the UK and in Europe (Trust for London, 2015). In later analysis chapters of my empirical data, I explore in more detail the impact that the extrinsic motivations of salary and housing have on the London stayers in my study.

3.4 Stayers’ resilience in the role of identity and motivation

There is a substantial body of educational literature which addresses the concept of teacher resilience in the context of teacher retention (Beltman, Mansfield and Price, 2011; Bobek, 2002; Brunetti, 2006; Gu and Day, 2007, 2013; Le Cornu, 2013). The concept of resilience, seen from a psychological perspective, has previously been understood in terms of a person’s qualities and characteristics. Brunetti (2006) understands teacher resilience as a ‘personal characteristic that enables teachers to ‘stay the course’ despite the difficulties they encounter’ (p.813). He adds that a teacher needs to be resilient in order to inspire resilience in his or her students. A teacher’s personal characteristics including a high sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and a sense of humour enable resilient responses to

challenging situations (Castro, Kelly and Shih, 2010; Mansfield et al., 2012; Yonezawa et al., 2011). While personal qualities and attributes are considered to be important influences on a teacher's resilience, what Mansfield et al. (2012) refer to as 'individual protective factors' (p.190), they are not the sole factors which determine a teachers' level of resilience. Resilience was once viewed as being an innate and stable quality (Gu and Day, 2013). Gu and Day (2007) suggest that resilience indicates that a teacher has the capacity to 'recover strengths or spirit quickly and efficiently in the face of adversity' (p.1302). However, they also assert that resilience is best understood as 'a relative, multi-dimensional and developmental construct' (Gu and Day, 2013, p.25).

There are multiple influences on a teacher's resilience, which shift and change according to the teacher's personal and professional contexts and circumstances (Day and Gu, 2010). Indeed there are commonalities in the educational literature as to what factors are considered to influence teacher resilience. For example, resilience is largely influenced by the relationships teachers build and sustain with colleagues and school leaders according to Stanford (2001); Bobek (2002) Gu and Day (2013) and Le Cornu (2013). In fact, Day and Gu (2010) argue that 'relational' resilience is the most important factor contributing to whether a teacher stays or leaves their job. Furthermore, it is claimed that a teacher's resilience can be enhanced through positive relationships with their students (Beltman et al., 2012; Freedman and Appleman, 2009; Nieto, 2005) as well as through well-structured and organised workplaces (Patterson et al., 2004).

Literature on urban teacher retention suggests that teachers who stay in hard-to-teach urban schools generally demonstrate high levels of resilience (Cohen, 2009, Hong, 2012; Peters and Pearce, 2012; Pratt-Adams and Maguire, 2009). Indeed the research suggests that resilience is influenced by and influences aspects of the urban teacher's identity, character, motivations and actions. For example, an urban teacher's personal qualities are reflected in their identity and these qualities in turn influence and are influenced by their motivations for remaining in their jobs (Beltman, et al., 2011; Day and Gu, 2009). In their review of literature on teacher resilience, Beltman et al. (2011) found having strong altruistic and intrinsic motives for teaching, such as deriving enjoyment from working with children and having a sense of 'moral purpose' and a 'sense of vocation' (p.191), strengthened teachers' resilience. Resilience also has a symbiotic relationship with a sense of vocation; a sense of vocation is 'an essential component of teacher resilience, which at the same time promotes resilience in teachers' (Day and Gu, 2007, p.1311). A teacher's sense of vocation is discussed further in chapters 5, 6 and 7 when examining the participant data. Personal motivations are significant factors influencing urban teachers' level of resilience where the more challenging the school context is, the more energy a teacher needs to remain resilient. (Gu and Day, 2007).

Studies on the motivations of urban teachers in challenging schools have often focused on their sense of vocation, their sense of calling and a desire to make a difference to society (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Freedman and Appleman, 2008). It would appear that those who share these motivations also share similar strategies for maintaining resilience through challenging situations, such as:

fostering positive relationships with colleagues; building productive and mutually respectful relationships with their students; seeking out professional collaboration and opportunities for professional development (Hunter-Quartz et al., 2010).

The ways in which teachers 'see' themselves can also contribute to their sense of resilience. When discussing the role that commitment played in the teachers who Nias (1989) interviewed, she reported that the teachers saw themselves as 'being stubborn', 'liking a fight', 'obstinate' (p.37). It could be argued that these teachers articulated resilient identities with character descriptions of themselves presented as being something positive. Thus through their discourse the teachers positioned their identities as being able to resist adversity.

The interaction between a teacher's personal and professional identities and their sense of resilience is highlighted in Gu and Day's (2007) study of three teachers at different stages of their career, where they examine, among other things, the relationship between their resilience and their personal and professional identities. When studying a mid-career secondary school teacher, Gu and Day (2007) found that although the school's context and social environment was positive and supportive, the teacher struggled with working within a prescribed performance-driven structure which had been imposed on the school from external policy directives. Since this way of working ran counter to the teacher's personal values and beliefs about teaching (personal identity), her professional identity was negatively affected and she was at risk of leaving. An inability to reconcile personal and professional identities can often mean that a teacher can no longer remain in teaching (Nias, 1989; Van Veen et al., 2005). Added to this, a lack of

work life balance meant that the teacher in the study was constantly in ‘teacher mode’ (p.1308) even when not working. Perhaps it was the teacher’s inability to switch from one identity (professional) to another (personal) when required, which may have contributed to her sense of unease. However, Gu and Day (2007) showed that in time, the teacher learnt how to ‘get around the rules, tests and targets and learned to inject her own interests in teaching’ (p.1309). Thus she found a way to ‘rescue’ her professional identity and be herself in the classroom. The revealing aspect of this example, however, and one which was shared by all the participants in Gu and Day’s (2007) study, was the significance of teachers’ core values and sense of vocation. The motivation to ‘make a difference’ appeared to be powerful enough to overcome the challenges they faced, thus demonstrating their resilience. To be able to stay true to personal beliefs and values, while managing complex professional expectations and the pressures they involve has a significant bearing on a teacher’s capacity for resilience (Gu and Day, 2007; Pearce and Morrison, 2011).

While the identities of the teachers in Gu and Day’s (2007) study were influenced by their sense of vocation and commitment to their roles, their resilience was demonstrated in their ‘physical continuation in the[ir] role’ (p.1314). Day after day, these resilient teachers lived out their vocation and commitment in, sometimes, very challenging circumstances. It could therefore be argued that the behaviour (maintaining the act of teaching) of teachers is also central to their identity formation. It is reasonable to argue that if teachers can achieve resilience in such a way, this may have a positive influence on their decisions to stay in their schools.

There are, however, concerns about how resilience is analysed (Saltman, 2014), and no more so in relation to the construction of a teacher identity (Price, Mansfield and McConney, 2012). Price et al. (2012) employ discourse theory to conceptualise how ‘socio-cultural forces’ and ‘neoliberal approaches’ (p.88) frame notions of teacher resilience in relation to constructions of teacher identity. Price et al (2012) draw on Connell’s (2009) work which critically explores the concept of the ‘good teacher’ and ‘competent teacher’ in the context of educational reform. In this context, the ‘good teacher’ is described by a set of professional standards which are used to measure, evaluate and ‘audit’ the performance of the teacher and their work (Price et al., 2012, p.87). Price et al (2012) argue that similarly the concept of ‘teacher resilience’ can also be ‘embedded in such standards’ (p.87). Indeed they caution against constructing teacher identity around resilience, arguing that by listing a set of personal characteristics and other in-school or external conditions as factors which foster resilience, there is a danger that ‘‘teacher resilience’ could be used to shape and control teacher identity’ (Price et al., 2012, p.88).

The idea that teachers are to ‘blame’ if they do not possess an adequate level of resilience is echoed by Saltman (2014) who discusses the impact of the resilience or ‘grit’ discourse surrounding students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Saltman (2014) argues that an emphasis on resilience in schools has led to the ‘scapegoating of students for conditions not of their making in addition to the ongoing assault on teachers’ (p.45). Furthermore, Price et al. (2012) are concerned that the discourse surrounding teacher resilience is focused on teachers learning how to ‘bounce back’ from adversity rather than actively engaging in

resisting adversity. Thus similar to Saltman's (2014) disadvantaged students, teacher resilience may promote a sense of agency for the teacher through an adherence to rules and regulations rather than questioning authoritative structures. From this perspective, if constructions of teacher identity and resilience are not probed and questioned, teachers may simply create an identity which 'does not challenge adversity, but simply learns to 'bounce back' from it' (Price et al., 2012, p.92).

The research on teacher resilience, and in particular on urban teacher resilience, identifies a web of influences and connections between teachers' motivations (often intrinsic and altruistic); their sense of vocation and moral purpose; their sense of self-efficacy and their teacher identities (Cohen, 2009; Hong, 2012; Marston et al., 2006; Peters and Pearce, 2012). From this perspective, resilience can be viewed as a 'multi-faceted and unstable construct' (Day and Gu, 2010, p.174) which must be nurtured and developed throughout a teacher's career (Gu and Day, 2013). Certainly evidence shows that if urban teachers' sense of resilience is nurtured, they are not only more inclined to stay, but also more inclined to take on new challenges (Day and Gu, 2010; Frankenberg et al., 2010). Rising to new challenges can help strengthen a teacher's sense of resilience and sense of self-efficacy (both which reinforce each other). What is particularly striking in the case of urban teachers is that a high sense of self-efficacy leads to increased resilience, commitment and motivation in a job where many challenges are faced and overcome on a daily basis. In the next section, I examine the concept of self-efficacy and explore its role in the context of teachers' identities and motivations to remain in their jobs.

3.5 Self-efficacy beliefs of stayers in the role of identity and motivation

A teacher's self-efficacy is the measure of how successful they are at what they do (Bandura, 1993). It is claimed that a teacher's sense of self-efficacy (their beliefs about their teaching abilities) impacts on their students' achievements, motivations and students' own self-efficacy beliefs (Haberman, 1994; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; 2007). When a teacher feels successful in their work, their sense of self-efficacy rises (Chester and Beaudin, 1996). It follows that a teacher's sense of their self-efficacy is linked to their own commitment and persistence, and influences career decisions (Gu and Day, 2007).

According to Tschannen- Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2007) research, there are four key factors which impact on a teacher's sense of efficacy. The most powerful relates to a teacher's 'mastery experiences' (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2007, p.945), when a teacher feels a sense of accomplishment at their students' achievement and success. This feedback from their students is a key lever in raising a teacher's sense of self-efficacy (Haberman, 1994,1995; Gu and Day, 2007). The other factors affecting self-efficacy include: how regularly a teacher receives positive feedback from others about their performance; seeing another teacher (with whom they identify) model good teaching practice; and positive emotional responses from working with their students (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2007).

These influential factors on teacher efficacy are borne out in other empirical research studies. For example, in a study by Chester and Beaudin (1996),

conducted on the self-efficacy of new teachers in disadvantaged urban schools, they found that self-efficacy is influenced by: the collegial nature of the school and the opportunities a teacher has for collaboration; receiving regular supervision and constructive feedback to enable them to improve their practice; and having adequate access to resources. Drawing from their longitudinal project, Gu and Day (2007) found that a teacher's self-efficacy was influenced by school collegiality and collaborative opportunities. Self-efficacy beliefs were also fostered as a result of positive and productive relationships with school leaders. Linked to school leadership factors, Gu and Day (2007) also found that having access to professional development opportunities to enhance career advancement and possible promotion was an important factor in influencing self-efficacy.

As discussed in the previous section (3.4), in the case of urban teachers, self-efficacy beliefs are linked to resilience and commitment (Gu and Day, 2007; Hong, 2012). Put simply, urban teachers' feelings of their efficacy also influence their decisions to remain in their schools (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Gu and Day, 2013). This perspective is illustrated in Dinham and Sawyer's (2004) study of long staying teachers in a range of secondary schools serving disadvantaged areas in New South Wales in Australia. They found that there was a correlation between the teachers' levels of satisfaction and commitment to the job. Although positive self-efficacy beliefs are important for teachers in general in order to stay in their schools (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Olsen, 2008), they are vital for the urban teacher. Self-efficacy beliefs not only impact on an urban teacher's motivations to remain in their school, but they are crucial for the children whom they teach. According to Chester and Beaudin, (1996) this is because teachers

who have high-efficacy beliefs are better placed to ‘assist low-achieving students during failure situations, and praise low-achieving students more and criticize them less than teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs’ (p.236).

McKinney et al’s (2007) work with 32 stayers in high-poverty schools in Southeastern USA found that they all possessed confidence in their abilities to help change the lives of their students. The study was based on Haberman’s (1995) work which had identified effective urban teachers or ‘star teachers’ (p.165). Using specific selection criteria, Haberman (1995) identified ‘star teachers’ as those who had an ongoing commitment to delivering high quality education to children in the most deprived communities in the USA. Studies on ‘star teachers’ (Haberman, 1995; Haberman and Post, 1998; McKinney et al., 2007) showed it was important that teachers had a high sense of self-efficacy because this led to successful outcomes with their students. It follows that feeling a sense of success with their students emboldens teachers’ commitment to continue teaching in challenging environments (Marston et al., 2006) and increases a teacher’s desire to take on challenges (Olsen, 2010).

Self-efficacy also influences the way in which teachers construct their professional identities (Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma., 2011; Olsen, 2010). Indeed a teacher’s professional identity is inextricably linked to self-efficacy, job satisfaction, commitment as well as levels of motivation (Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma 2011). The influence of self-efficacy on a teacher’s professional identity cannot be viewed in isolation but as one significant factor among others in the construction of a teacher’s identity. Olsen (2010) argues that a teacher’s

sense of self-efficacy highlights the interrelatedness between teachers' previous experiences and practices, their level of confidence and abilities as well as with their future career goals and decisions. His suggestion is that a teacher's identity lies at the heart of all these different aspects of a teacher's life which are in 'conversation with each other' (Olsen, 2010, p.140). Although a teacher's sense of self-efficacy is a key factor in the shaping of teacher identity, Olsen (2010) cautions that the self-efficacy factor must not be over-emphasised. His argument is that a teacher's identity is an 'active collection' of a teacher's 'human' sides [...] as well as the professional, technical sides' (p.142). The role which self-efficacy plays in strengthening teachers' sense of resilience and commitment to their schools will be further explored in later chapters (in particular chapters 6 and 7) when examining the data from the London stayers in my study.

3.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

This chapter has provided a multi-layered framework in which my empirical study is set. It has problematized the concept of the stayer by recognising the contested nature of staying, particularly in relation to staying in one school (or more than one school) and the number of years a stayer has served. Taking these considerations into account, I have provided an interpretation of what the stayer is. I have also examined what motivates the urban stayer to remain in their challenging school for at least 5 years. Furthermore this chapter has sought to illuminate how teacher identity matters when considering teachers' motivations for choosing to remain in their schools. Additionally, it has explored the concepts of resilience and self-efficacy and investigated how these dimensions of a

teacher's experience are interpreted and influence the stayers to remain in their schools.

The chapter draws on a range of research from different countries on teacher retention in primary schools and secondary schools. Although I acknowledge that the structure of the secondary school and motivations of secondary school teachers may differ from primary schools and their teachers, examining research from secondary schools has provided me with a wider perspective of teacher identity and motivations. Certainly the international research has highlighted some broad and overlapping issues related to teacher identity and teachers' motivations and decision making. I acknowledge that in making comparisons with the urban educational environment, for example in the United States, that there are cultural differences between urban America and London which require careful analysis.

As discussed in chapter 1, London is a unique city characterised, not least, by its diversity, extremes in poverty and wealth and high costs of living. This unique context is reflected in the work and life of the inner London primary school teacher: a key point which I have sought to underscore in the preceding chapters. However, in reviewing the international research on urban teacher retention, I have drawn on common themes which has been useful in constructing an analytical framework for my study.

The literature I have reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that when the contextual challenges are great, successful urban teachers are motivated by

particularly strong commitments to make a difference to students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Haberman, 1994,1995; Nieto, 2005; Stanford, 2001). These teachers often possess a deep desire to address social inequalities (Frankenberg et al., 2010). However, research also shows that possessing idealistic motivations to teach in urban contexts is often not enough to sustain commitment (Brown, 1992; Castro, 2012; Heinz, 2015; Huberman, 1993). For example, urban teachers who adopt a ‘saviour’ identity when choosing to teach children in deprived contexts are much less likely to remain teaching in these schools (Castro, 2012, p.14). In this chapter I have argued that urban stayers remain in their schools due to an array of factors (Johnson et al., 2005). Therefore, to view in isolation any one of the motivational factors which influence an urban teacher to stay would not do justice to the rich and varied picture of what it is to be stayer (Olsen, 2010).

To appreciate why the urban teacher stays, a wide-lens perspective needs to be taken in order to interpret how the various elements of a stayer’s personal and professional life interact and relate to one another. Just as becoming a teacher is an on-going process (Dillon and Maguire, 2011; Olsen, 2010), so ‘staying’ is also a process. The act of staying can be strengthened and, at times, weakened by a variety of professional and personal factors, challenges and motivations. These motivations are in constant conversation with other dimensions of a stayer’s personal and professional identities. These identities themselves are shaped and re-shaped by a myriad of influences, not least by a stayer’s sense of self-efficacy and resilience to remain in their job. However, it is important to note that there is no specific linearity in how stayers’ motivations and other influences impact on

their decisions to stay. For example, a stayer's resilience may be strengthened by one or more factors, but their level of resilience may also serve to reinforce other motivations. Resilience itself may not be enough to encourage teachers to stay. Although the concept of resilience is often referred to in connection with a teacher's commitment to their school, the research also highlights its inherent complexity and instability (for example, Day and Gu, 2010). Indeed, as discussed in this chapter the concept of 'teacher resilience' itself needs to be carefully analysed against the backdrop of urban school teacher turnover. It is too neat a conclusion to suggest that stayers simply need resilience to maintain commitment to their school and profession.

While the research I have reviewed illuminates many aspects of staying, it also highlights gaps in our understanding of staying. Existing research and literature can provide insights to a point, but in terms of the London stayer, there is still much more to learn. This chapter is my starting to point in understanding how teachers' identities connect and interact with a multitude of personal and professional factors, and how these identities relate to teachers' motivations. There are many dimensions to staying which are connected and interwoven; they can change and shift year on year, across a teacher's professional life (Day and Gu, 2010).

My understanding of teacher identity as a theoretical concept is one where a teacher has multiple identities which are shaped and re-shaped in different circumstances and are contingent on a variety of personal, professional and situational influences. Identity is a multi-faceted structure constructed by the

teacher's past and present identities and projections of future identities. Following Nias's (1989) understanding of identity, I suggest that a teacher possesses a certain 'core' or 'substantial' identity, which is embodied by their closely held beliefs and values. Although not unshakeable, this 'core' identity is generally impervious to change and one which a teacher may strive to strengthen and defend. These concepts of identity are inextricably linked with a teacher's motivations and career decisions. Indeed, people are motivated to act in ways which fit with their sense of identity. In other words, their motivations are influenced by their values and beliefs as well as by their personal and professional contexts and relationships. These motivations in turn influence how a person constructs and re-constructs their identity in multiple and complex ways. The relationship between a teacher's identity and motivations is not clear-cut; it ebbs and flows and is dependent on internal and external influences.

In my examination of my stayers' career decisions, I aim to employ this theoretical framework to illuminate the reasons why they choose to remain in their schools. Stayers are not a homogenous category of teachers. I am asserting that every stayer has a different 'pattern' of connections and different ways they act out 'staying'. In this thesis, therefore, I explore the staying lives of some of those individuals and seek to discover *who* they are and *why* they choose to stay in challenging London primary schools. In chapters 5, 6 and 7 I examine the staying stories of London primary school stayers, where the subjects I have investigated in chapters 2 and 3 will be further developed and analysed. Before this further discussion and analysis, I turn to the next chapter where I present the methods and methodology for my empirical study.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains what my research entails and discusses how the theoretical frameworks explored in chapters 2 and 3 shape my methodological approach and data analysis. After outlining my research questions, I explain why I chose to take a qualitative approach to my research. Then I discuss how I gained access to my participants and give further details of the sampling process. The next section focuses on the data collection itself and explores how questions for semi-structured interviews were constructed and how the interviews were conducted. Next I discuss the steps involved in my data analysis which includes the carrying out of transcriptions and the data coding and analysis. I examine the ethical considerations involved from the very beginning of the research process, all the way through to the final analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of my role as the researcher and an exploration of researcher positionality and reflexivity.

4.2 Background to the research study and theoretical perspectives

The choice of my research topic reflects Silverman's (2013) point that for some researchers 'direct personal experience becomes the starting point of their research' (p.80). My research interest arose from my own experience as a 'stayer' in a London primary school located in a socially deprived neighbourhood. Similar to many primary schools of its kind, the majority of children are on Free School

Meals; higher than average numbers of children are on the Special Educational Needs register; a large number of children speak English as an additional language; and many children come from unstable and chaotic home lives so they arrive at school in often fragile emotional states. Teacher turnover was high but, while I taught in the school, there remained a small group of teachers (of which I was one) who had decided to stay at the school. I decided that for my MA study (Towers, 2011) I wanted to examine more closely why these teachers decided to stay. The stayers in my initial research study reported a complex mix of reasons for continuing to teach in their schools. Although some reasons featured more significantly than others, such as an altruistic reason for wanting to ‘make a difference’, in general, these reasons were not always clear-cut and were sometimes contradictory in nature. As Mason (2002) suggests, as a qualitative researcher I did not expect my research questions to find ‘fixed solutions [...] to be existing ‘out there’ ready for collection’ (p.20). In other words, my research questions did not require a definitive answer. Instead the questions acted as a guide for my enquiry which were more exploratory in nature and prompted further questions on the nature of stayers’ motivations.

These further questions, which emerged from my initial research on why teachers stay in challenging schools, prompted this study where I investigate in further depth stayers’ career decisions. As Wolcott (2009) argues, ‘theory should facilitate the inquiry process’ (p.72) and indeed an early critical review of the literature highlighted how a theoretical perspective on motivation would help in analysing teachers’ career decisions (for example: Heinz, 2013; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Watt et al., 2012). As discussed in chapter 2, motivations are

frequently framed within three categories: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This theoretical framework provides a useful tool with which to explore the reasons why teachers stay in challenging schools.

In my examination of the literature and theory on teacher motivations, it soon became apparent that the concept of identity featured significantly in teachers' lives and career motivations. For example, in Nias's (1989) seminal work *Primary Teachers Talking*, which charts the lives of primary school teachers in the UK spanning 20 years, her analyses on teacher motivations and identity influenced my thinking on the interconnectedness of motivations and teachers' identities. A further review of the literature revealed that the concept of identity can be employed as a useful analytical lens through which to examine teachers' lives and career decisions (for example: Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Day et al., 2006a; MacLure, 1993; Olsen, 2010). As Wolcott (2009) claims, 'human behaviour is complexly motivated' (p.70), so utilising some aspects of identity theory to probe the reasons why teachers stay in 'hard-to-teach' London primary schools offered a greater scope for investigation and analysis. As there are no empirical studies, as far as I am aware, which examine the motivations of London primary school stayers, I believe that in Mason's (2002) words, I had identified 'a gap in our knowledge of some aspect of the social world' (p.13).

In chapters 2 and 3 I explored two theoretical perspectives which provide me with, 'a framework for the problem and questions to be addressed in the study' (Flinders and Mills, 1993, p.114). Here, I consider how my theoretical

frameworks have informed my methodological choices, the methods of my analysis as well as my research questions.

4.3 Research questions

The aim of my study is twofold: the first purpose is to explore the reasons why long serving primary school teachers ('stayers'), who teach in disadvantaged London schools, decide to remain in these types of schools. The second purpose is to explore in more detail the stayers' 'teacher identity' and ascertain to what extent, if at all, identity factors influence 'staying' or not. As discussed in the previous section, my research questions were prompted by an 'initial curiosity' (Agee, 2009, p.433) of interest close to my own experience. My intention was to uncover the reasons why teachers choose to remain in their schools, but having researched teachers' lives prior to this study, I knew that in order to gain a richer insight into why teachers stay, I needed to use identity as an analytical tool to examine their motivations. Indeed by focusing on staying through the lens of identity, I had arrived at the 'essence of [my] enquiry' (Mason, 2002, p.19).

Initially I had conceived my research question regarding stayers as having two strands: motivation and identity. As I began my research, I realised that however I constructed my research questions, there would be an overlapping and interweaving of these two concepts. Therefore to create a single research question which incorporated everything I wanted to investigate would not be feasible. As Agee (2009) argues, research questions do not solely act as a starting point to a research study, their construction should be an 'ongoing process' throughout the course of the work. Even though the concept of identity permeated each research

question, I decided to construct my research questions into three clear areas of focus. The reason for separating these specific areas was a practical one: to provide a framework in which to conduct my research and construct interview questions. Indeed Mason (2002) suggests that a research question needs to be focused yet simultaneously can be ‘exploratory and fluid’ (p.20) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that a research question cannot be too ‘broad as to give rise to unlimited possibilities’ (p.25). I therefore constructed three research questions under three areas of focus: Stayers, Motivations and Identity.

RQ1: Stayers: What is a ‘stayer’ and who are stayers?

RQ2: What motivates stayers (or has motivated them in the past) to stay in disadvantaged inner London primary schools?

RQ3: How, and in what ways, does a stayer’s identity (professional and/or personal) influence their decisions to stay?

Agee (2009) discusses the importance of well-constructed research questions at the outset of the research because ‘poorly conceived [...] questions will likely create problems that affect all subsequent stages of the study’ (p.431). However, she also suggests that questions can be refined during the research process to ‘serve as a basis for more rigorous and reflexive enquiry’ (Agee, 2009, p.434). When considering my initial research question pertaining to stayers, I encountered problems in defining the ‘stayer’. A review of the literature revealed that there is no general consensus as to what constitutes a stayer. Therefore before asking *who* the stayers are, I needed to ascertain *what* constitutes a stayer. As a result I refined

my first research question so I could theoretically construct a working conceptualisation of the stayer before asking who the stayers are. Perhaps Agee's (2009) call for the formulation and re-formulation of research questions is what Mason (2002) suggests is the process of 'active reflexivity' which all researchers must engage with in order to maintain a high quality of research.

4.4 My research approach

4.4.1 A qualitative approach

When choosing my methodological approach for my study, I followed a key guiding principle: the research methodology I would use must fit 'the general aims and purposes of the research' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.73). Here I briefly explore the principles of the two main research approaches used in empirical research before discussing my choice of methodology.

Qualitative and quantitative research are generally taken as having 'two fundamentally different world views' (Muijs, 2004, p.4) where qualitative research assumes there are 'multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event' (p.9). By contrast quantitative research takes a more positivist and realist view, assuming that 'reality exists "out there" and it is observable, stable and measurable' (Merriam, 2009, p.8). This quantitative approach stresses the 'measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.8). Advocates of quantitative methods of research sometimes argue that their research is done 'within a value-free framework' (p.8). On the other hand qualitative research takes an interpretive

approach which involves ‘understanding a situation through the eyes of the participant’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p.116).

Central to my research process was deciding on an appropriate methodological approach for my study that would elicit rich and meaningful responses to my research questions. I wanted my participants’ voices to be at the heart of my research and I felt that my research questions lent themselves to a qualitative method of investigation where I aimed to ‘understand the subjective world of human experience’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p.17). My approach enabled the stayers to give shape to their definitions of a stayer and to provide in-depth accounts of staying. Given that I chose to employ identity as one analytical lens through which to explore teachers’ career decisions, I was keen to explore in detail the participants’ thoughts, feelings and attitudes as to how they constructed their identities and how, if at all, their identities influenced their reasons for staying in their schools.

In her research on the experiences of white urban teachers in the USA, Lensmire (2012) argued that ‘rich, descriptive data can be gathered through the interview alone’ (p.70). Similar to Lensmire’s (2012) study, the key aim of my research was to understand the stayer’s perspective on their experiences, in their own language. This point is echoed by Silverman (2013) who suggests that a researcher deploying a qualitative approach has, ‘an interest in subjectivity and the authenticity of human experience’ (p.6). My research questions were in keeping with a more ‘exploratory and more hypothesis generating rather than testing’ research approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.25). Thus, it was clear that a

qualitative research approach, using interviews to gather my data, was the most appropriate method.

Some criticism, however, levelled at qualitative research is that it is inherently subjective (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2000) and that it cannot reliably produce valid data (Maxwell, 1992). In qualitative research, the individual researcher is the ‘primary instrument of data collection and analysis’ (Merriam, 2009, p.214) thus reality is interpreted and then presented by the researcher. Therefore, questions about credibility need to be examined if findings are to be trusted.

4.4.2 Trustworthy research

The trustworthiness of qualitative research has been the subject of much debate (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As Creswell and Miller (2000) assert ‘qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible’ (p.125). The terms ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ are commonly used with reference to the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Creswell and Miller (2000) discuss the different techniques which can be employed by researchers to ensure validity such as engaging in member checking, using triangulation methods, engaging in peer review or having an external audit of the data. However, it could be argued that these methods are less useful for the researcher engaged in an interpretivist approach to their research. The term ‘interpretive validity’ was coined by Maxwell (1992) who discussed how important it is for the researcher not only to present accurate descriptions of what is said or observed, but also to apply such accuracy to the ‘*perspective of the individuals included in the account*’ (p.289) (my italics).

It can be argued that Maxwell's (1992) understanding of 'interpretive validity' is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) interpret as credibility. Rather than unearthing 'a single, tangible reality' (p.294), Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that trustworthy qualitative research involves presenting, '*reconstructions* that have been arrived at via the inquiry [that] are *credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities*' (p.296; original italics). Credibility in qualitative research can be achieved in a number of ways, including ensuring that a thorough account of the data gathered is presented. Credible research can also be realized by paying close attention to rigour in the research process. Indeed Mason (2002) emphasises the importance of an on-going process of self-criticality and 'active reflexivity' on the part of the researcher (Mason, 2002, p.7). In doing this, the researcher can thus be held accountable for their work by providing its 'audience with material upon which they can judge it' (p.7).

Mason's (2002) suggestions for maintaining credibility through ensuring quality and rigour throughout the research process appeal to me and complement my research approach. Since the participants are at the heart of my research, my aim is to convey their experiences, beliefs and attitudes to generate a subjective understanding of their lived world. It is my task to ensure that my participants' stories are told as accurately as possible and are also analysed and interpreted in such a way that my audience can trust the truth of what I am conveying.

Furthermore I draw on Hammersley's (1992) concept of "subtle realism" (p.199) whereby he suggests that such research does not result in 'knowledge that can be taken to be valid because it is based on a certain foundation, but rather knowledge

that can reasonably be assumed to be (on average) less likely to be invalid than information from other sources' (p.200). In other words, employing Angen's (2000) understanding of Hammersley's (1992) argument, my research findings can be provided with 'confidence rather than certainty' (p.382).

4.5 My participants

4.5.1 Sampling

Shipman (1997) argues that: 'the key to the quality of all samples is their relation to the aims of the research' (p.60). My research required me to gather data from a number of stayers including: class teachers, senior leaders, headteachers and former stayers. The stayers in my sample had to fulfil two 'staying' criteria: they needed to have taught for 5 or more years, and they needed to have stayed for that length of time in the same school. When planning the initial stages of my data collection, I theoretically constructed a diverse sample (see above) to highlight the issues which had come from the literature I had examined. However, as discussed in chapter 3, the 'stayer' is a contested concept, for there is no overall consensus on the length of time a teacher must serve to be considered a stayer (Huberman, 1993; Wilhelm et al., 2000). It should be acknowledged that in reality the length of time a stayer serves is not as rigid as the 5 years I have opted to use as a criterion for being a stayer; it is perhaps more elastic than this. However, because evidence has shown that there is an increasing number of teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years of teaching (Blower, 2015; Bousted, 2015; Bubb and Earley, 2007), it is reasonable to assume that 5 years is a key milestone in the career of a teacher. The added reason for choosing 5 years was

practical for the purposes of my study: I needed consistency when selecting my participants.

I also wanted to focus on teachers who showed commitment and dedication to the *same* school and to examine the nature of their commitment in relation to their school. Hunter-Quartz (2009) refers to these types of stayers as '*same school stayers*' (p.146). She found that in her study on urban teachers in Los Angeles, '*same school stayers*' highlighted an aspect of teacher retention that provided an '*insight into the creation of stable professional learning communities at school sites*' (p.146). For my study, I was curious to discover if staying in the same school had a particular influence on their identity as teachers according to what they said. Therefore I concluded that teachers and headteachers who continued working in their disadvantaged schools for 5 years or more could be considered to be stayers (Bubb and Earley, 2007).

Given that I was working with a relatively small sample (24 participants), I was keen not to categorise the stayers too finely. Therefore I have acknowledged which stayers have remained in their schools for their entire careers and those who have moved from another school to stay in their current school for five or more years (see Table 4.1). I have chosen not to categorise these participants as two separate groups of stayers: wherever their beginning or end points in their careers, stayers in this study are those teachers who have remained in the same school for five or more years. This interpretation of a stayer, which I have constructed, was the first criteria that my participants had to meet before being selected for interview.

The second criterion that my participants needed to meet, was that they had to teach in disadvantaged schools. If I was not familiar with the school that a participant worked in, I would ask them about the school's background to ascertain if it fitted into the 'disadvantaged' category of inner London schools. I also checked recent Ofsted reports (at the time of researching) to confirm this. As Maguire et al. (2006) argue, the characteristics which are often presented in such urban schools include: higher than average numbers of children requiring Free School Meals; significant numbers of children on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register; and high levels of children speaking English as an additional language as well as pupil premium funding.

In total I conducted 24 semi-structured interviews (see Table 4.1). Of the participants interviewed, 5 of the senior leaders were not full time class teachers, even though they had teaching commitments in the school. Indeed, it was evident from the literature that one of the reasons teachers decide to stay in their jobs was because of opportunities for career progression (Cochran-Smith, 2004). In my sample, 7 of the stayers were assistant heads, one was a deputy head, one was a key stage leader. All the other participants held a subject leadership role.

My sample also consists of 5 current serving headteachers. It is well documented that many schools, particularly disadvantaged urban schools, have difficulty recruiting headteachers (Crawford, 2009; Howson, 2016). I wanted to know why those headteachers who decide to remain in their schools, do so. Added to this, many studies show that the leadership and management of a school have a

significant bearing on teachers' decisions to stay or leave a school (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Towers, 2011). Therefore I thought it was important to include headteachers in my sample.

My sample includes a small group of former stayers because I decided to gain a retrospective perspective on staying. The 5 former stayers consist of: one 'leaver', 2 'movers', and 2 retirees. The 'leaver', Liz, had left her school to raise a family. The two retirees still live in London, one of these is a retired headteacher. Two of the former stayers left their schools to teach in other equally disadvantaged schools (one in London, one out of London). I refer to these two former stayers as 'movers', teachers who move to other schools either in the same area or elsewhere (Elfers et al., 2006; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

Of the participants interviewed, the majority are women. Teaching has traditionally been seen as a feminised occupation (Vogt, 2002) and the majority of teachers in London are women (Allen et al., 2012) and the majority of my participants (17) are women. In addition, I found evidence that a significant body of women continue teaching after having started a family (for example: Boulton and Coldron, 1998; Evetts, 1990). This appeared to be true of many stayers who I knew in the profession, so I included 7 working mothers in my selection. Research by Smithers and Robinson (2003) highlighted the relatively small number of men in primary school teaching and I represent this proportionately within my study. Within my selection of participants, I included 7 men (4 of whom are headteachers). The stayers came from 12 schools from 6 different boroughs, in the North, South and East of London.

I used a purposive sampling approach to recruit my participants and ‘hand-pick(ed) the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought’ (Cohen et al, 2011, p.156). However, purposive sampling also assumes that the researcher selects a group of participants in order to highlight and test a particular hypothesis. While the literature highlighted specific themes in relation to staying, I was keen to ensure as far as possible that the study be rooted in the participants’ voices. Here is where a contradiction lies, for as a qualitative researcher, I am interested in exploring the ‘depth, nuance and complexity’ of the research data, yet I needed to be strategic in selecting a group of people so I could ‘acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it’ (Mason, 2002, p.157).

4.5.2 Snowballing

Access to the first few participants was relatively easy, as I still had contact with some teachers from the school where I used to work. I asked my participants if they could recommend anyone else who would be willing to be interviewed and who matched my selection criterion (see Sampling 4.5.1). By accessing participants through ‘snowballing’, I could reach participants whom I may not have been able to contact otherwise. After the interviews, many participants expressed positive feedback on the experience and in many cases offered to contact other ‘stayers’ who they thought could be willing to be interviewed. Indeed this highlights Cohen et al.’s (2011) suggestion that in snowball sampling, ‘interpersonal relations feature very highly’ (p.159). While this proved to be

beneficial for my research, it is worth noting the ‘flip side’ of using snowballing techniques; it can be ‘prone to biases of the influence of the initial contact and the problem of volunteer-only samples’ (p.159). However, my sample was a relatively hard to reach group as long serving teachers in disadvantaged London schools were not easy to find so I relied quite significantly on the snowballing method and perhaps would not have accessed so many participants in the time given, had I not used this technique.

In terms of my sample size, I weighed up the practicalities involved in being a sole researcher along with the need for enough data from which I could elicit themes and chart any patterns so to make informed conclusions (Mason, 2002). I had planned to interview approximately 30 participants but finally interviewed 24. I decided to stop at this number because I judged that I had sufficient data fit for the purpose of the study. My major themes were saturated and I was not obtaining any new insights from the last set of participants; their experiences validated my earlier findings. Added to this, there were some practical considerations. I needed to ensure that the data was gathered in time to allow for analysis and writing up of the final study.

4.5.3 Access

Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that ‘access does not present quite such a problem’ (p.54) if the researcher is part of the school or organisation where the participants work. In my case, although I had left my school I maintained links with a number of staff there including the headteacher, thus access to these participants was relatively straightforward. Through my contacts at the school and the borough I

worked in, I was able to gain access to a number of other teachers in at least 3 other schools in the area. The fact that I was a stayer myself meant that participants perceived me as being ‘one of them’ (Walford, 2001). However, once I had interviewed the stayers I knew professionally, access became more of a challenge. Although I approached a number of other stayers through the snowballing technique, it was not always easy to secure an interview despite promises from the potential participant to do so. Without a doubt, the teachers’ time pressures had much to do with this.

I would also attest to Walford’s (2001) claim that access to participants can be ‘fraught with difficulties’ (p.34). Accessing male stayers who are class teachers proved particularly challenging for two reasons: firstly stayers are in the minority in the teaching workforce. Secondly the male stayers I did find were not all keen to be interviewed. There were an additional 3 male class teacher stayers I located but who, I felt, were not eager to be interviewed. Therefore I did not pursue them any further for an interview. The males I had the least difficulty with were the headteachers. Of the 5 I interviewed, 4 are men. The reason for this may be because there are proportionally more male primary school headteachers than female heads (DfE, 2010), or it could just be that most of the headteachers I had access to and who agreed to be interviewed are men. According to the 2015 school workforce census (DfE, 2016), the largest majorities of female teachers work in maintained nursery and primary schools (84.8%) and my overall sample reflected this demography.

Table 4.1 List of participants

Name (pseudonyms)	School (pseudonyms)	Biographical details
CURRENT STAYERS		
Stephanie	Beaumont Primary	Joint Assistant Head 11 years in current school since NQT
Stella	Beaumont Primary	Joint Assistant Head. 10 years' teaching experience. 7 years in current school.
Alice	Beaumont Primary	Early Years Leader 10 years in current school since NQT
Mary	Beaumont Primary	Year 2 class teacher/Literacy Co-ordinator 8 years' teaching experience 6 years in current school
Isabelle	Beaumont Primary	Year 1 class teacher/ MFL leader 6 years in current school since NQT
Amelia	Beaumont Primary	SENCO/SEN teacher 9 years' teaching experience 8 years in current school
Dan	Meadway Primary	Deputy Headteacher/Year 5 teacher 11 years' teaching experience 7 years in current school
Rosa	Meadway Primary	Year 5 teacher/Assistant Head 8 years in current school since NQT

Name (pseudonyms)	School (pseudonyms)	Biographical details
Caroline	Canbury Primary	Year 6 class teacher/ Assistant Head 8 years in current school since NQT
Tom	Canbury Primary	Year 6 teacher/ Maths co- ordinator 14 years in current school since NQT
Sian	Kingswood Primary	Assistant Head 10 years in current school since NQT
Penny	Farland Primary	Year 2 teacher (part time) 8 years in current school since NQT
Maria	Ridgeway Primary	Assistant Head/SEN co-ordinator 13 years' teaching experience 7 years in current school
Jack	Chesterfield Primary	Year 5 teacher/Assistant Head 8 years in current school
HEADTEACHERS		
David	Beaumont Primary	Acting Head for 1 term. Head for 25 years
Eva	Canbury Primary	Deputy Head for 3 years Head for 5 years
Graham	Ridgeway Primary	Deputy Head for 3 years Acting Head for 2 terms

Name (pseudonyms)	School (pseudonyms)	Biographical details
		Head for 5 years
John	Parkland Primary	Phase Leader for 2 years Deputy Head for 2 years Head for 6 years
Peter	Gainsborough Primary	Head for 6 years
FORMER STAYERS		
Freya	Creighton Primary Haverly Primary	11 years in Creighton from NQT then became Key Stage leader. Now in Haverly as Reception teacher and Curriculum Leader
Liz	Beaumont Primary	10 years in Beaumont as class teacher in EY, KS1 and KS2 Left London to raise her family
Paula	Parkland Primary Beaumont Primary as Deputy Head then Greenmount Primary	Left London after nearly 10 years' teaching. 7 years in Greenmount Primary in South of England.
RETIRED STAYERS		
Grace	Last school: over 20 years in Rainbridge Primary school.	Teacher for 40 years in inner London primary schools. Retired and living in London
Josephine	Headteacher at: Gateshill Primary and Maple Primary	Headteacher for 27 years 16 years at Gateshill Primary 11 years in Maple Primary school. Retired and living in London

4.6 Data Collection

4.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

I decided that the interview would be the most suitable method of data collection for my research. Interviewing would fit well with my conceptual framework of identity and motivation and would be compatible with my research questions. As Mason (2002) argues, the researcher needs to reflect carefully on the reasons why he or she may choose interviewing as method of data collection. A point which resonated with the aims of my research is Mason's (2002) assertion that: 'the researcher's ontological position suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations [...] are meaningful properties which your research questions are designed to explore' (p.63).

However, even having established that the interview would be a suitable method of data collection, there are several key issues to consider regarding the most appropriate form of interview to use. Silverman (2006) refers to four particular types of interview in qualitative research: the structured, semi-structured, open-ended and focus group interview. At one end of the spectrum is the structured interview where questions are answered rather than explored and discussed, and where data is reasonably easy to analyse (Bell, 2005; Burgess, 2006). In these interviews, there is an emphasis on maintaining objectivity by avoiding 'over-sociability' which can allegedly lead to bias (Burgess, 2006, p.84). At the other end of the spectrum is the unstructured or open-ended interview which can 'produce a wealth of valuable data' (Bell, 2005, p.161). However, unstructured interviews tend to be more challenging and time consuming to undertake as they need 'a great deal of expertise to control and a great deal of time to analyse' (Bell,

2005, p.161). According to Mason (2002) the 'qualitative interview' (p.62) usually means a semi-structured interview. She describes this form of interview as one which is relatively informal, somewhat akin to a dialogue or conversation and is characterised by its 'fluid and flexible' structure (p.62).

The intention of the qualitative interview isn't simply to 'excavate' knowledge from the interviewee but to 'operate with the model that knowledge is constructed' (Mason, 2002, p.68). Cohen et al. (2011) highlight this point by suggesting that the interview is 'part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable' (p.409). Such interviews are what Burgess (2004) refers to as 'conversations with a purpose' (p.84) and which Walford (2001) claims are 'invested with significance' (p.88). As a result, the interviewer must be highly skilled at conducting such interviews and have a 'high degree of intellectual and social skill' (Mason, 2002, p.74).

However, the qualitative interview can be subject to bias and subjectivity (Bell, 2005; Brannen, 1992; Cohen et al., 2011). It can be difficult to take a completely objective view in an interview because, 'the constraints of everyday life will be a part of whatever interpersonal transactions [the interviewer] initiates' (Cohen et al., 2011, p.410). Maxwell (1992) warns that interviews only give a snapshot of the participant's life and therefore interpretations of the participant's responses 'can easily lead to false inferences about his or her actions outside the interview situation' (p.294). Indeed Hammersley (2003) points to the potential problems involving what people say in an interview context, their attitudes and how they behave in other contexts.

Despite its limitations, the interview is very widely used in qualitative research because of its ‘richness and the scope of qualitative interviews’ (Kvale, 1996, p.2). This makes it a valuable method of gathering data and furthermore, it allows for more in-depth responses than other forms of data collection (Cohen et al., 2011). While Hammersley (2003) calls for greater caution to be used when collecting and analysing interview data, he does also suggest that researchers can over problematize interview data. While researchers need to be mindful of the problems involved in using interviews, they can still present ‘accurate representations’ of the data (Hammersley, 2003, p.123).

4.6.2 The Questions

I initially constructed two versions of my interview schedule: one for the current serving teacher stayers and one for the headteachers. For the participants who were former stayers, I used similar questions but asked the participants to reflect on them retrospectively. The questions for both interview schedules were constructed after having examined the literature for my topic. I used an aide-memoire as a guide, always bearing in mind the ‘big’ research question’ and then breaking it down to ‘mini’ research questions’ (Mason, 2002, p.69). I sequenced the questions by gathering factual information about the participant before asking more open-ended questions (see appendices D and E). Cohen et al. (2000) suggest constructing the questions so they move ‘from objective facts to subjective attitudes’ (p.257). The questions then began with the phrase ‘Can you tell me a bit about...?’ as suggested by Kvale (1996). These more open-ended questions had the effect of establishing a rapport with the participant as well as helping me to

collect examples of the participant's beliefs and attitudes (Cohen et al., 2011). In some cases, I needed to include further probes to gather more information about the answers given (Kvale, 1996). There were occasions where some questions had to be omitted in order to delve more deeply into an area which was particularly revealing. As Mason (2002) warns, interviewers may have to '[sacrifice] some breadth of coverage for depth on a particular issue in a particular case' (p.73). Although I did not technically select participants to pilot my interviews, I did 'try out' my interview schedule with two participants prior to interviewing the rest of the sample. After transcribing and reflecting on these interviews, I made some minor adjustments for the interviews with the rest of the sample.

4.6.3 The Interviews

I knew from previous experience of conducting semi-structured interviews (Towers, 2011) that building rapport between myself, as the interviewer, and the participant was crucial to the success of the interview. Shipman (1997) claims that depending on how the interview is conducted, it can 'increase rapport or sustain detachment' (p.85). As well as being highly attuned to the need for rapport with the participant, the interviewer needs to listen carefully to the participant's responses, analysing how they relate to previous responses and how this will inform the next question.

Prior to the interviews, I revisited the main themes from my reading of the literature. I had, therefore, some preconceived ideas about why teachers decide to stay teaching in their schools and some ideas on how teacher identity is constructed. As Cohen et al. (2000) argue, in qualitative research such as this,

there is often an ‘intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied’ (p.10). After my initial interviews, I decided not to alter the general structure and sequencing of the questions on my aide memoire. However, I did find myself sometimes ‘following up unanticipated leads from the subjects and of posing questions not prepared in advance’ (Kvale, 1996, p.113). This mostly occurred when asking questions about the participant’s identity, and in nearly half of the interviews, the subject of identity arose in the course of the interview before my prepared questions. After the first few interviews, I knew my questions so well, that I ceased referring to my aide memoire during the interview. I found that this helped the flow and flexibility of the interview and I felt a greater ease in exploring unexpected themes as they arose (Mason, 2002).

In some of the cases I knew the participants well from having worked with them for a number of years. In two cases (Stephanie and Amelia) the participants had also become friends of mine. Sikes (2000) draws on Grumet (1991) when talking about some of the pitfalls of knowing participants well. She quotes Grumet (1991) stating that ‘telling a story to a friend is a risky business: the better the friend, the riskier the business’ (Grumet, 1991, p.69 quoted in Sikes, 2000, p.265). Generally speaking, however, I had every reason to believe that the participants I knew well were being honest in their responses. However, given that much of the interview focussed on concepts relating to identity, I was mindful that my participants could have been concerned with ‘present[ing] themselves in what they believe will be seen as a favourable light’ (Sikes, 2000, p.265). Certainly, as Sikes (2000) suggests, for participants, telling their life stories (or in the case of my interviews,

their career-life stories) is an opportunity to ‘construct an identity’ (Sikes, 2000, p.264).

In the ‘search for truth’, how could I tell that my participants were being truthful? Walford (2001) is sceptical that participants tell the truth in such interviews and suggests that ‘it seems much more reasonable to expect people to lie about anything and everything that is of importance to them’ (p.90). I am trusting of my participants and believe that they answered my questions honestly. On a few occasions participants made general statements in answers to my questions and I was keen to explore these areas in further depth believing that I could elicit more informed responses through the use of probing questions and follow-up questions (Kvale, 1996). In fact, many participants revealed vulnerable and particularly sensitive aspects of their biographies, with a few becoming emotional during the course of the interview. Only on one occasion was a participant reluctant for me to use the tape recorder so I prepared to take notes by hand. However, after an initial chat with the participant and putting her at ease, she was happy to continue with the interview being recorded. However, I was aware that, as Bell (2005) claims, ‘the knowledge that the tape is running can sometimes inhibit honest responses’ (p.164). This matches Sikes’ (2000) suggestion that ‘extremely pertinent things [are] said as soon as the tape-recorder is switched off’ (p.266). Indeed in many cases, participants were keen to continue the discussion after the interview and talk more on the subject. If I felt more ‘pertinent’ things were being said, I always asked permission to use our conversation in my field notes.

4.7 Data analysis

My data analysis was guided by my knowledge and understanding of the research literature and also by aspects of identity and motivation theory. From the outset, my intention was to reflect the voices of the participants to understand why they choose to remain teaching in challenging London primary schools. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) state, the qualitative researcher aims to ‘step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective’ (p.16). My participants were invited to reveal aspects of their identity, to explain themselves in the context of their decisions. Perhaps, as MacLure suggests, the teachers found themselves ‘justifying, explaining and making sense of [their] conduct, career, values and circumstances’ (p.316). But as Shipman (1997) argues ‘humans are a slippery subject matter’ (p.7) as they are a part of a fluid, dynamic and often unpredictable social world. In what follows I will consider the steps I took when analysing the data starting with the transcription process. I will then discuss in more detail the coding procedures which I undertook before exploring how I dealt with themes which emerged from the analysis.

4.7.1 Transcriptions

I had two main reasons for deciding to transcribe the interviews myself. First, I believed that by studying the taped interview closely, I could pick up on nuances which I may have missed in the actual interview. Mason (2002) warns that undertaking transcriptions is a ‘very large commitment of time and resources’ (p.78). Walford (2001) agrees, pointing out that one hour of the spoken word generally corresponds to five hours of typing. However, Walford (2001) disagrees

that transcribing interviews allows the interview to engage more intimately with the data, for, in his view, the researcher is more concerned in typing what is actually being said, rather than paying attention to what the interviewee is saying. He suggests analysing the data directly from the recording because the words on the paper do not entirely correspond with the interview experience. This point is borne out by Silverman (2006) who suggests the transcription process ‘may be gravely weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, but often crucial pauses and overlaps’ (p.287). Although I agree that the transcription is not ‘an objective record of [the] interview’ (Mason, 2002, p.77), the process of transcribing my interviews meant that the interview had often to be played and then re-played phrase by phrase. During the transcription processes, I often had new insights and ideas on the themes discussed in the interviews.

The other practical reason for transcribing the interviews myself, was to reduce the cost which would be involved in employing another person to do the job. As a sole researcher with limited resources, this reason cannot be underestimated. Ultimately, whether the interview is transcribed by the researcher or not, there cannot be a ‘single ‘correct’ transcription’ (Cohen et al., 2000, p.282). The important issue is whether the transcription can be used effectively for the intended research.

4.7.2 Coding

Merriam (2009) believes that analysing qualitative data is done ‘simultaneously with data collection’ (p.171). I began coding my data soon after having transcribed my first interviews. Corbin and Strauss (2008) liken the coding

process to ‘‘mining’ the data’ and uncovering ‘hidden treasures contained within the data’ (p.66). In effect the coding process takes ‘raw data and rais[es] it to a conceptual level’ (Corbin and Strauss 2008, p.66). I read the transcript of each interview thoroughly prior to beginning the coding process in order to become more familiar with the interview I was working on. I initially attempted to use the NVivo software programme to undertake open coding whereby I assigned codes to pieces of data. However, I moved away from using NVivo after the initial stages of open coding with my first set of interviews because I preferred instead to work on hard copies of the transcripts (see Appendix F for coded transcript). Creswell (2007) suggests that for some researchers a computer program ‘may cause an uncomfortable distance between the researcher and his or her information’ (p.202). However, I did use NVivo to ascertain word and phrase frequency and created some ‘word trees’ which helped me view the spoken words from another perspective.

The open coding stage of my data analysis involved writing notes on the transcripts, before combining my codes into categories. Initially my supervisor also carried out some open coding of one of my interviews. This process enabled me to check my coding process with my supervisor and then discuss in detail my initial findings. In these first stages of the coding process, I was able to note patterns and recurrent themes across some of the interviews. For example, it became evident that my participants were influenced by their own educational experiences to choose a career in teaching, and that ‘making a difference’ to children in their schools featured in nearly every case. I identified a wide range of descriptive and conceptual codes during this process, reflecting Merriam’s (2009)

assertion that the process of data analysis is a complex one and ‘involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts’ (p.179).

However, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) point out, the coding process is ‘more than just noting concepts in the margins’ (p.66). I began the process of axial coding, an inductive process where I grouped my open codes into categories. After sorting my data into categories, I analysed the data again and in some cases the coding needed to be modified and categories refined. By repeating and amending my analysis, I was attempting to ensure that there was a ‘consistency, refinement, modification and exhaustiveness of coding’ (Cohen et al., 2000, p.149). However, Corbin and Strauss (2008) caution that the researcher should not become so entrenched in following the coding procedures that ‘the fluid and dynamic nature of qualitative analysis is lost’ (p.12). On the other hand, Cohen et al. (2000) warn that the analysis of interview data is ‘interpretive’ (p.282) hence it is important to be mindful of the potential for the data to be just ‘interpretations of a social encounter’ (p.282). The key task in analysing the data was to strike a balance between following clear coding procedures while accepting that complete objectivity in qualitative research cannot be achieved (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

The theoretical frameworks which guide my study also influenced the way in which I constructed my data categories. For example, my theoretical framework (identity and motivation) informed the creation of my coding maps that I constructed to help interpret my data on a conceptual level. Here I separated my findings into five areas from which I could lay out the themes which I had drawn from the data and then ‘detect patterns, themes and begin to make generalizations’

(Cohen et al., 2000, p.284) about the data. The five code maps I constructed focused on: Seeing self as a teacher – the beginnings (appendix G); Influences on Teacher Identity (appendix H); Teacher Identity (Personal and Professional) (appendix I); ‘Putting on a Show’ (appendix J); Merging and Separate identities (appendix K). Although I present my completed code maps, I acknowledge that the coding process has been an iterative one. However, at the very least, by presenting the data in five different ways I could then begin to ‘take steps towards ‘drawing conclusions’’ from the data (Bell, 2005, p.214).

4.7.3 Themes/categories

As the aim of my research was to reflect the voice of the participants, I took a thematic approach akin to a grounded theory approach which allowed the themes to emerge. However, I discovered, not surprisingly, that a number of themes which emerged from the participants’ voices related to the literature I had examined and the questions I had asked. Some of these themes were similar to the ones which emerged in the analysis of my previous MA dissertation (Towers, 2011). For example, the value which the participants placed on the children as a reason to remain in their schools featured prominently. This relates to a wide range of studies on teacher motivation (for example: Frankenberg et al., 2010; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Nias, 1989; Stanford, 2001). Similarly the importance of a collegial atmosphere in the participants’ schools was a key reason many gave for staying in their jobs. This related to studies which I had examined on this area (for example: Cockburn and Hayden, 2004; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Whately, 1998). However a contradictory theme emerged in my data, which did not appear in the literature, where one participant claimed that she

stayed in her school despite unfriendly colleagues, and one teacher claimed she stayed even though she did not like the senior management team. Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that preconceived ideas about what themes to expect in the data should be abandoned so the researcher can let 'the data and interpretation of it guide analysis' (p.160) I acknowledge, however that this can be difficult to achieve in practice.

4.7.4 Writing up - using vignettes

The writing up of my research was a key aspect of my research process. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that in the writing up process, the 'form of our reports and representations is as powerful and significant as their content' (p.109). When writing up my data chapters 5 and 7, I chose to represent 8 of my participants' extended stories and experiences in the form of vignettes. Using vignettes to represent qualitative data can be a useful tool to bring what Ritchie et al. (2013) describe as a 'degree of specificity to the discussion which can be valuable, helping to highlight the boundaries or contingencies of people's beliefs and actions' (p.166). In qualitative research, vignettes can be used as a tool in data collection. For example, vignettes in written or pictorial form can be presented to participants to 'elicit responses to typical scenarios' (Hill, 1997, p.177). Vignettes can be also employed to help participants discuss potentially sensitive issues pertaining to their experiences (Barter and Reynold, 1999). Essentially the vignette is an illustrative story which provides a rounded and holistic picture of what is being explored. The vignette is certainly a useful technique 'for exploring people's perceptions, beliefs and meanings about specific situations' (Barter and Reynold, 1999, n.p.). In my research I have chosen to use vignettes in the

presentation of my data. Indeed, there were some key reasons why I chose to represent some of my stayers' stories in the form of vignettes. First, I was keen to present my participants' stories in context where the reader could appreciate the individual contexts and personal narratives of the stayers as much as possible. I was influenced by research literature on teachers' lives such as Rinke (2012) and Hunter-Quartz et al. (2010) who employed vignettes, or pen portraits, to provide detailed holistic accounts of their participants' career decisions.

My research relies on the participants' narratives to help make sense of their teacher identity construction (Sfard and Prusak, 2005), and representing their career stories more fully fits the purposes of my research. Wright and McCarthy's (2008) work on what they term 'portraiture' in qualitative research can be applied to the use of what I describe as vignettes. This is because they argue that this approach can 'minimize the risks of stereotyping' and 'ensure(s) that attention remains focused on the diversity of people in the target group throughout the process' (p.640). Indeed in my writing through producing these vignettes, it became apparent that staying is highly individualised and the stayers are an internally differentiated and heterogenous group of teachers. As Hughes (1998) suggests, vignettes are stories about individuals as well as situations and structures which can 'make reference to important points in the study of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes' (p.381). The vignettes in my study have served to make connections and patterns in the data in a more coherent and meaningful way through the use of story-telling.

4.8 Ethical considerations

I ensured that I followed the required procedures in obtaining ethical permission to undertake the study. This research study was carried out with Ethical Approval from King's College London (The Social Sciences, Humanities and Law Research Ethics Subcommittee: Education and Management Research Ethics Panel, REC Reference Number: REP(EM)/12/13-6, See appendix A). As well as adhering to the guidelines set out in the King's College London Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research, I also conducted my research according to the BERA (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. I ensured that participants all received the information sheet (see Appendix B) as well as a consent form (see Appendix C) which gave a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity for the participants. The information sheet and consent form were emailed to the participants more than 24 hours in advance. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research process any time up until the final draft writing of the dissertation. Participants were contacted either by telephone or email prior to receiving the information sheet so I could outline some details of what the research entailed. Bell (2005) suggests that the researcher should ensure that there is 'careful preparation involving explanation and consultation before any data collecting begins' (p.45). Prior to beginning the interview process itself, I also reminded participants of what my research entailed. Participants were also informed that any information about them would be stored in a secure location.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) assert that following procedural ethics alone is not sufficient for it does not address the other 'ethically important moments in

qualitative research' (p.262). There are issues involving confidentiality, informed consent and the consequences of interviewing. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity relies on the honesty of the interviewer. As Bridges (1989) suggests, 'honesty and openness in any relationship are supported by and demand reciprocal obligations' (p.145). However, even if ethical procedures have been adhered to, Delamont (2002) suggests that 'moral dilemmas' (p.81) can arise in areas where least expected. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) caution the researcher to prepare for such unexpected moments, for the University ethics procedures cannot necessarily help the researcher in the field when such moments arise. In situating ethical considerations in specific contexts, Simons and Usher (2000) argue that the researcher acts in response to the individual involved in the research rather than on 'ethical principles and codes' (p.11). Thus in the interview context the researcher may encounter ethical issues which may not necessarily be covered by universal codes of practice.

An example of such an ethical issue is the use of leading questions. Kvale (1996) suggests that there are situations where leading questions are needed, such as when the interviewer may be aware that the participant is being less than honest in his or her responses. However, leading questions also make 'assumptions about interviewees' (Cohen et al., 2000, p.122). This can limit the choice the participant has in answering the question in the way he or she wishes. As the interviewer generally holds the power in an interview situation (Cohen et al., 2000), by using leading questions, the researcher may take advantage of the power they hold. It is therefore important to be mindful of how such questioning is used. As Foster (1989) suggests, the researcher's perceptions of participants can be influenced by

their ‘own biographies and the way [they] have come to see the world and [their] position in it’ (p.196). In such situations, the interviewer may potentially cause the participants harm by persisting with a line of questioning which the participant is not comfortable with. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) claim such harm is ‘often quite subtle and stem[s] from the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant’ (p.274). One way to address ethical dilemmas through the research process is by adopting a reflexive approach to the ethical dimension of the research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). The authors explain what this entails:

Being reflexive in an ethical sense means acknowledging and being sensitized to the microethical dimensions of research practice and in doing so, being alert and prepared for ways of dealing with ethical tensions that arise. (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004, p.278).

Such reflexivity is an on-going process and as such cannot always be resolved. However, the researcher is encouraged to practice what Mason (2002) refers to as ‘active reflexivity’ (p.7) throughout every aspect and stage of the research process which would ensure at the very least the researcher can be as honest as possible in the given circumstances.

4.9 My role as the researcher

My position as a researcher is defined by my identity ‘in relation to [my] participants and data’ (Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer, 2011, p.380). In my case, my position incorporated both etic (outsider–researcher) and emic (insider–researcher) perspectives (Lapan et al., 2011). This is because I am a former stayer. So while I understand the perspective of the stayers, I was no longer teaching in a

challenging urban primary school when I conducted the interviews, so I was positioned outside of that context. In terms of how I positioned myself in the interviewing process, all the participants knew my history and therefore were aware that I had an in-depth understanding of the situations in which they worked. However, even though I shared similar career experiences with many of my participants, there was no avoiding the clear interviewer- interviewee relationship. As Kvale (1996) suggests it is ‘not the reciprocal interaction of 2 equal partners’ (p.126).

In the case of those participants I know well, I was mindful of the fact that my role as the interviewer could potentially ‘involve a tension between a professional distance and a personal friendship’ (Kvale, 2008, p.29). To address this, I ensured that when interviewing these participants, I established an interview ‘environment’ where I adopted a clear interviewer role by placing a recording device between us and taking notes during the interview. This helped maintain a certain ‘professional distance’ during the course of the interview. As discussed in 4.6.3, when interviewing my participants, there was the chance that they may have wanted to cast themselves in a favourable light and therefore could have been less forthcoming with honest responses. Conversely, my participants may have been more honest with me *because* of my researcher/stayer background. For example, it may be that Graham would not have told his harrowing story about being attacked by a parent, or Peter may not have admitted to his angry outbursts at a challenging parent to another researcher.

My position as a researcher but also as a former stayer meant that these experiences affected how I approached the data analysis. Corbin and Strauss (2008) talk about qualitative researchers drawing on their own experiences when analysing data. In fact they suggest that a researcher who has a similar professional experience to that of the participants is able to ‘understand the significance of some things more quickly’ as well as ‘enhance sensitivity’ (p.33). This can also help in ensuring that the conclusions that the researcher arrives at are grounded more fully in the data as, they explain, ‘sensitivity enables a researcher to grasp meaning and respond intellectually (and emotionally) to what is being said in the data’ (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.41). There are of course potential pitfalls of being so closely connected to what is being researched and there may be the temptation to ‘showcase [...] confessional tales about yourself’ (Mason, 2002, p.5). However, if the researcher maintains self-criticality and reflexivity throughout the research process, then, according to Mason (2000) their knowledge of the field can illuminate the research problem.

Nevertheless it is important to acknowledge that given my own research positionality, there are some potential limits to data authenticity. To confront this issue, I was mindful of being reflexive throughout the research process; indeed this was a key concern of mine. As previously mentioned, Mason (2002) emphasises the crucial role of reflexivity as well as ‘critical self-scrutiny’ by the researcher (p.7). I had some preconceived ideas about the reasons for staying and the identities of the stayers I was researching, having been one myself. This meant, that I had to be rigorous at checking those biases throughout the process. I had to challenge my ‘own assumptions, and recognis(e) the extent to which [my]

thoughts, actions and decisions shape how [I] research and what [I] see' (Mason, 2002, p.5). This was particularly the case during the analysis of the interviews and arriving at an explanation of the data. Such reflexivity is vital particularly if I am to gain the trust of my readership audience and ensure credibility in my outcomes. Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) emphasise the need for integrity. Demonstrating integrity through critical reflection, ensures that the research is more likely to be 'grounded within the data' (p.531). This also involves ensuring that where there is any discrepant data, that such reflexivity is robustly employed.

4.10 Chapter summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how I have framed my study using the theoretical perspectives of identity and motivation. These perspectives not only helped clarify my research questions, but also informed my methodological choices and data analysis. My examination of the methodological literature has also guided my choice of a qualitative approach and helped explain why I believe conducting semi-structured interviews is best suited to explore my research questions. As I have previously discussed, I acknowledge that following a qualitative research approach has its limitations, but I believe the benefits of using this approach has outweighed any disadvantages as it has yielded a particularly rich and in-depth set of data. While my participants' voices lie at the heart of my study, theoretical perspectives have helped in formulating categories and themes with which to make sense of my data.

As well as following ethical guidelines, I have also attempted to take into consideration other ethical issues which have arisen throughout the research

process. I have identified the importance of employing self-criticality and reflexivity in the process of searching for representations of my participants' stories. Identity is a fluid, shifting and highly complex concept that cannot be straightforwardly represented in findings of research such as mine. Indeed, I cannot guarantee I can represent my participants' realities with complete certainty, but by exercising reflexivity, honesty and integrity throughout the research process, I can in good faith present what I perceive to be as accurate and reliable a representation of the participants' stories as possible. My chosen methods have, I believe, empowered the individual stayer's voice and has provided an opportunity for them to construct a stayer narrative.

Chapter 5

Motivation and Identity: The origins of stayers... and why they stay

5.1 Introduction

I begin my series of analysis chapters with an exploration of my participants' early 'beginnings'. This chapter explores two strands of the stayers' identities: their identities prior to becoming teachers ('pre-teacher' identities) and their subsequent *stayer* identities. I will start by considering how the stayers' early beginnings influenced their motivations to become teachers. I then explore how these teachers' identities have evolved over time to become, what I have termed, their 'stayer identity'. Next, I examine how the stayer's identity has influenced their reasons for staying in the same school.

In this chapter I draw on 18 of the 24 in-depth interviews I conducted. I will only consider the responses from the teachers and not the 5 headteachers and retired headteacher. Headteachers are excluded from my analysis in this chapter because I chose to focus on their beginnings prior to becoming *headteachers* rather than prior to becoming *teachers* (see chapter 6). Of the 18 participants, 14 are currently serving 'stayers' in London primary schools. The 4 remaining former stayer participants are made up of 2 'movers', 1 'leaver' and 1 retiree (see Table 4.1 in chapter 4). All of the participants have at one point stayed in their disadvantaged London primary schools for at least 5 years. Drawing from research by Kukla-Acevedo (2009) and Smithers and Robinson (2003), I define the 'leaver' as a teacher who has 'left teaching altogether' (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009, p.445), while

the ‘mover’ is one who has ‘switched schools but remained in teaching’ (p.445). In my sample, one mover, Paula, left her post as a deputy head in a London primary school to become a class teacher in a (disadvantaged) primary school in south east England, where she has stayed for 7 years. The other mover, Freya, left her class teacher post in a disadvantaged London school where she stayed for 11 years to go to another nearby primary school where the disadvantage is even more acute. At the time of the interview, Freya had been in post at her new school for over a year. The ‘leaver’, Liz, left teaching to bring up her children outside of the city. Liz had stayed at her primary school in London for 10 years before leaving.

Based on the responses of these 18 participants (see Table 5.1) about their initial motivations for choosing to teach, I have constructed a typology based on their reasons for becoming teachers (Cohen et al., 2011). From coding and analysing their interviews, I categorised their motivations for deciding to teach into four categories: ‘Born-to-teach’, ‘Pragmatic Choosers’, ‘Making a difference’ and ‘Resisters’. Below, I discuss in further detail how I constructed these categories. I also present an overview of what each category means in terms of the stayers’ decisions to teach and briefly consider a selection of my participants’ beginnings (‘pre-teacher’ lives). Next I present short vignettes (5.3.1, 5.4.1, 5.5.1, 5.6.1) of one stayer from each category and examine their career trajectory from their early beginnings to their identification as stayers in their schools. The individual stayers I have selected for the vignettes are ones whose experiences served to ‘contain precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in [their] decision making or judgement making...’ (Lee, 1993, p.79 cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p.176). Within these vignettes, I will consider: first, how the stayers’ early

beginnings shaped their early (pre-teacher) identities; second, how their beginnings influenced their motivations to teach and third, if their early beginnings and early motivations influenced their reasons to stay in their schools. I also consider if the participants display a *stayer* identity and if this identity is shaped by those early beginnings.

Table 5.1 Featured participants in analytical categories

<i>Name and Role</i>	<i>School and number of years in school</i>
‘Born to teach’	
Caroline Year 6 class teacher/Assistant Head	Canbury Primary School (Stayer for 8 years)
Freya Reception class teacher	‘Mover’ from Creighton Primary (11 years) to Haverly Primary (1 year to date)
‘Pragmatic Choosers’	
Alice Early Years’ Leader and Reception teacher (part time).	Beaumont Primary (Stayer for 10 years)
Amelia SENCO and SEN teacher	Beaumont Primary (Stayer for 8 years)
Stephanie Assistant Head (Joint role/part time)	Beaumont Primary (Stayer for 11 years)
Stella Assistant Head (Joint role)	Beaumont Primary (Stayer 7 years)
Rosa Year 5 teacher/Assistant Head	Meadway Primary (Stayer 8 years)
Tom Year 6 teacher/Maths Co-ordinator	Canbury Primary (Stayer 14 years)
Penny	Farland Primary

<i>Name and Role</i>	<i>School and number of years in school</i>
Year 2 teacher (part time)	(Stayer 8 years)
Jack Year 5 Teacher/Assistant Head	Chesterfield Primary (Stayer 8 years)
Maria Assistant Head/SENCO	Ridgeway Primary (Stayer 7 years)
Liz (Leaver)	Beaumont Primary (stayed for 10 years)
Grace (retired)	40 years in London primary schools. Last school before retiring: Rainbridge Primary (stayed over 20 years)
‘Making a difference’	
Dan Deputy Head/Year 5 Teacher	Meadway Primary (Stayer 7 years)
Mary Year 2 class teacher	Beaumont Primary (Stayer 6 years)
‘Resisters’	
Sian Assistant Head	Kingswood Primary (Stayer 10 years)
Isabelle Year 1 class teacher/MFL leader	Beaumont Primary (Stayer 6 years)
Paula (Mover) Part-time Year 6 teacher	Former Deputy Head at Beaumont Primary. Now in Greenmount Primary (South East England – stayer 7 years)

5.2 Rationale for grouping and constructing typologies

Among the key themes which emerged from the initial open coding of my data was one relating to the participants’ early (pre-teacher) beginnings. The teachers’ pre-teacher beginnings go back to their own childhoods, where I explored if

family and other social influences had a bearing on their subsequent decisions to become teachers. In a coding map (see appendix G) entitled ‘Seeing the self as a teacher – the beginnings’, I recorded emergent themes into three columns entitled: ‘Motivations’, ‘Early Memories’, ‘Other Influences’. Much of the literature attests to the important role that teachers’ early influences, beliefs and values play in their decisions to teach (for example: Alsup, 2006; Day et al., 2006b; Giddens, 1991; Nias, 1989). Therefore I suggest that there is a story to be told about the stayers’ early beginnings as a key factor in why they remain teaching in challenging schools.

People’s motivations for teaching can be numerous, complex and not necessarily clear-cut. When I asked my participants why they chose to become teachers, I expected to receive more than one reason, having found this to be the case in a previous study of mine (Towers, 2011). I recognise, though, that participants’ views do not necessarily fit into the neat categories as set out by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2011). For the purposes of my analysis, however, I decided to use the stayers’ main reason for choosing to teach which, in most of the cases, was their initial response to the question: ‘Why did you decide to become a teacher?’ I constructed a typology where each group was identified by a common attribute (Kluge, 2000), which, in the case of my participants, was the initial reason they gave for becoming a teacher. I categorised my participants into four distinct groups on this basis, three of which related to the altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic categories which I discussed in Chapter 2. One discrepant group, which I chose to examine, reflected alternative motivations which lay outside altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (Olsen, 2008). This group, as I will discuss later, was

characterised by an initial resistance to follow a path into teaching. As Huberman (1993) found, teachers have a number of reasons for choosing to teach, and my participants were no different. Even though in many cases participants gave additional reasons for wanting to teach, in what follows I will be primarily focusing on what the teachers highlighted as being their principal reason for choosing to teach, that is, their beginnings.

Cohen et al., (2011) suggest ‘analysis is, for a large part, intuitive and requires trusting the self to make the right decisions’ (p.71). I acknowledge that even though I have decided to use these particular categories, they are not exhaustive in understanding why my participants chose to teach; another researcher may interpret the data differently. However, these categories serve to function as a workable frame against which I can explore my participants’ beginnings and subsequent career decisions.

5.3 ‘Born to Teach’

The first group I consider is made up of two participants who gave intrinsic reasons for wanting to teach (see Table 5.2). Their principal reasons for wanting to teach were: the desire to do the actual ‘job activity itself’ (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000, p.17) and the desire to work with children (Bielby et al., 2007). These stayers have always wanted to be teachers ever since they can remember so I have named this group the ‘Born to teach’ group.

Table 5.2 'Born to Teach' stayers

<i>Name and Role</i>	<i>School and number of years in school</i>
Caroline Year 6 class teacher/Assistant Head	Canbury Primary School (Stayer for 8 years)
Freya Reception class teacher	'Mover' from Creighton Primary (11 years) to Haverly Primary (1 year to date)

In Nias's (1989) study of nearly 100 primary school teachers, she found that a minority of teachers' identities were 'rooted in childhood' (p.41). I found a similar pattern among my participants. Freya and Caroline claimed they had always wanted to be teachers since childhood. Both had early memories of 'playing school' and enjoyed being around young children. One of these is a 'stayer' and one is a 'mover'. Smithers and Robinson (2003) categorised a 'mover' as someone who left their school to take a post in another maintained school. Freya, the 'mover', who had been a stayer in a large challenging primary school for 11 years, recently left her school to go to another (even more) disadvantaged primary school nearer her home. At the time of interviewing, she had been in her new school for one year. She claimed she never wanted to do anything else but teach, saying:

Apparently when I was three or four, I used to line my teddies up and take the register [...] then when I was 13 or 14 I'd help the young kids in the street with their reading and writing and the parents would give me pocket money for it (Freya).

Like Freya, Caroline 'always wanted to be a teacher' and recalls early memories of 'playing school' in detail:

I used to spend my days teaching my teddies and dolls in my house when I was little. I used to go and pick up brochures in the tourist office to teach 'my children' about it (Caroline).

In Freya and Caroline's teacher role-playing, they were already exploring an early sense of a teacher identity. Mitchell and Weber (1999) discuss how such memories 'provide insights into how childhood experience contributes to adult identity' (p.11). The influences of early experience on occupational choice can be found in other empirical studies such as one conducted by Olsen (2008) with 6 early career English teachers in urban schools in Los Angeles. Olsen (2008) reported that many of his participants recalled 'playing school' in their childhoods, which involved them 'mimicking images of teaching they received from their own female teachers' (p.28). However, there is a danger of 'over-reading' the stories Caroline and Freya told of their teddies and dolls. These memories may well simply act 'as a type of signposting for events to come' (Mitchell and Weber, 1999, p.10). It could be that Caroline and Freya's stories of 'playing school' are a way of contributing to their sense that they were destined to be teachers (Mitchell and Weber, 1999).

Nevertheless, I argue that in talking about their early memories, Freya and Caroline highlight the role that personal narratives play in helping them construct their teacher identities (Pearce and Morrison, 2011; Sfard and Prusak, 2005). Freya's personal narrative may have meant that a young sense of her 'teacher self' had become ingrained so that even when she was discouraged to go into teaching by a university tutor, she still decided to do a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate of Education). After qualifying, she made a conscious decision to work in a

disadvantaged primary school because she wanted to ‘make a difference’ and ‘work with those kids that a lot of people give up on’. In contrast, Caroline was encouraged in her career choice as she came from a family of teachers and said, ‘I’ve been surrounded by teachers forever [so] it was in-built’ and she added, ‘I don’t know whether you inherit those things or if my mum brainwashed me as a child’.

Both Freya and Caroline reported intrinsic reasons for wanting to be teachers; they both loved children and loved the idea of being teachers. Freya also had an altruistic reason for deliberately choosing to teach in a disadvantaged school. She appeared to have what Giddens (1991) calls a ‘robust’ self-identity which can withstand challenges to it such as her university tutor ‘trying to put [her] off teaching’. It may well be that those early motivations to be a teacher have sustained Freya’s career so far and now into her current London primary school where the challenges are even greater.

I will explore this first category of ‘stayer’ in more detail by examining Caroline’s story. What follows is a short vignette which explores how Caroline’s beginnings influenced her teacher identity as a stayer in Canbury Primary School, a large school serving some of the most socially deprived children of the borough.

5.3.1 Vignette of Caroline: ‘Born to Teach’

‘The children are at the heart of everything’ (Caroline)

Caroline always wanted to teach ever since she could remember. She said: ‘there was no doubt in me that I wanted to do anything else. I had a real conviction’. She

does not recall having discussions with her family about wanting to be a teacher; it was, as she explained just 'in-built'. It was as if her identity as a teacher was already in the process of being constructed. Manuel and Hughes (2006) in their study on teacher motivations of trainee teachers in Australia suggest that the motivation to teach, such as in Caroline's case, may be the result of some 'aspects of the subjective inner landscape of the individual' (p.11). In other words, it could be that Caroline has in some way always identified with being a teacher. This idea of an 'inner landscape' being influential in Caroline's early identity can also be seen in Olsen's (2008) study. When discussing his participants' stories of 'playing school', Olsen (2008) argues that perhaps their early experiences growing up in teaching families 'may very well have planted in their young, developing identities some deep images of who teaches (and how, and why).' (p.28).

Caroline communicated a passion and deep commitment to the children she teaches, to her school and to her role as a teacher. Although she did not deliberately choose to work in a disadvantaged school, she realized when she arrived for her job interview at Canbury Primary that: 'I loved it. Just the vibe of it and that was when I thought 'This is where I want to be'. And then I got the job and that was it. And I haven't left!'

It is as if she found a home in her school, an environment that reflected her beliefs and values. In Beijaard's (1995) research with secondary school teachers in the Netherlands, he found that among other considerations one crucial determinant of a teacher's commitment to their job was the influence of the school environment. This is exemplified in Caroline's case, where the ethos of the school aligns

closely with her sense of self so she finds it easy to 'be herself' in her work. Nias (1989) discusses the importance of teachers being true to themselves. She found that the majority of the teachers she interviewed for her research believed that adopting a teacher identity was 'simply to 'be yourself' in the classroom' (p.181).

When asked if she sees herself differently in terms of her personal identity and professional identity, Caroline stated clearly. 'I think I'm the same in and out. I'm me and that's what they get. I'm not a different person at work than I am outside of work. I'm me and here I'm me too'. Caroline described herself as being 'passionate, approachable [...] friendly and loving'. For Caroline now, the children are 'at the heart of everything' she does. She talked about the intake of her school where children often come with 'very traumatic home lives, who have seen things that they should never have seen at the age that they are'. She talked about how 'hugely underprivileged' they were and about the chaos the children lived in:

There are ones that live with their seven cousins and all their aunties and their dads – you ask them who they're living with and they give you a different answer every day.

When asked if the children she teaches have influenced her she said, 'I think they make me a little bit of who I am. Because I am a very cheery, happy person, because they make me happy on a day-to-day basis'.

The children appear to reinforce her best qualities. Her motives for entering a teaching career were essentially intrinsic, however since teaching in Canbury Primary, she has invested a great deal of her 'self' in seeing the children she

teaches achieve and being happy. 'I know this sounds clichéd but I'm like their mum'. Stanford (2001) also found in her study of urban teachers in Washington that her participants expressed their 'love of and commitment to children, especially "these" children' (p.81). Out of all the participants interviewed, Caroline uses the term 'love' the most frequently – 20 times in total throughout the interview which is on average four times more than the other participants in their interviews.

This theme of love features significantly in Nieto's (2001, 2003) studies on what motivates teachers to stay in the profession. Nieto (2001) highlighted how the teachers in her study who stayed teaching in high-poverty urban schools in the United States were 'people who have a passion for teaching and [...] who unabashedly love their students and hold high expectations of them' (p.9). Caroline echoed this belief when she said:

It's all about expectations [...] I've had some children in here who have been in some horrendous schools, and they were really hard children [but] they had potential, you just had to see it. You have to give them time, so when you've built that relationship, you're already half-way there.

Caroline's commitment to the children is a key factor in why she chooses to stay at Canbury. From what she says, her relationship with the children plays a central role in the construction of her teacher identity. Nias (1989) talks about a person's teacher identity evolving over time. I think that perhaps Caroline had an early sense of her *teacher* identity when she first became a teacher. However, this teacher identity has continued to be shaped and reshaped during her time at

Canbury. What I believe has emerged over time is a powerful aspect of Caroline's teacher identity, which I call her '*stayer* identity'.

5.3.2 Caroline's stayer identity

Caroline's stayer identity is inextricably linked to Canbury Primary and her initial conviction to want to become a teacher has, if anything, strengthened during her time at Canbury. This conviction manifests itself as a commitment to the particular type of children she teaches in her particular type of school. She is staying for the most part for "these" children. Therefore *staying* is connected to the special relationship she has with the children.

Another strand of her stayer identity involves concepts of stability and continuity. Caroline places great importance on the notion of stability and is uncompromising about its effect on the children and their parents. She explained: 'The people who live here, whether it's children or adults, need a constant in their life. And *we* are it'. Caroline aligns herself with the stability of the school and displays a loyalty to the children and the community through being a stable force in the life of the school. In McIntyre's (2010) study of long serving teachers in disadvantaged secondary schools in northern England, she identified that, 'they are bound by ties of loyalty and professionalism to a particular community' (p.611). The stability of Canbury Primary - the rock which holds the children and their parents together amid the chaos of life - is a theme Caroline returns to. For her being a stayer is vitally important for she embodies that sense of stability explaining:

They don't have a constant in their life [...] we're the only thing that stays the same. And I think it's important for the

parents too [...] we are the only thing that is a stability for them and their child.

The fact that she had just been appointed an assistant head the day before my interview with her confirms her commitment to the school as well as the school's commitment to her. In fact Caroline raises the theme of stability once again when talking about the management team. She explained that an excellent headteacher and leadership team 'gives you stability as a team and it gives the children stability too'. Caroline articulates a *stayer* identity through her language of stability and continuity and in particular her commitment to a hard-to-teach school.

When reflecting on Caroline's career story, it becomes apparent that she has what Nias (1989) refers to as a 'stable sense of identity' (p.297). This core identity or 'substantial self' (p.20) is generally impervious to change. Caroline appeared to always have a strong sense of self and a clear teacher identity. This teacher identity may have been an early construction from her childhood where she grew up in a family of teachers and where she frequently engaged in 'teacher role-play'. It is Caroline's sense of conviction which seems to be the common thread which links her initial motivations for wanting to teach, to committing to an urban school and then deciding to remain there. In conjunction with her commitment to the children comes a deep attachment to the people who work in Canbury Primary, many who are now her personal friends, including Canbury's headteacher. She also identifies with the community which Canbury serves. What I have described as a *stayer* identity is shaped by Caroline's conviction but also is

characterized by commitment and stability as well as the love of the children she teaches who pass year on year through the school.

In the next section, I consider a group of teachers who reported predominantly extrinsic motivations for deciding to teach. First I give a brief overview of the group's common characteristics and then follow up with a short vignette of one particular 'Pragmatic Chooser', Alice. I have chosen to analyse Alice's story for she exemplifies how a teacher's initial extrinsic motivations for deciding to teach can evolve and shift throughout the course of their career.

5.4 'Pragmatic Choosers'

The second group of participants I examine chose to teach for predominantly extrinsic reasons (see Table 5.3). I have termed these stayers the 'Pragmatic Choosers'. I have adopted this descriptor from Maguire et al. (2006) who used this term to categorise participants from their study of urban teachers who had chosen to teach largely for extrinsic reasons. This category of stayers make up the largest group of participants.

Table 5.3 'Pragmatic Choosers' stayers

Name and Role	School and number of years in school.
Alice Early Years' Leader and Reception teacher (part time).	Beaumont Primary (Stayer for 10 years)
Amelia SENCo and SEN teacher	Beaumont Primary (Stayer for 8 years)

Name and Role	School and number of years in school.
Stephanie Assistant Head (Joint role/part time)	Beaumont Primary (Stayer for 11 years)
Stella Assistant Head (Joint role)	Beaumont Primary (Stayer 7 years)
Rosa Year 5 teacher/Assistant Head	Meadway Primary (Stayer 8 years)
Tom Year 6 teacher/Maths Co-ordinator	Canbury Primary (Stayer 14 years)
Penny Year 2 teacher (part time)	Farland Primary (Stayer 8 years)
Jack Year 5 Teacher/Assistant Head	Chesterfield Primary (Stayer 8 years)
Maria Assistant Head/SENCO	Ridgeway Primary (Stayer 7 years)
Liz (Leaver)	Beaumont Primary (stayed for 10 years)
Grace (retired)	40 years in London primary schools. Last school before retiring: Rainbridge Primary (stayed over 20 years)

When asked what motivated them to enter teaching in the first place, most of the 11 participants in this category reported wanting a stable and secure career; one participant suggested she wanted a job which allowed opportunities to travel; and one participant chose to teach as a stepping stone to becoming an educational psychologist.

The additional reasons the ‘Pragmatic Choosers’ gave for entering a teaching career included: enjoying being with children; doing something that was

meaningful and made a difference; and doing something that they would enjoy. Of these 11 participants, 8 of them either came from teaching families, had memories of being around younger children and/or fond memories of primary school and former teachers. For example, Amelia never had any desire to be a teacher when she was growing up as she always wanted to be an actress. But in her late twenties, when her acting career did not work out, she did not know what to do so she began to look for a career which would afford her some stability and structure. Someone suggested teaching to her which she then became excited about doing because as she said:

I was always really good with children having been brought up with my mum as a registered child minder and generally always found it easy being with children and I'd been a nanny and knew that I enjoyed working with them (Amelia).

Amelia's example is a telling one for she had constructed an 'actress' identity throughout her youth claiming 'I only ever wanted to be an actress and thought I was going to be and didn't think outside of that box at all'. When this identity was no longer an option for her, she managed to reconstruct a different occupational identity for herself by drawing on other experiences in her life and becoming a teacher in a primary school. As du Gay (1996) argues, the workplace is not merely a place to do one's work, but is a crucial site where identities are constructed. Indeed du Gay (1996) asserts that, 'work is represented not only as a livelihood, but also as a stable, consistent source of identity' (p.11). Amelia moved from one occupational identity to another highlighting Giddens's (1991) notion of a person's identity being a 'reflexive project' (p.75). By using the term 'self-identity' for this purpose, he argues that a key aspect to the structuring of a

person's identity involves 'reflexively organised life-planning' (p.5), making choices and decisions about lifestyle. This is what Amelia appeared to do as she embarked on a teaching career.

However, the 3 'pragmatic choosers' who did not report any memories of growing up around young children or coming from a family of teachers, found themselves attracted to teaching only once they had entered the profession. Rosa applied for a teacher training course and a police training course because she wanted a secure and structured career and she also wanted to work with people. After being accepted on a PGCE course and then completing her NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) year, Rosa realised she enjoyed teaching and so continued with it.

Stephanie had planned to teach for just two years in order to pursue an educational psychology qualification, but then decided to stay. She said that she 'fell' into teaching. Huberman (1993) argues that there are some who 'discover teaching almost by accident' (p.155). Rosa and Stephanie could be described as 'accidental' teachers. Rosa and Stephanie are similar to Amelia in that they had not imagined themselves as teachers prior to becoming teachers. However unlike Amelia, Rosa and Stephanie only began to see themselves as teachers once they had embarked on a teaching career. So these two stayers began to construct their teacher identity once they had begun their careers. Nias (1989) presented a similar finding from her study where she found that although, prior to becoming teachers, her interviewees had 'well-defined views of themselves [...] as people with particular standards, principles, personalities, and needs' (p.38), they did not all

necessarily see themselves as teachers until they had begun to embark on their careers.

Two further participants whom I have categorised as ‘pragmatic choosers’ are male teachers (Tom and Jack). They both came into teaching later in their lives because they wanted stable careers. Tom talked about wanting to do something worthwhile with his own education, saying: ‘I’d had a decent education but ended up doing nothing with it really’. He added that he always admired a male primary school teacher he had when he was younger, saying: ‘I was really influenced by a teacher I had in primary school [...] so that made me think about primary school teaching’. In Sexton’s (2009) study on New Zealander male teachers, he found that half of the 12 teachers he interviewed reported positive school experiences as a motivation for entering teaching and his participants recounted specific characteristics of teachers they admired. Tom’s own childhood experiences at school were perhaps influential in creating the identity of the type of teacher he could see himself as. As Olsen (2008) argues, a teacher’s reason for entering teaching may ‘bridge prior events and experiences with the kind of teacher one [becomes]’ (p. 36).

Jack was also in pursuit of a stable yet meaningful career. He came from a ‘teaching milieu’ (Huberman, 1993, p.117). His mother was a primary school teacher and his father a secondary school teacher so it could be argued that Jack already had an identification with teaching and being a teacher (Olsen, 2008). However, Jack had difficulty recalling any memories from his primary school days. It was a chance encounter with a (male) primary school teacher which

sparked his interest in teaching and a discovery that he was ‘enjoyed being with kids – and was good with kids’ (Jack).

The participants in the ‘Pragmatic Choosers’ category decided to enter teaching for what appears to be largely pragmatic reasons but which were mixed with other, usually intrinsic, reasons. Huberman (1993) uses the term ‘material motivations’ (p.125) to describe those motivations such as a desire for job security and career stability. He found that trends in his study generally pointed to the fact that those who had primarily material motivations for entering teaching were less likely to stay in their careers. However, the crucial point Huberman (1993) makes is that because a person’s motivations for teaching may be many and varied, their initial motivations are not ‘a trustworthy indicator of what follows in one’s careers’ (p.125). The fact that the ‘Pragmatic Choosers’ in my study have decided to stay in their jobs may be because they did not have solely pragmatic reasons for choosing to teach. It may also be the case that those initial pragmatic reasons continue to persist *alongside* other (intrinsic/altruistic) motivations, thus strengthening the teachers’ resolve to stay. In the following vignette, I present the story of ‘Pragmatic Chooser’, Alice. Her story starts in the very community that she eventually decided to remain living in, working in and raising a family in. Her motivations for deciding to teach, and then deciding to stay, have shifted during her career along with her identity as a person, a teacher and a mother.

5.4.1 Vignette of Alice - ‘Pragmatic Chooser’

‘I don’t want to fail the children here’ (Alice)

Alice is an Early Years’ leader and has taught in Beaumont Primary for 10 years. At the time of the interview she was teaching part-time so she could spend time with her young children. However, she was planning on returning to full time work in the following September.

Alice grew up in the area where she now teaches. She does not have any early memories of wanting to be a primary school teacher but she has positive memories of primary school. She said:

I enjoyed primary school, I *really* enjoyed primary school [...] I had teachers that I had a real bond with at school and then when I did work experience in my primary school with my old teacher – that was fun.

Many studies attest to the positive influence that memories of school and inspirational teachers have on those choosing to teach (for example: Huberman, 1993; Flores and Day, 2006; Sexton, 2009). Although in Alice’s case, this was not necessarily an explicit motivation, the fact remains that she had memories of happy primary school days with positive relationships – all which brought about positive emotions about school. These happy memories were in stark contrast to her secondary school days which she said she ‘hated’. Another aspect of her background was the fact that Alice’s mother was a nursery nurse and, at home, was a child minder, so Alice grew up in an environment of young children. Alice explained that her conscious motivations for deciding to teach were practical ones. She said, ‘I wanted to do something quite practical – if I was going to do

something, it had to lead to a job at the end of it. So I think that was part of my motivation to become a teacher’.

As the first member of her family to attend university, securing a stable job at the end of her studies was of paramount importance. Studies conducted on people’s reasons for entering a teaching career show that when extrinsic reasons are cited, they tend to refer to job security as being the predominant reason (Bielby et al., 2005; Hong, 2012; Moran et al., 2001). Alice did not go into detail about her family background, but the fact that she was to be the first of her family to attend university and have a profession cannot be underestimated in her decision to teach.

Alice’s determination to embark on a teacher training degree becomes more apparent as she described herself as being a ‘big picture person’ and she was strategic in her plans to train to be a teacher. She took a gap year to work and save up for university and then commuted to her college outside London every day. She said she did all of this as ‘I just knew I was setting myself up for a life and a career’. Alice had constructed what Giddens (1991) calls ‘strategic life-planning’ which he explains is ‘a means of preparing a course of future actions mobilised in terms of the self’s biography’ (p.85). This life plan was carefully thought through and required a great deal of perseverance and commitment to carry out. The qualities Alice revealed through her narrative show an aspect of her identity which features largely in her later ‘teacher identity’ as she demonstrates her commitment to the children she teaches, to her community and to her school.

Alice's case shows that we cannot assume that pragmatic reasons for choosing to teach hold any less value than predominantly intrinsic or altruistic reasons.

However, the fact that Alice gave an extrinsic reason as her primary motivation does not mean that she did not have other (intrinsic) motivations to teach. First there is the early influence of her own school days and her mother's occupation as a child minder and nursery nurse which may have influenced Alice's final choice of deciding on teaching. She explained, 'I [didn't] want to work in an office because that's boring so I wanted to do something different and I thought teaching would be ... then I [thought] I really want to work with children'. Second, she talked about the fact that she wanted to do something which also harnessed her creative streak, 'I thought working with children would be something good to do with that'. So Alice also demonstrates intrinsic reasons for deciding to teach which would align with her sense of self. Studies on teacher motivation highlight how important it is for people to find a job which provides an outlet for their talents and creativity (Huberman, 1993; Watt et al., 2012). Nias (1989) found that primary school teaching attracted those 'who are looking for work which will use a wide range of their talents and skills' and argues that this allows them 'scope for self-expression' (p.42). Alice's creativity was certainly used to good effect once she started teaching.

5.4.2 Becoming a teacher

While training as a teacher, Alice claimed that she was becoming more and more motivated by the children she taught. She then had to decide where she wanted

her first teaching job to be. Alice's reasons for choosing to teach in a challenging inner London primary school were mainly practical.

Maguire et al. (2006) found that respondents in their study on teachers in urban primary schools often chose to remain working in an area with which they were familiar. However, Alice wanted to 'offer something to the community' where she grew up because her positive experiences at her local primary school made a difference to her life. It could be that this comment is what Purcell et al. (2005) call a 'post-facto rationalisation and a conception of the 'right' answer' (p.20). However, I am inclined to take Alice's comment at face value, because of the subsequent motivations she gives for staying in her school. I would also suggest that even at this early stage in Alice's career, the 'teacher Alice' shows a commitment to her community and those in it because she is very much a part of it. She knows the children and the families in her community very well and now that she too has become a mother, these links with the community have become further embedded. Unlike Caroline, who grew accustomed to her environment and eventually formed a strong attachment to it, Alice's attachment to her community was already in place. What has evolved over time is Alice's particular attachment to Beaumont Primary as her professional identity as a teacher has evolved.

In order to understand better Alice's identity as a teacher in Beaumont Primary, it is useful to see how another aspect of her identity has evolved; her identity as a mother. Beijaard et al., (2000) consider that a teacher's place in his or her 'life cycle' is a key factor in the construction of their professional identity. Alice's

mother identity has influenced her teacher identity in how she now interacts with the parents. She explained the impact being a mother has on her role:

Many of our parents, many who don't work – many are unemployed – their only area of expertise is their children ... but now I've got children, they respond to me differently because they think you understand where they're coming from.

In a study on teachers becoming mothers, Thomson and Kehily (2011) found that most of the seven teachers they interviewed 'expressed or acted upon a desire to separate the professional and personal' (p.242). While I found this to be the case with most of the 'mother' participants I interviewed, it was clearly not the case for Alice. Alice's *mother* identity appears to be closely entwined with her teacher identity. She explained that she has exactly the same expectations of her own children as she does of the children she teaches, and said: 'I would never do anything to any child in my class that I wouldn't do to my own [because] I love those children at school'. This statement runs contrary to Thomson and Kehily's (2011) findings which showed that the early years' teacher-mothers acknowledged that while 'their professional practice in these settings may be good and appropriate for *others*, it is not what they want for their own child' (pp.243-244). However, in Thomson and Kehily's (2011) study, there were clearly class issues involved in the mothers' reluctance to send their children to the schools in which they worked. The authors found that their participants had a 'desire for a particular class trajectory for their own child' (Thomson and Kehily, 2011, p.244). This does not appear to be a preoccupation for Alice, however. Such is her whole-hearted commitment to the school that her children were due to start in Beaumont's nursery the following academic year. Even at the time of the

interview, Alice's children were very much part and parcel of her teacher life at Beaumont. 'My kids come in and they follow me around like little ducks [...] I've got Ali under one arm and Jess under the other, or over there doing something' (Alice).

5.4.3 Alice's stayer identity

Alice did not know she would stay when she started teaching at Beaumont. She explained that her reasons now for staying at Beaumont are predominantly for the children she teaches, saying:

I'm motivated by the children in the Early Years at Beaumont [...] I don't want to leave because I don't want to fail the children here. Why should they suffer because I think it's easier to go somewhere else? So that's what made me stay here.

Alice reflects what Nieto (2003) describes as a teacher's 'deep and abiding care' for the children she teaches. Like Caroline, Alice finds "these" children of her community particularly special. It is apparent that Alice has what Freedman and Appleman (2009) call a 'sense of mission' (p.330). Alice talked frequently of being 'goal orientated' and of having a clear vision of where the Early Years' team and its children should go.

As Alice has become more confident and comfortable with her teacher identity and her identification with the school, the less she has a desire to leave. There are several reasons she cited for staying at Beaumont. The first, as discussed, is for the children. The second significant reason for staying is her close friendships at school. She said, 'the people have kept me here, the staff [...] I really like everybody here'. These relationships are vital for Alice, even when there was a

year where she was unhappy with the school leadership and the direction they wanted the Early Years to take, she still remained because her colleagues are like ‘a little family’. Like Caroline, Alice appears to have found a ‘home’ in her school. Indeed, many studies attest to the importance of colleagues in a teacher’s decision to remain in their school and in particular in challenging urban schools (Eslinger, 2012; McIntyre, 2010; Stanford, 2001). Alice claimed she does not have many friendships outside of school, but her colleagues are her personal friends too. So much so, that she finds it hard to work with colleagues who are not her friends. She said: ‘I think that I work best with people who I get on personally with’. Her relationships with her colleagues contribute to her sense of stability at the school.

The other key reason Alice gives for staying in Beaumont, which is linked to the first two reasons, is her sense of self-efficacy, a feeling that she is successful at what she does. A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy is crucial if they are to maintain commitment to their school (Chester and Beaudin, 1996; Gu and Day, 2007). As Alice’s career at Beaumont has progressed, she now has a level of confidence and assertiveness which she did not have before. As a result, she now feels more established in her school. Alice’s main commitment is to the Early Years of Beaumont. She feels confident and self-assured enough now to decide how the Early Years should be run. ‘There are professionals in the Early Years in the LEA and they would go, ‘well you should be doing it this way’ ... and I say, ‘I don’t work for you, I work for *us*’ (Alice).

Alice has constructed a stayer identity which, similar to Caroline, is characterised by aspects of stability and continuity but also a sense of confidence that she is delivering what the children in the Early Years at Beaumont need. Alice *is* the face of the Early Years in Beaumont. She has remained there the longest of anyone working there. In later chapters I will discuss in further detail themes of merging and separated identities in Chapter 7. However, in Alice's case, it is almost impossible to consider aspects of her identity separately as they are so closely interwoven.

Alice's early beginnings demonstrate a perseverance and commitment to make a life for herself as a teacher. As she began to teach, those core motivations remained at the forefront of her teaching practice. Her hard work and dedication to the school has led to an increasing confidence and self-assuredness in her teacher identity where her 'bigger picture' philosophy of life has influenced how she has driven the Early Years. As her career has progressed, she has developed a stayer identity which is characterized by resilience, stability and confidence in what she does. Alice has constructed her life and thus her identity around the school and community she works in. Alice summed up her decision to stay: 'I don't think a school can have a really good identity or vision if people are always moving [and] I've established myself, I don't need to start again'.

5.5 'Making a difference'

The third category which I examine here are the stayers who decided to teach for altruistic reasons (see Table 5.4). These stayers chose to teach in order to 'make a difference' to society. As discussed in chapter 2, the term 'making a difference' is

widely used in literature on teachers' motivations to teach (for example: Maguire et al., 2006; Purcell et al., 2005; Watt et al., 2012).

Table 5.4 'Making a difference' stayers

Name and Role	School and number of years in school.
Dan Deputy Head/Year 5 Teacher	Meadway Primary (Stayer 7 years)
Mary Year 2 class teacher	Beaumont Primary (Stayer 6 years)

Two stayers were clear that they chose to enter a career in teaching for altruistic reasons. Although there are different interpretations of what altruistic reasons involve, they do frequently appear as reasons to teach (Brown, 1992; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Moran et al., 2001). Altruistic reasons to teach, however, tend to feature more prominently in studies on urban teachers (for example: Frankenberg et al., 2010; Hunter-Quartz et al., 2003). Maguire et al.'s (2006) study of urban teachers in England, found that teachers talked about the desire to 'make a difference' to children's lives. The term, 'making a difference' is frequently mentioned in literature on motivations to teach (Brown, 1992; Manuel and Hughes, 2006; Purcell et al., 2005; Watt et al., 2012). For this reason, I have named the category of altruistically motivated teachers, the 'Making a difference' group. Another aspect of this group which sets them apart from the other groups, is that they actively sought to teach in disadvantaged schools in order to 'make a difference' to a particular section of society.

Dan, a deputy head, had a Christian upbringing and lived by a moral code where 'you shouldn't be here to get what you want out of life [...] but try to be as selfless as possible'. He said, 'I came from a really happy stable home ... I wanted to do something, to make a difference, make a mark so to speak'. However, Mary a year 2 teacher at Beaumont Primary did not frame her decision for becoming a teacher quite so emphatically, but she was clear that she had always been motivated to do good for others. At university she was involved in lots of charity organizations and said, 'I always wanted to do something meaningful and carry on doing something good for others. I think that was my main motivation, to make a difference'. Mary often returned to the theme of 'doing something meaningful' throughout her interview. She embarked on a Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) and chose to work in a school in a very socially deprived area of inner London. After completing the programme, she chose to teach in an equally disadvantaged school another inner London borough.

Both Mary and Dan cited altruistic reasons as their initial motives for becoming teachers, actively choosing to work in disadvantaged schools. Studies on urban teachers (Freedman and Appleman, 2009; Hunter-Quartz et al., 2003; Olsen and Anderson, 2008) often highlight the social justice aspect of urban teaching. Olsen and Anderson (2008) talk about the fact that urban teachers decide to work in disadvantaged schools in order 'to change the world' (p.18). Both Dan and Mary presented themselves as caring individuals who want to change the lives of others for the better. They appeared to have a clear view of the type of person they believed themselves to be and this has influenced their identity as teachers. Dan, in particular, had what Freedman and Appleman (2009) reported from their study

of urban teachers as a ‘kind of calling’ to teach children from disadvantaged communities.

5.5.1 Vignette of Dan – ‘Making a difference’

‘I want to try and change attitudes, make a difference’ (Dan)

Dan has taught in Meadway Primary school for 7 years and was now the Deputy Head. He entered teaching ‘to make a difference, leave a mark so to speak’. His altruistic reasons for entering a career in teaching have remained steadfast throughout his career so far. To understand more clearly why he is so altruistically motivated, it is important to look at his background and beginnings.

Dan was brought up in the English countryside where he said, ‘everyone looks the same, everyone speaks the same language, everyone is the same religion and it was all the same’. He deliberately chose to move to London and work in a socially deprived school ‘to try and change things’. Dan is the only participant to speak in such explicit terms about his wish to change the ‘status quo’ of society. His sentiments are echoed in many American studies (for example: Frankenberg et al., 2010; Hunter-Quartz et al., 2003; Olsen and Andersen, 2007) on motivations of urban teachers where they chose to teach in order to ‘address societal inequities’ (Merseth, Sommer and Dickstein, 2008, p.103). As discussed in Chapter 2, it could be that many of these studies focus on teachers or student teachers who have enrolled in urban focused education programmes, and so they are likely to target individuals who already have values and beliefs about the importance of social justice. Participants in many American studies such as, Hunter-Quartz et al., 2003 and Merseth et al., 2008, often use ‘crusading’

language to explain their decisions to teach in socially deprived schools. Such missionary language seems less evident in literature from the UK, which is why Dan's motivations stood out among my sample.

The influence of family is key to a person's identity construction (Day et al., 2006b) and this is highlighted in Dan's career story. Dan described his family as 'a Christian family'. He was the only participant who was forthcoming about his family's religious beliefs. This was so he could provide a context which would help explain the type of person he is and explain the decisions he has made in his career.

I've got very kind, but very driven parents ... I mean in terms of doing the right thing and being seen to do the right thing and expect others to do the right thing too ... I grew up going to church and everything ... and well, my parents, my mum in particular has no issue with pulling up people she doesn't know very well on their behaviour and their attitudes towards certain things.

Olsen and Andersen's (2007) study of 15 urban teachers in California, also found that their participants' religious backgrounds influenced their career decisions, suggesting that those family backgrounds 'provided tacit or explicit encouragement for their children to consider teaching in urban communities' (p.21). Dan indicated that his personal biography and relationships with his family had a significant influence in shaping his identity and helping him frame who he is (Giddens, 1991; Pearce and Morrison, 2011). He said of his upbringing:

I think it was always kind of drummed into me that [...] you shouldn't be here to get what you want out of life, it should be about trying to make a difference – being happy yourself but not being selfish – try and be as selfless as much as possible.

Even now, his parents are a force in his life as he faces the emotional challenges of teaching in his school. He said, 'I talk to my parents each day, they're like my counselling service. My mum is very good at talking things through if I need to'.

5.5.2 Becoming a teacher

Dan talked a lot about his family and how they influenced the type of person he is. Dan appeared to use his family context and upbringing as a 'device for justifying, explaining and making sense of [his] conduct, career, values and circumstances' (MacLure, 1993, p.316). In doing so, he presented a stable 'core identity' (Gee, 2000) of someone with clear principles, values and beliefs which he has continued to demonstrate in his identity as a teacher. Dan exemplifies Giddens's (1991) view that 'the individual appropriates his past by sifting through it in the light of what is anticipated for an (organised) future' (p.75). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that along with a clear sense of moral purpose, Dan demonstrates persistence and resilience when faced with difficulties. Dan explained how he felt when he first arrived at Meadway.

I was really unhappy because it was such a culture change, but which I had deliberately chose to do so I stuck it out. I don't like to give up, I do like to stick things out and see things through.

Some research suggests that there is a danger in having predominantly altruistic motivations for choosing to teach for such motivations may not sustain a teacher once faced with the everyday challenges which urban teaching presents (Brunetti, 2006; Dornyei, 2001; Gu and Day, 2007). However, Dan brought to his teaching career an identity of someone who was determined to affect change and persevere

in the face of challenge. It is his perseverance combined with his moral purpose which has most likely kept him teaching in his school.

Dan has constructed a particular teacher identity, which is in keeping with his values and beliefs. It was very important for Dan as a class teacher that he was a 'role model' for the children in his class. Now as a deputy head, his identity appears to have evolved in as much that he is now concerned to be a role model not just for children, but parents and other members of staff. He emphasized the importance of demonstrating how to behave and how to work. He said, 'I try to live by what I say ... I have to practise what I preach and be seen to do that'. He feels responsible for setting the 'tone of the school' by leading through example.

Dan is hoping to become a headteacher of an inner London school in the near future. Apart from enjoying working with people from different cultures, Dan said he wants to work with people from lower socio-economic backgrounds where 'you've got families living on the breadline, benefit culture, that's the sort of school I want to work in'. His goal is clear, as he explained:

I want to try and change attitudes, make a difference, give those children aspirations they're not getting in other places [...] I want to inspire people, kind of like my mission. I want the children and their families [...] to take control of their own destiny.

In their study on 6 schools in different regions of the UK, Troman and Ragg1 (2008) found that there was little evidence of teachers entering teaching for "crusading' moral purposes or social class-based commitments to addressing educational equality' (p.97). Instead they found that these "grand narratives'

have been, 'elided into the softer, late-modern and ambiguous narrative of 'making a difference'' (p.97). Dan made mention of the term 'making a difference' 13 times in his interview, however it would be wrong to conclude that there is anything 'soft' about Dan's desire to 'make a difference'. Or indeed that Dan's altruistic motives for teaching urban children are, as Brown (1992) suggests, another way of 'moulding' children to answer his own 'personal growth needs' (p.194). Rather Dan has a clear moral purpose where he believes that he can help change the attitudes and lives of the children and families he works with. Dan's sentiments are echoed in a study by Merseth et al. (2008) where their urban teacher participants believed their schools could be 'a powerful epicentre of change' (p.103). However, Dan also believes that working with the children and families in Meadway Primary has changed him as a person and as a teacher.

I think you can learn a lot from the children. My attitudes to lots of things have changed since working here – like my attitudes to society and everything – just seeing good things happening and bad things happening and that has a bearing on how I see the world, so that would have an effect on how I portray myself I suppose.

Dan did not elaborate how differently he portrays himself, but it is evident that the school's contextual influences have a bearing on how he presents himself. However, in Dan's case, his biography and his personal history interacts with his context to help construct a particular teacher identity. MacLure (1993) calls this a 'biographical project' (p.314) for it is the teacher's *biography* which is made up of their values and beliefs which is then responsible for 'partially construct[ing] that context' (p.314).

5.5.3 Dan's stayer identity

In some ways, Dan demonstrated a similar stayer identity to Caroline and Alice; an identity characterised by a moral purpose, confidence and resilience. He suggested that a teacher who stays in an urban school for the 'right reasons' is someone who has an inner quality which, he claimed, 'you can see in the best people in education'. He emphasized, in particular, the importance of resilience as being a key quality to being an effective stayer. He explained that a resilient teacher is someone who 'can have a lot of things thrown at them and cope with it'. In this comment, Dan seems to suggest that a teacher should have what Brunetti (2006) refers to as 'a quality', which allows the teacher to keep going in their job, 'despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks' (p.813). However, Dan also went on to say that the teacher may not necessarily be resilient 'straight away because sometimes they need support'. It would appear that Dan has recognised that a teacher's capacity for resilience can indeed be strengthened by supportive school contexts (Mansfield et al., 2012).

In Dan's case, his sense of vocation appears to feature as a significant factor affecting his resilience to remain in his school. Indeed, Gu and Day (2013) suggest that resilience and a sense of vocation are linked and that a teacher's vocation 'is associated with a strong sense of professional goals and purposes, persistence, professional aspirations, achievement and motivation' (p.1311). It could be argued that Dan's stayer identity is characterised by his resilience and sense of vocation.

Unlike Caroline and Alice, Dan did not talk in great detail about the importance

of stability and continuity but rather placed an emphasis on teachers and stayers who can ‘see the bigger picture’ of what they’re doing and have a ‘passion [...] for education and for change’. In some ways his stayer identity is also linked to his identity as a leader. Dan highlights Wenger’s (1998) argument that identity and practice are inextricably linked. Dan often used the phrase, ‘role model’ and ‘practise what you preach’ to demonstrate the type of leader he is. Dan expects to see the same commitment from other urban teachers. He suggested that the very best teachers are ‘those who do find it hard to switch off, because those are the dedicated ones who immerse themselves in everything’. It may be that I am reading too much into his words, but it seems as if Dan sees teaching in an urban school as a lifestyle choice where you have to be prepared to sacrifice a part of yourself for the good of society. Dan’s philosophy for teaching is echoed by Christopher Day (2007) in a speech he gave to the General Teaching Council in which he talked about teachers who have a passion for their work and suggests that ‘being passionate creates energy, determination, conviction, commitment’ (Day, 2007, n.p.).

Dan’s early influences contributed to the construction of an identity of someone who believed in the value of making positive changes to society, of someone who was committed to making a difference to others. These core values have permeated throughout his teaching career and have held fast even in the face of difficulties and challenge. Dan’s teacher identity is characterised by his desire to make a difference for the children he teaches and for society. His identity as a leader is concerned with acting as a role model for others and helping his colleagues to make a difference. From one perspective, it could appear that he

embodies what Castro (2014) in his study on urban teachers refers to as being a 'visionary' teacher. This is someone who sees teaching 'as a way of contributing to society or improving the world' (Castro, 2014, p.142). Castro (2014) concludes that the 'visionary' teacher is one who is likely to persist teaching in urban schools. From another perspective, it could appear that Dan reflects another of Castro's (2014) urban teacher types: the 'saviour'. The 'saviour teacher' believes that teachers should 'rescue' the children from their backgrounds and their environment (p.9). His comments about wishing to 'change attitudes' and giving 'those children aspirations they're not getting in other places' could perhaps suggest a residual form of what Pitzer (2014) refers to as 'deficit thinking' which, she argues, 'predominates in urban schools' (p.131). However, Dan also claims that his own attitudes have changed and that he has 'learnt a lot from the children' since working in his school. Perhaps Dan fits neither of Castro's (2014) constructions of an urban teacher. What was unambiguous from Dan's interview, is that he clearly articulated a sense of conviction and vision of changing society by starting with making a difference to children's lives. This appeared to be a key reason which has prompted him to stay.

Nias (1989) suggests that a teacher's identity evolves over time, and it would seem that over time, Dan has constructed a stayer identity. Perhaps though, Dan's stayer identity is not one which is attached to a particular school, but rather a commitment to the larger community of disadvantaged schools. It could be that teaching in and eventually leading a school is where he feels he can make the greatest difference to people's lives. Dan's stayer identity is concerned with embedding change and influencing others to make a difference over time. He sees

himself as someone who can make a difference to society through his commitment and passion and empower people to make a difference too. This core sense of self has had a profound influence on his career decisions and his identity as a teacher.

The final category of stayers I discuss in this chapter are those who initially resisted a career in teaching. The decision to resist a career in teaching was one which was shared by three of the teachers I interviewed.

5.6 ‘Resisters’

The fourth group I constructed is somewhat different from the first three. Rather than focus on their motivations to teach, I focused on their initial motivation *not* to teach (see Table 5.5). I have named this category of participants as ‘Resisters’. When asked why they became teachers, all three participants in this group (two current stayers and one mover) reported that they initially resisted teaching as it was, as Huberman (1993) suggests, ‘a path [which] was already laid out for them’ (p.117). All the participants who are in this group came from families of teachers. I was keen to explore to what extent their family backgrounds eventually (if at all) influenced their decisions to teach and ultimately to stay in the profession.

Table 5.5 ‘Resisters’ stayers

Name and Role	School and number of years in School
<p style="text-align: center;">Sian Assistant Head</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Kingswood Primary (Stayer 10 years)</p>

Name and Role	School and number of years in School
<p style="text-align: center;">Isabelle Year 1 class teacher/MFL leader</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Beaumont Primary (Stayer 6 years)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Paula (Mover) Part-time Year 6 teacher</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Former Deputy Head at Beaumont Primary. Now in Greenmount Primary (South East England – stayer 7 years)</p>

What was striking about all three participants, however, is that they did eventually choose to teach and all have stayed in the teaching profession with two out of the three participants staying in disadvantaged primary schools in London. The other reason why I chose to include them in this analysis chapter is that they all came from families of teachers. It is this common factor which I wanted to examine in more detail and explore what it is about the participants' beginnings which may have influenced them to ultimately choose teaching and stay in their schools. Of the three 'Resisters' I identified, two are current stayers in disadvantaged London primary schools, one former London stayer (who according to Smithers and Robinson's, 2003 definition is actually a 'mover') is now a stayer in a hard-to-teach primary school in another part of the country.

All three participants actively resisted following a path into teaching. Isabelle claimed that she was 'trying to not go down that route that everyone thought I would go down'. Paula also reported: 'I didn't want to be a teacher because both of [my parents] were and I guess it was a reaction against what they did'. Rose (2000) argues that 'human beings often find themselves resisting the forms of

personhood that they are enjoined to adopt' (p.319). Initially all three wanted to do something different but ultimately pursued a teaching career.

Sian, who has been in her school for 10 years and is now an Assistant Head, said of her beginnings: 'I think in some ways because my mum was a teacher, I resisted following what she did. I had to find my own way. But I think it was pretty inevitable really'. All three participants had plenty of experience of being and working with young children. Paula (the mover) had early memories of 'playing school' and in her later teenage years, worked as a teaching assistant, claiming that even though she did not want to be a teacher, she did 'want to work with children'. Sian had spent a lot of time in schools with her teacher mother and worked with children in holiday clubs all through her own education and said that eventually she 'fell' into teaching.

The 'Resister' respondents indicated that they resisted teaching simply because their family were teachers, so the act of resisting seemed to be an intellectual resistance to an identity that they may have felt had already taken a hold. Rose (2000) points to this form of resistance as being 'perspectival: it can only ever be a matter of judgement' (p.320). These three participants actively decided that they did not want to embrace a teacher identity, perhaps feeling that they needed to 'find themselves' before deciding what to eventually do. Giddens (1991) talks about the importance of acting 'authentically' when constructing an identity adding that 'to be true to oneself means finding oneself' (p.79). This may well be what the three resisters in my study were engaged in doing prior to deciding to teach.

However, they did not remain resistant once they began training to be teachers, but embraced the experience and began to identify as teachers. Studies refer to teachers who ‘default’ to teaching or ‘fall’ into a teaching career (Huberman, 1993; Watt et al., 2012) in the absence of anything else to do, or because a career in teaching is expected of them. Interestingly, both Sian and Paula suggested that they ‘fell’ or ‘defaulted’ into teaching. However, both went on to explain how they then embraced their teacher training programmes and both remain committed stayers. Isabelle worked through her doubts in the most systematic way. She chose to do other jobs before agreeing to give teaching a chance, although still not convinced that she wanted to formally train as a teacher. After teaching children overseas in a variety of educational contexts which she enjoyed, she eventually decided that she wanted to become a teacher and applied for a PGCE course.

The ‘resisters’ are the only group of participants who appeared to work actively on reshaping their identities before becoming teachers. Isabelle, Paula and Sian chose to teach through ‘strategic life planning’ (Giddens, 1991, p.85) in which they were engaged in creating ‘life plans’ which involved reflexively organizing the ‘trajectory of the self’ (p.85). Sian illustrates this most vividly in her career story.

5.6.1 Vignette of Sian – ‘Resister’

‘My job in the school is to spread positivity’ (Sian)

Sian’s mother and both her sisters were teachers and so she chose to resist teaching precisely because this ‘path’ was laid out for her. After being told by her

teachers at school that she was not clever enough to become a vet, she completed a degree in Humanities at university in the absence of a better idea. During her time in university, she worked in a nursery school in the holidays. It was at this point, she decided she wanted to be a teacher and so embarked on a PGCE course.

Sian reflected on her decision:

I suppose I always had [teaching] in the background somewhere – I'd spent a lot of time in schools with my mum after my GCSEs and my A Levels. I worked in holiday club too so I knew I liked working with children.

Although Sian claimed that her mother never suggested teaching to her and wanted Sian to make her own decision, the 'family milieu' undoubtedly had a significant influence on her (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). Although Sian did not have any early memories of 'playing school' like Caroline (who also grew up in a teaching family), she nonetheless had plenty of experience working with young children and 'playing' the teacher role for real.

Sian's early experiences would have most likely contributed to the construction of an early teacher identity, or at the very least provided her with 'deep images of who teaches' (Olsen, 2008, p.28). In Sian's own words it was perhaps 'inevitable' that she became a teacher. However it would be wrong to suggest, as some studies have found with teachers in similar situations, that she *passively* 'defaulted' to teaching or that she opted to teach in the absence of a better idea (Huberman, 1993; Purcell et al., 2005; Watt et al., 2012). Sian does talk about the inevitability of following a teaching career which echoes Giddens' (1991) argument that the lifestyles people create for themselves are 'influenced by group pressures and the visibility of role models' (p.83). Sian is also clear about her subsequent (intrinsic)

reasons for eventually deciding on being teacher: it is because she loved working with children.

5.6.2 Becoming a teacher

Sian came from northern England and her reason for working in London was a pragmatic one as it was a place both she and her husband could find work. Very soon, Sian's early teacher identity took on an altruistic dimension when she decided to pursue a career in a challenging inner London school. She described her reasons why:

I [went] to a primary school in [the north of England] where there were 48 children in the whole school and every one was white. So I knew I wanted to be somewhere diverse, where it was going to be rewarding, it was going to be challenging. I didn't want to be somewhere that was going to be easy.

The desire to work somewhere challenging yet rewarding was a reason that Maguire et al. (2006) also found in their study of teachers working in urban primary schools. Like Dan, Sian also came from a very different environment to one where she finally ended up working in. In fact of all 24 participants, just under half came from other areas of England with two of those originating from other countries. Most of these participants were attracted to teaching in diverse environments which are different to their own primary school experiences.

Sian's career story reveals a teacher who consciously and actively worked on shaping and reshaping her teacher identity. In the first few years of teaching, Sian explained that she was very young when she started teaching at only 22. She said of herself:

In the first couple of years in teaching, I would cry at the drop of a hat and things would really get to me and I thought to myself, I've got to do something about this. This isn't good for me, it's not good for the kids.

Early on in her career, Sian recognized this tension between her personal self ('over-emotional') and what she needed to be as a teacher for the children in her class. She said that she received professional development training which helped her to become 'more reflective' and subsequently, more resilient. Sian's willingness to be reflective is very much a personal trait and she claimed that being a teacher in her school has helped her develop her personal identity too. She said she would often ask herself: 'Why am I feeling like this? What could I have done differently? And what can I do next time?' Sian's narrative reflects Giddens' (1991) concept of identity work being a 'reflexive project' (p.75) as a way of 'understanding and being in the world' (Spillane, 2000, p.308). Sian's determination to 'work' on herself rather than leave teaching shows a resilience to address the personal and professional identities so she can be successful at her work.

A key turning point in Sian's identity development occurred after seven years of teaching when she decided to take a sabbatical and travel the world. She explained what happened at that point: 'that is where everything changed, because I realized that there was more than me and worrying about little things ... and more than anything, you realise how much it's out of your control'. Huberman (1993) found that career doubts often surface between 7 to 15 years of teaching. Sian did not indicate she had any career doubts, although she did admit that she did not feel ready to take on the challenge of an assistant head role which she had

been encouraged to seek. She said of that time, 'I wasn't resilient enough then'. Huberman (1993) talks about how teachers can see off a career crisis through overseas travel suggesting that teachers can find it a 'therapeutic measure' (p.153). For Sian, it changed the way she saw life, which consequently changed the way she presented herself in her job. She reported that people at school thought she had become 'nicer' and that she was 'more relaxed' and 'more resilient in my general life which I was able to transfer into my work life'.

Sian talked about how her travelling experiences have made her much more 'in control' and 'confident' in her role. After a bumpy start, she has transitioned into a leadership role, where she has an identity which consists of being a 'good role model'. She explained that for her this means being in control and being organized which is particularly important in her role. She explained why: 'On the senior leadership team, I'm the one who organizes us all and makes things happen'. Sian also has a particular role in the life of the school which she described to me:

My job in the school is to spread positivity ... I've been nicknamed the 'Tinkerbell' of the school because I go around solving problems with a smiley face and that is generally what people see – I don't let things get me down.

Although staff members may see Sian as relentlessly positive and upbeat, she has engaged in a lot of work around remaining resilient and her positivity and ability to solve problems is the way her resilience is manifested. Kelchtermans (2005) talks about the importance of 'self-understanding' which is 'dynamic and

biographical in nature' and which develops over time (p.1000). I think Sian reflects this aspect of the on-going process of identity construction.

5.6.3 Sian's stayer identity

Sian does not want to leave her school. It may be that the point where she assumed a 'stayer' identity was when she returned to her school after some months of travelling overseas. It was then she began to feel more confident in her role and as she said, 'I know exactly what I'm doing, I know what to expect and I love the people I work with'. Her headteacher is very 'hands-off' and Sian and the deputy head have a close relationship. She said that they are 'the face of the school'. She explained that she and the deputy head have worked hard to create 'a really warm and inviting place where everybody feels safe, whether it's the children or the staff'. Similar to Caroline and Alice, Sian views Kingswood Primary as a kind of 'home' for everyone there.

Sian's stayer identity is intimately connected with her school and with her role in the school. Her stayer identity is inextricably linked to her leadership role which is characterized by her confidence in how she does her job, which is linked to her feeling of self-efficacy. Her feelings of self-efficacy, which have developed over time, are a vital aspect of a teacher's identity if they are to remain resilient and continue teaching in their school (Gu and Day, 2007, 2013; Hong, 2012). In Alice's case, her stayer identity was closely entwined with the identity of the Early Years - she is the 'face' of the Early Years. In Sian's case, her stayer identity is interwoven with the identity of the school as a positive and nurturing environment for children and staff.

Ultimately, Sian's *stayer* identity embodies resilience and commitment to a career in a school which not only has been instrumental in influencing the shaping of her identity (both personal and professional) but which has also benefited from the identity work Sian has done over the past decade. Sian's story highlights Spillane's (2000) definition of identity as: 'an individual's way of understanding and being in the world' (p.308).

5.7 Chapter summary and conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to explore how the participants' biographies and identities prior to becoming teachers (or 'pre-teacher' identities) are linked to their reasons for choosing to teach, their reasons for choosing to stay, and to the process of constructing their teacher identities (see Figure 5.1). Through the construction of the typologies of stayers, I aimed to outline in more precise terms the relationship between motivation and identity. I have attempted, first, to show the relationship between a participant's 'pre-teacher' identity and their motivations for choosing to teach. Second, I have attempted to show how the interplay between initial motivations and early identities has helped shape teacher identity.

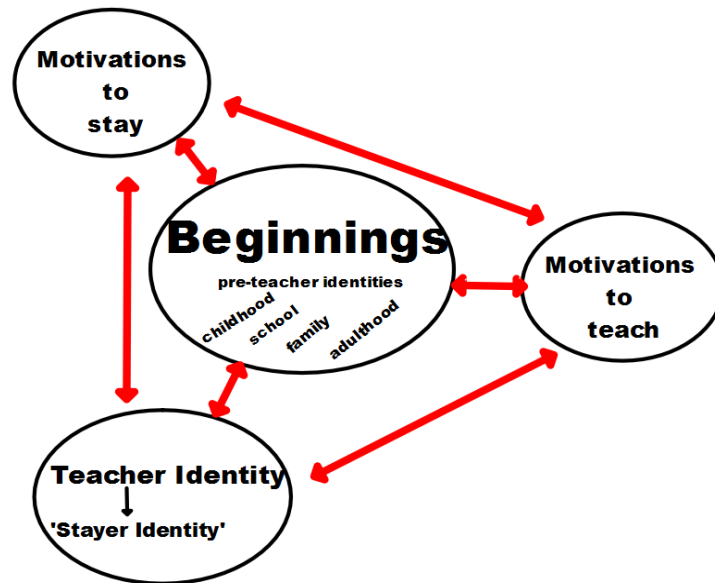


Figure 5.1 Stayers' Beginnings, Motivations and Identity

I have also focused on how the interplay between a teacher's identity (both pre-teaching and current teacher identity) and motivations has influenced them to stay in their schools. In this chapter I have explored one aspect of their teacher identity which I have termed a 'stayer identity'. Indeed, the theoretical framework of identity and motivation as explored in chapter 3 can be seen in practice in this chapter, where the vignettes show how the teachers' past and present identities are instrumental in the construction of their future identities. Through the participants' stories in the different category of stayer, I have shown how each teacher's 'stayer identity' has been influenced by their pre-teacher identity as well as their motivations to teach and motivations to stay.

There were a number of commonalities which emerged from the categories of stayers, although these are 'played out' differently depending on the individual. One common theme which did emerge, however, was the influence that early

beginnings had on all participants' reasons to choose teaching as a career. This finding is reflected in much of the literature on teacher identity (for example: Alsup, 2006; Day et al., 2006a; MacLure, 1993). These studies attest to the importance that a person's personal history including family background and environment plays in formulating a person's teacher identity. The participants' 'pre-teacher' identities appeared to influence their subsequent professional/occupational teacher identities, a point which is echoed in other studies on teacher identity (for example: Day, 2002; Van Veen et al., 2005).

Nias (1989) considers how teachers can 'fuse their personal and occupational self image' (p.42) and that over time a 'teacher identity' emerges. In the case of my participants, the ways which such a 'teacher identity' emerged differed according to each stayer's situation. However, there were commonalities in some of what the participants had to say about their motivations. For example, nearly all the participants who came from a 'teaching milieu' or from a background where family occupations centred on children (such as a mother being a child minder) reported that they were influenced by their backgrounds. This was irrespective of their initial motivations for deciding to teach: whether it was an altruistic reason, a pragmatic reason or even initially resisting entering the teaching profession. It could thus be argued that the teachers' early influences provided a familiar resource for them in the construction of their own personal and professional identities (Nias, 1989).

It should be noted that the participants' discussions on family backgrounds largely centred on the female members of their families (mothers, aunts and sisters). It

may well be that the female members of the family feature significantly in the teachers' career choices, or that the participants have been influenced by certain gendered expectations; what girls 'should' do. As Vogt (2002) argues the concept of caring, which is central to the primary teacher's role, has clear gendered connotations. Many of the stayers told stories about playing with teddies and young children. It may be that for some of the stayers, a caring female primary teacher identity matches their identities as responsible, loving and perhaps even maternal individuals. In the case of several of the female stayers in this research, it is useful to understand their motivations for choosing to be a primary school teacher in the context of social and family gendered expectations.

Although I have chosen to research urban stayers, it may be that there are similarities with other non-urban primary school stayers. For example, perhaps stayers in what Freya calls 'leafy schools' also choose to stay in their schools because they recognise the importance of stability and continuity for the children they teach. Furthermore, it may be that stayers in less challenging, non-urban schools have a similar commitment to their local community where they themselves may want to live and raise their own families. It could also be that once 'comfortable' in such a school, there may even be an apprehension of moving to an unknown school. Certainly, the statistics reveal that primary school teachers in advantaged schools are less likely to move than those in challenging urban schools (Allen, et al., 2012).

In the case of the urban stayer as highlighted by my participants, there appears to be, what I have understood as, altruistic reasons for staying whether it be a sense

of vocation (such as Dan and Caroline); or desire to give back to a community where the stayer was born and raised (for example Alice); or whether the stayer wants to work somewhere which is challenging yet rewarding (like Sian). However, as I have discussed there are other complementing reasons for staying. Some of the stayers either already have strong roots in the city, or have put down roots since starting to teach in their schools. They are settled in their accommodation (whether it be social housing, through a key worker living loan arrangement, privately owned or rented housing). They may be reluctant to move or change schools, maybe they even have a fear of change and disrupting their status quo. It may be that for the urban stayers there is a symbiotic relationship with their schools: maintaining stability and continuity in their lives is as important as providing stability for the children.

There is one motivating factor, however, which I have not discussed in this chapter: the salary factor. It could be that the stayers have secured a decent salary in their roles and they are reluctant to move and potentially take a drop in salary. However, although the issue of salary is one which does feature in teachers' reasons for staying, I have chosen not to consider it in the main body of this chapter for two reasons: first, the salary issue did not emerge as being a significant motivating factor in the context of the teachers' identities and early beginnings. Second, the issue of salary is a complex one, as I have found in previous research (Towers, 2011), and therefore needs to be more fully examined to be better understood in the context of teachers' decisions to stay in a London primary school. I will, therefore, return to theme of money in chapter 8 where I consider the role that salary plays in teachers' decisions to stay in their schools.

Through careful analysis of the participants' stories, I detected a common aspect of their teacher identities which is linked to *staying*. I have called this the 'stayer identity'. I am, however, fully aware of my potential bias for what is being studied in constructing the term 'stayer identity' (Angen, 2000). I was once a stayer myself and so I may be identifying aspects of the participants' identities which I myself identified with at one time. Lee (1999) draws on Glaser (1992) to argue that researchers should be concerned with interpreting what is evident in the data rather than 'risk imposing on the data too many of their own personal biases' (p.46). However, each of the stayers I presented in the vignettes referred in one way or another to the importance of commitment, stability and/or continuity for the children in their schools. Each of the stayers was committed to improving the lives of the children in their schools. All of the stayers admitted that at times, life in their schools was a challenge; an aspect of their teaching careers which must not be underestimated. Through their stories, they have shown how they tackled the difficulties faced. Although the stayers continue to confront these challenges in their own different ways, they have all managed to 'stay the course'.

Many of the stayers used the term 'resilience' to help explain why they stay. Some of the stayers I interviewed believed that teachers who stay in challenging inner city schools must possess an 'inner quality' to do the job, thus reflecting Brunetti's (2006) suggestion that resilience is to some extent an 'inherent personality characteristic' (p.822) which enables teachers to overcome difficult situations. However, all the participants agreed that external factors greatly enhanced teachers' reasons for staying and remaining resilient. For example,

when I asked Stella, an assistant head at Beaumont Primary, what is about her that makes her stay, she replied that she doesn't possess any 'special innate quality' that enables her to persist teaching in her school, but that having a 'good support network' and 'caring for the children' helps build her resilience.

However, the stayers indicate that a sense of resilience or 'keeping going' can be strengthened and/or weakened at different points in their careers, so it follows that perhaps a teacher's sense of commitment to a school and to the children can also waver. Although the stayers in my study seemed to have their capacity for resilience and commitment to their school *enhanced* by key factors, they also suggested that their resilience and commitment could be tested. On the one hand it would appear that the words: 'stability', 'continuity' and 'commitment' are not merely abstract concepts for the stayers, but are concepts which are embedded in who they are as teachers. On the other hand, it could be the case that these concepts are not unshakeable; they can be challenged by various in-school and out-of-school factors.

Giddens (1991) argues that a person's identity is their ability to keep a 'particular narrative going' (p.54) as opposed to something which is found in a person's behaviour. The stayers in each of the categories employed similar vocabulary to explain their reasons for choosing to teach and choosing to stay. For example, stayers in the 'Making a difference' category used expressions such as 'calling' 'vocation' 'practise what you preach'. It appeared that the stayers' chosen expressions contributed to their staying narrative and thus helped shape their identities. Perhaps in the case of disadvantaged London primary schools, a

stayer's behaviour (to keep going) reinforces their narrative and contributes to their sense of identity. In other words, the stayer's identity is characterised by his or her behaviour: their persistence in continuing to teach in challenging circumstances. In all this, the teachers' identities are in constant flux as they are constructed and reconstructed depending on different factors and influences. What I hope to have shown is that the participants' *stayer* identities are *more often than not* characterised by the very concepts of commitment, stability and continuity which they test out, deploy and demonstrate on a daily basis.

In all cases, the stayers have been aware of how their school experiences, both as children themselves and as teachers, have contributed to the shaping of their teacher identities sometimes unexpectedly. By reflecting on their personal histories, their motivations and identities, the stayers have been able to engage in narratives about themselves which have in turn articulated the shaping of their identities. The stayers' narratives and claims about themselves and their work have constructed an identity which I refer to as a stayer identity. Indeed by reflecting on the stayers' early beginnings, there are clues that reveal how their 'pre-teacher' identities embody those 'beliefs and assumptions about [the] self' (Nias, 1996, p.297), and which have an influence on their subsequent 'stayer' identities. As Caroline emphatically stated about working in a hard-to-teach primary school:

You have to be ready for it ... for the challenges. You can't just come and work in a London school like this without knowing what's going to happen. You *need* to be strong to handle it.

The stayers in the vignettes have shown that even if they are initially not prepared 'for the challenges' they encounter in their schools, they learn how to draw on a range of resources to help them persevere and develop what Tricarico et al. (2015) refer to in similar urban contexts as 'staying power' (p.237). In doing so, the stayers learn, not only how to 'handle' the challenges which they face, but to thrive in their schools and make a difference to the children with whom they work.

Chapter 6

Headteachers of challenging London primary schools: Why do they stay?

6.1 Introduction

Nearly all of the participants in my study refer to their headteacher as a significant reason for remaining in their challenging schools. This is in part because the headteacher plays a crucial and very visible role in the life of a primary school (Crawford, 2009; Eslinger, 2012; Guin, 2004). Indeed as one participant told me, ‘the head dictates the ethos of the school’ (Stephanie). Therefore a study on primary school stayers would be incomplete without the inclusion of the perspectives of stayer headteachers in challenging London primary schools. At a time when it has become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain headteachers in these sorts of schools (Future Leaders Trust, 2016; Howson, 2013), I was keen to discover why my headteacher participants chose to stay.

In order to understand why the headteachers in my study stay in their schools, it is useful to explore why they chose to take on a headship of a challenging London primary school in the first instance. First, this chapter examines why the five headteachers, and one retired headteacher (see Table 6.1), decided to become headteachers of London primary schools. Second, I consider what specific challenges the headteachers face in their urban schools and how these are addressed. Third, I explore the factors which motivate these headteachers to *stay* in their schools. Finally, I investigate what it is about *who* the headteachers are which prompts them to stay. In this chapter I form a picture of the identities of the

London primary headteachers in order to try to detail why they have become heads, and crucially why they stay in their headship posts. I consider how different aspects of their work contribute to constructing a headteacher identity and how their work affects their motivation, commitment and persistence to remain in the job. In this chapter, I also reflect how the headteachers' leadership and 'staying power' can influence and inspire their teachers to remain committed to their schools.

Table 6.1 Headteacher participants

Name	Age	School	Leadership career in school
David	55 - 65	Beaumont Primary	Acting Head for 1 term. Head for 25 years
Graham	35 - 45	Ridgeway Primary	Deputy Head for 3 years Acting Head for 2 terms. Head for 5 years
Eva	35 - 45	Canbury Primary	Deputy Head for 3 years Head for 5 years
John	35 - 45	Parkland Primary	Phase Leader for 2 years Deputy Head for 2 years Head for 6 years
Peter	35 - 45	Gainsborough Primary	Head for 6 years
Josephine (retired since 2010)	65 +	Gateshill Primary Maple Primary	Head for 16 years Head for 11 years

Primary school headteachers everywhere, regardless of context or location, share similar experiences, problems and issues (for example: Bristow et al., 2007;

Thomson, 2009). However, in what follows I consider what is distinctive about the London heads, their experiences and their career decisions in their hard-to-teach primary schools.

6.2 Why become a London headteacher?

6.2.1 Initial motivations and identity

Headship is about who you are (Graham)

Thomson (2009) suggests that ‘there is no single and simple answer to the question, ‘How do teachers decide to become headteachers?’ (p.28). Indeed, the headteachers I interviewed gave more than one reason for deciding to become heads in the first place. What became clear during the course of my analysis, was that motivations for choosing headship were often mixed with beliefs and values about the nature of education. What soon transpired was how difficult it became to separate the heads’ motivations for becoming headteachers without also examining aspects of their identities. Hayes’ (1996) study of six small school headteachers reported that the participants had ‘from the start, a strong sense of personal identification with their jobs’ (p.387). This was also the case with my participants who had chosen to lead their inner London primary schools.

All the headteachers in my study had been teachers in disadvantaged London primary schools prior to becoming heads. Their identities as urban teachers were thus well established. Thomson (2009) suggests that those who decide to become heads ‘must be able to see themselves in the position while also being able to identify important continuities between their teacherly identity/ies and that of a headteacher’ (p.2). The headteachers’ desire to make, what many of them have

described, as an even greater impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds prompted them to take the ‘top job’.

For example, John explained that when he started teaching in the north of England, he ‘school-hopped’ every one to two years. It wasn’t until he came to London to work in his current school as a class teacher that he finally found the ‘fulfilment that you look for when you teach’. Working in this environment with its diverse and challenging intake was what he had been looking for in his career. He believed that schools such as his had was a greater opportunity to make ‘a bigger impact [...] on those children who don’t have the stability or advantages that some others have’. John was searching for a school where he could express his values and beliefs and where his teacher identity could develop and grow. Parkland Primary was that very place, for as he explained ‘this is home, this is where I feel comfortable, I’m happy, I do really enjoy coming to work’. Therefore, it is not so difficult to understand that although he had not initially intended to be a headteacher, he had what he referred to as the ‘self-belief and self-confidence’ to become a head. Becoming a headteacher was, ‘a natural progression’ for him.

Eva explained that a major motivation for her as a headteacher is to ‘really really improve the quality of teaching that goes on here, so that [the children’s] life chances are evened out’. Eva’s commitment to social justice is reflected in Maguire et al.’s (2006) study on urban headteachers who expressed ‘passion and commitment to making a difference for their children and families who already faced a number of disadvantages’ (p.70). Peter’s motivations were very similar to

Eva's. He explained, 'I am passionate about what I want [and] I am very passionate about what I want the children to get [from their education]'. After applying to several schools out of his borough, he secured a headship in a school which was 'very very challenging'. He wanted to make a real difference to the lives of the children in his school and wanted them to have 'the best first hand experiences possible'. Like Eva, Peter also revealed something about his identity which explains what it is *about* him which motivated him to take on the challenge of headship in a hard-to-teach London school. He talked about being competitive and having a 'will to win' with 'an innate stubbornness', all qualities which appeared to propel him to take on the role of head at Gainsborough Primary. He justified why he is like this, and explained, 'Because actually I know that I'm good at what I do and I know I'm doing it for the right reasons'.

Graham gave two reasons for deciding to be a headteacher. First, he explained that he wanted to do the job because 'I care about the job, I care about the kids, I care about the standing of the profession'. He also said that the point at which he wanted to be a head was when 'I realised the impact that the headteacher had not just on policy, not just on the rules, not just on the ways of working, but on the culture that exists within the school'. Like Eva, Graham had clear values and beliefs about creating a school which could make a difference to the children it served. Unlike Eva, though, Graham suggested that he always harboured a belief that he *could* one day be a leader. He explained:

The nucleus of the idea of being a headteacher probably came quite early [...] and although I never vocalized it, that I wanted to be a headteacher, it was probably there somewhere [...] the people I admired, either real or

fictional characters were leaders – I remember that my biggest influence at the age of 17 was Jean Luis Picard!

As discussed in chapter 5, this type of ‘biographical talk’ serves to help people ‘construct accounts of both their previous experience and the possible future trajectories of their lives’ (Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.24). This is a critical point in Graham’s progression, for once he had settled on promotion to headship, nothing would deter him from securing a post. Graham became an acting head for two terms in the school where he was a deputy. He soon realised that if he wanted to secure a substantive headship at Ridgeway Primary, he needed to articulate more clearly what kind of person he was to those who interviewed him for headship posts. In other words he had to reveal his *personal* identity and that is when he explained, ‘I started to understand the extent to which headship is about *who* you are’.

David is the most experienced of the serving headteachers I interviewed, having been at Beaumont Primary for 25 years. Like most of the other headteachers, David said that initially he had no plans to become a head and explained that he was ‘very happy being a teacher’. However, things changed for him during a challenging period of deputy headship in another school. When an opportunity to take on an acting headship role in Beaumont Primary came along, he opted for it despite the fact that the school was in his words ‘as dire as could be...the worst school in the country’. Beaumont Primary had seen five acting headteachers in the year when David applied, but he was ready to take on the challenges that Beaumont presented him with, believing that he could make a positive impact on the school. Like my other participants, David could have sought promotion in a

more stable and 'easy to teach' setting, but he actively took up a significantly challenging headship.

The headteachers I interviewed discussed their personal traits and their identities in their interviews when explaining their decisions to become heads. As Baumeister and Newman (1994) argue, 'telling stories about oneself to others may be a vital means of causing these other people to recognize and validate one's identity claims' (p.680). All the heads engaged in personal narrative not just to explain their career decisions, but to show *who* they are and therefore *why* they chose what to do and, ultimately, why they choose to stay.

Amongst the heads I interviewed Graham, Eva, Peter and John were forthcoming in describing what it is about *themselves* that motivated them to take on their headship roles. They tended to foreground their personal qualities to explain their career decisions. John, as being 'self-confident'; Eva as being 'a bit of a rebel'; Graham as being 'honest and genuinely caring' and Peter as being 'a people person'. Crucially, they also all appeared to have a belief that that they could do the job well.

When discussing teachers' identities in Chapter 3, I referred to Nias' (1989) argument that teachers must be able to align their personal values and beliefs with their professional role. She argues that teachers are more likely to remain in their jobs if they manage to negotiate a 'fit' between their 'situational and substantial selves' (p.78). Headteachers know this, as they have already invested much of themselves in their career prior to taking on headships. It is therefore not

surprising that a potential headteacher needs to examine *who* they are to ascertain if there is a 'fit' between themselves and the job they are about to embark on. Their career decisions still followed their desire to make a difference to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, by the time they had become headteachers, those who were not originally from London (three in total) had established themselves as 'Londoners'. The heads were settled into their lives in London with partners and, in most cases, with children of their own who attended London schools. In other words the heads identified London as their home; they had adopted London identities and London headteacher identities.

As I discuss in the next section, the job of the headteacher (of any type of school) requires as many personal qualities as it does professional qualities in order to do a good job. McNulty (2005) attests to the specific challenges presented by challenging headship in urban schools. Referring to his own experience as a head of a very challenging and disadvantaged secondary school in the north of England, McNulty (2005) describes how all heads have to deal with many school issues, such as 'premises issues and matters of finance' (p.9). However, the urban head will be 'struggling to deal with wide ranging social, economic and demographic problems impacting on a daily basis' (p.8-9).

6.3 Common challenges

6.3.1 The challenges faced by the headteachers

There are universal challenges with which all headteachers, regardless of the type of school they lead, must contend (Bristow, Ireson and Coleman, 2007; Atton and Fidler, 2004; Revell, 1996; Thomson, 2009). Many of these tasks present as

problems which need to be resolved swiftly and efficiently. As Revell (1996) observes, the work of a headteacher consists of ‘a melée of events and interactions, a constant buzz of incidents, problems and encounters’ (p.393). Similar to many headteachers, my participants all mentioned their heavy work schedules. ‘I work ridiculous hours’ (Graham); ‘I work six days a week – because we have Saturday school too’ (Eva). Peter summed up how he felt at the end of each working day, ‘by quarter past four, I’m out of here – not physically, just mentally because it can be a carousel of like, ‘Bang, Bang, Bang’ – no time for me to reflect’.

However, on top of the usual demands which headteachers of any school have to deal with, the urban headteacher is faced with additional problems and demands which are specific to his or her type of school (McNulty, 2005). All of the headteachers talked about the difficulties and problems they encountered in the early days of their headships which were far more acute than they were by the time I interviewed them. This is perhaps unsurprising as the headteachers are most likely to have stayed precisely because they were able to overcome their schools’ most pressing and challenging problems in the first years of headship. These initial years of headship can be the most challenging for a new headteacher (Bubb and Earley, 2013; Fidler and Atton, 2004). However, even now the heads still had to contend with challenging situations which reflect the specific issues of working in disadvantaged London schools.

The challenges which the heads encounter are discussed in the following section and include: dealing with children’s behaviour and emotional issues and the

efforts involved engaging with a diverse group of parents; dealing with the challenge of ensuring that their schools achieve and maintain high standards of teaching and learning; the difficulties of dealing with staffing issues, particularly with underperforming staff; and coping with the pressures of intensified accountability measures. The primary schools in which these headteachers work typify inner London contexts as discussed in chapter 1: high rates of mobility of children and families; highly diverse populations where a significant proportion of children and families have English as an additional language; higher than average rates of poverty which can often lead to acute learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Many families face social and economic difficulties around housing, health and finance so that supporting education may be much less of a priority for them. Thus, all the concerns which the heads confront are magnified by the overarching challenge of working in an inner London school.

6.3.2 Behaviour Issues

'At least the children aren't now fighting and bouncing off the walls' (Graham).

Challenging pupil behaviour and the lack of support from leaders in a school in tackling poor behaviour are key reasons given by teachers who leave the profession, and leave disadvantaged schools in particular (Smithers and Robinson, 2005; Tikly, 2013). This is certainly the case for teachers in inner London schools. My headteacher participants all appeared to respond to teachers' concerns by showing support to their staff in dealing with challenging behaviour and troublesome pupils. However dealing with poor pupil behaviour is widely reported to be a significant challenge for many headteachers (Houle, 2006; Lupton and Thrupp, 2013; Riley, 2006). Indeed the London headteachers

indicated that behaviour issues were particularly challenging in their initial years of headship. Tikly (2013) argues that the poor behaviour often seen in the disadvantaged school differs significantly from a school which does not have the same level of disadvantage. This is mainly because schools have to deal 'with the emotional and psychological needs of disadvantaged learners from diverse backgrounds' (p.6). Indeed violence has been identified as a characteristic of many schools in disadvantaged contexts (Tikly, 2013). Violence emerged as a feature in three headteachers' schools.

David explained that when he became Head of Beaumont in the late '80s, he had to deal with some very violent behaviour. He added, 'we were blacklisted by supply agencies - it was too dangerous'. David explained that he recruited teachers who were 'heavy men' and admitted that 'some of them couldn't teach for toffee but they could withstand someone throwing a punch at them'. Maguire et al., (2006) found that the new urban headteachers in their study focused initially on ensuring that behaviour policies were in place before attending to curriculum issues. This was certainly the case for David whose first concern was to create a safe environment by tackling poor behaviour. When that was achieved, his focus switched to ensuring quality teaching and learning was taking place. He explained, 'Once we had become an average school, I could see the children deserved better - we had poor quality teaching. So our [heavy] men left, new people came in, we got some fantastic teachers'. Although overt violence is no longer a problem at Beaumont, they still deal regularly with difficult behaviour, but David explained that the 'problem children' the school has now are those that 'we would have laughed at ten years ago'.

Graham also talked about challenging behaviour problems when he arrived at Ridgeway. However, unlike David, Graham dealt with poor behaviour issues alongside his staffing issues. As Graham explained, only by addressing the whole school culture of teaching, learning and expectations, could he have a significant impact on incidences of violence and poor behaviour. As a result of his strategies for overall school improvement, there has been ‘a massive reduction with our behaviour incidents’. Consequently, Graham said that he now has a school where ‘the children aren’t fighting and bouncing off the walls’.

All the headteachers had stories about incidences of violent and poor behaviour in their schools, and all were committed to tackling these problems whenever they arose. The heads revealed that they took a tough line on problem behaviour, but they also talked about the importance of being ‘constantly positive with the kids’ (Graham) and being ‘100% positive with the children’ (David). In general, I found that the headteachers showed deep understanding of the complex and challenging contexts in which the children lived. In dealing with the children’s difficult behaviour and emotional issues, they showed empathy towards the children and their families.

6.3.3 Parents

‘Lots of parents came in to hit me ...’ (David)

Studies reveal how parent relations feature largely in a headteacher’s work (Lupton and Thrupp, 2013; Thomson, 2009). In disadvantaged primary schools, the problems which parents present can be very different from those in more

affluent contexts. In London where parent bodies are culturally, socially and economically diverse, a headteacher needs to be adept at relating to and working alongside *all* the parents for the good of their children. As Eva pointed out, ‘if a parent has got problems we have to help them resolve those problems in order for their children to flourish’.

The headteachers I interviewed reported difficulties in engaging parents and placating more challenging parents. Many of the parents in their schools have to raise their children in often very chaotic and unstable situations, and the headteachers gave examples of how parents sometimes responded to them with abuse and violence. For example, David said that when he arrived at Beaumont, ‘lots of parents came in to hit me [and] I took out injunctions on parents for this and that’. Graham described a particularly harrowing incident at a parents’ evening with a child’s mother:

There was this very large 6 foot 4 lady [...] basically threw me about like a ragdoll in front of lots of other parents [and] she kept slapping me about until I told someone to phone the police.

Revell (1996) claims that incidents such as assaults by parents can have ‘intense emotional effects for heads, often accentuating their feelings of preoccupation, uncertainty and anxiety’ (p.394).

Peter also reported how difficult encounters with parents could be upsetting. He explained how there are parents in his school with whom he has had ‘stern words’. He recounted an incident with one father of a child: ‘There was one in

particular where ... well there was shouting – it wasn't my finest hour. You know when someone takes you to the brink? ... then last year, I blew'.

Josephine, spoke about how she attempted to handle difficult situations with abusive parents, explaining that she had a 'simple philosophy' to remain detached from the problems that the parents presented. However, she talked about a specific incident when 'a mad parent' was particularly threatening and she was worried about the threat of violence because, 'I never knew when I went out at night whether he was going to machete me'. Despite Josephine's tactic of attempting to distance herself from parent problems, her case highlighted Revell's (1996) suggestion that troubling parent encounters can cause anxiety and distress. Josephine was clear however that 'at no point did I ever want to give up'. Similarly none of the other heads interviewed revealed that violent challenges made them want to leave their posts.

Despite the difficulties that most of the headteachers appeared to have with some challenging parents, they showed compassion towards the parents and the conditions in which many had to live and raise their children. This is highlighted by the views of most of the headteachers in Lupton and Thrupp's (2013) study who were 'empathetic rather than judgemental or moralising' (p.799). Dealing with difficult parents was a significant challenge for most of the headteachers, however overcoming these challenges brought great rewards. They all worked hard to integrate parents into the life of the school and believed that the children's parents and families were key to the success of each child. The heads utilized the diversity of their parents as a powerful resource to help build a sense of

community and belonging in the school. For example, David said: 'I have worked hard to get every ethnic community in this school involved so there's no hiding in corners. We are all together'. In particular David, Eva, Peter and Josephine emphasised the community nature of their schools. Josephine had a special space built in the school for the children's families. She explained:

We did a lot of family learning during the week and weekend [and] we had a 'Community House' built [where] I could create something that was like home. I wanted to welcome the parents in and say "Come on, you're part of this".

Indeed the heads' firm belief in creating partnerships with the parents echo McNulty's (2005) view that 'parents must be treated as partners in the enterprise of giving their children an education' (p.87). While all headteachers would subscribe to this philosophy, realising inclusion in complex settings of diversity is harder to achieve. Undoubtedly, the active involvement of the parents in the life of the school strengthens the school community and engenders a sense of belonging, not just for the parents and children but for all the staff too. The heads in my study demonstrate that by nurturing the parents in helping create a close school community also appeals to the teachers in their schools. The stayers interviewed for this study value the sense of community and 'family' which their schools offer. Many of the stayers point to the fact that this is particularly important given that some of the schools are located in somewhat marginalised neighbourhoods and/or where the wider community life is rather more fragmented than cohesive.

6.3.4 The teachers

'Employing really good teachers is the key to having a really good school'
(David)

The teacher stayers in my study nearly all mentioned they had 'good' headteachers who engendered a sense of loyalty in their staff. Similarly the heads I interviewed looked for 'good' teachers who they could trust and who would, in Eva's words, ensure that the children in their classes 'get at least good teaching on a day-to-day basis ... so the [children's] life chances are evened out'.

In urban schools such as the London schools in my study, attracting and retaining quality teaching staff is a challenge for headteachers (Lupton and Thrupp, 2013). Yet, as David acknowledged, 'employing really good teachers is the key to having a really good school'. This is vital in hard-to-teach London schools such as the ones in my study, where typically children enter school with lower than average levels of attainment (Lupton, 2004). Graham began to tackle poor teaching standards straight away which resulted in a major staff turnover but one where, in his view, he 'never lost a good teacher'. Thomson (2009) discusses how much of a headteacher's time is taken up with staffing matters which includes supporting existing staff to teach well, hiring good teachers but also 'dealing with incompetence' (p.82).

In Earley et al's (2011) study on new headteachers in urban schools, they found that one of the main challenges the heads faced was 'dealing with ineffective staff' and 'restructuring staffing' (p.22). Of all the heads, Graham had the most challenging task of overhauling the staff in his school. Staff morale was low, there

was minimal trust between staff and leadership, much of the teaching was poor and many non-teaching staff behaved unprofessionally. Prior to changing the staff and teaching structure at Ridgeway, Graham thought a lot about what it is to be a good headteacher. He said it was important for him from the outset to ‘vocalize his moral purpose’ as a head. Graham was acutely conscious of the fact that in removing many staff members, he was ‘dealing with livelihoods’ and had to face ‘the cost on human beings’. But always at the centre of his decisions lay his commitment to provide the children with the best education possible. He explained, ‘I had taken myself through that whole process and aligned myself to it on a human level [which] informs my convictions as a leader’. Graham argued that being a headteacher is about *who* he is and this event served to highlight his belief. As Franey (2002) says in her account of her time as a headteacher of a disadvantaged primary school, the ‘transmission of my values and beliefs was of fundamental importance’ (p.32).

Hand in hand with the pressure to recruit and maintain a good and effective teaching staff is the need for care and compassion for teachers and all staff. The pressure to raise and maintain standards as well as the pressure to respond to growing levels of accountability, all within a challenging disadvantaged context, unsurprisingly takes its toll on all teachers’ emotional wellbeing (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). David talked about how, ‘you get some really fragile people ... you have to look after them and care for them’. The teachers in my study nearly all acknowledged that their headteachers cared deeply about their teachers’ wellbeing and this contributed to their becoming stayers.

Crawford (2009) talks about how leaders of schools take on the emotions and problems of other people in their schools and suggests that heads become ‘psychological containers for other people’s emotions’ (p.77). All the heads indicated that they needed to be aware of the emotional tide of their schools and three of them said that being ‘emotionally intelligent’ is a crucial part of the job. Crawford (2009) argues that ‘leading any school is a role that requires emotional skill, and some schools require more of such skills than others’ (p.153). I would suggest that hard-to-teach urban primary schools are those where emotional intelligence is most needed. Certainly, Peter was particularly concerned about the emotional wellbeing of his teachers and had introduced some school funded activities and support networks to help alleviate stress. He spoke of teaching as being a profession where ‘there aren’t any perks’. He explained:

It’s tough now, I mean it’s always been tough, but the accountability now is so high that that’s why I’ve got to keep people safe. One of my Reception teachers, she’s giving up after 4 years of being a teacher. She’s given up on teaching, it’s really sad. We trained her, she’s great – but it’s tough.

All the headteachers talked of the emotional health of their staff and wanted happy and harmonious schools. It would appear that teachers’ emotional wellbeing has always been an issue for heads of urban schools. Josephine explained that when she was a headteacher, she was very concerned to ‘take that emotional stress off them’. She added:

I also told them that it was no good if there was all work and no play. Very very concerned, I tried to cut down on the paper work, because for me, the most important thing, especially in inner city schools, was being there for the kids, fresh and ready.

With the heads I interviewed, teachers' and children's wellbeing were vitally important to the running of a good school. Josephine said she feared that too many heads now are 'led by results' and said, 'if you lead the school for results, it's not going to be a good school, bottom line. In my book, you've forgotten that wellbeing bit'.

The heads revealed that at a time when the demands of teaching have become intensified, they need to invest a great deal of time building and nurturing relationships with their teachers thus resulting in a greater likelihood that their teachers choose to stay. Certainly for the teacher stayers in my study, these positive relationships with their heads are a key factor in prompting them to stay. It would appear that the headteachers *model* what it is to be a stayer, and furthermore, what it is to be a stayer in a challenging London school.

6.3.5 Managing accountability pressures

'We are under constant pressure for results' (Graham)

Every headteacher I interviewed talked about the pressure of either achieving or maintaining high teaching standards. As Earley et al. (2009) found in their study on urban headteachers, 'improving pupil progress and raising standards at a rapid pace' (p.22) was a key challenge they all faced. This is a particularly significant challenge for the urban head, given the lower attainment levels with which many of the pupils begin their schooling (Tikly, 2013). Graham explained, 'we are under constant pressure for results, constant pressure with new initiatives'. He argued that it is much harder for disadvantaged schools because, 'you're dealing with context pressure [as well] that you're not necessarily dealing with

elsewhere'. Similarly Eva suggested that the intense scrutiny schools receive can be 'demoralising'. She said:

I just think we're working in a system that is all stick and no carrot. I get frustrated by Ofsted and how it's always changing and how they're always moving the goalposts. It's very difficult for schools like this to get an 'outstanding' ... I think that sometimes they make it very difficult for people to stay in disadvantaged settings like this.

However, John suggested that even with the recent 'outstanding' report his school received from Ofsted, he was still concerned about the 'raised expectations of Ofsted' and 'the added pressures that have come in'. He was also mindful of the fact that 'you're compared with previous results as well as with other schools'. Peter explored this theme in more detail and talked about the fact that even though their results have greatly improved in recent years, he is acutely aware of the importance of maintaining high standards otherwise Ofsted will 'be all over us like a rash'. Like Graham, although he is not keen on the high stakes nature of the testing regime, he concedes that, 'you'd be a mug not to prepare the [children], not to get them test ready'. Similar to John, Peter is mindful that he is compared to other schools in the borough as well as with his previous results year on year. He put it bluntly, 'I mean I'm one year's set of data from 'bye bye, you're off'. Peter's comment echoes a point made by Earley et al. (2011) who found that the new heads in their study were aware that 'without increasing or maintaining standards, their jobs were on the line' (p.23). The pressure to achieve and maintain high standards is particularly acute in disadvantaged settings as the heads in my study attest to. As Webb et al. (2012) found from their study of English and Finnish primary headteachers, '... the growing intimidatory tone of

the accountability attached to policy requirements was cited as creating new sources of anxiety and generally contributing to making the job additionally stressful' (p.154).

When talking about the external accountability pressures placed on heads and teachers, the headteachers were clear that such measures were not what they valued in education. They talked a lot about finding a way to stay true to their core values and beliefs, and ultimately how they identified themselves as headteachers. For Eva, this was something she found challenging. She talked about the fact that she did not agree with the ranking of schools in league tables but conceded that, 'if I want to do this job, then I have to work in that system'. Graham also articulated how he managed to balance external expectations with his own values, 'you have to align your personal vision, your personal morality with what it looks like to do the job well'.

Supporting the wellbeing of all their staff is a significant challenge for the headteachers and one of which they are mindful. However, they also have to attend to their own emotional wellbeing. Earley et al. (2011) suggest it is 'perhaps urban heads more than others, [who] need to demonstrate the qualities of resilience, persistence and emotional and contextual intelligence' (p.22). The heads in my interviews believed that having heads in schools such as theirs who could stay the course, despite the challenges they face, is crucial if the teachers and the staff are to stay too. As Graham explained heads in schools like his need to stay and shape the culture and be a role model to others. He compared heads who stay with those who do not, 'I know Heads who have gone into schools and

transformed schools - they put in lots of systems, results go up, they've left and then the school falls apart'. My headteachers participants appear to be committed to ensuring their schools do not 'fall apart' if and when they eventually decide to leave. They recognise the power of staying for both teachers and for headteachers in urban schools.

6.4 What are their motivations for staying?

'I'm blessed to do the job I do' (Eva).

All the headteachers in my study reported that they relished their jobs. For example, Eva said of her job, 'I'm very lucky that I'm blessed to do the job I do. Not every moment (laughs), but most of the time I love it'. David said, 'I've stayed because I look forward to coming into work every day. I stay because I've got a job that I love'. What is it about the job which they enjoy so much and which keeps them coming into school day after day despite the challenges they face? There are three key reasons which the headteachers identified that motivate them to stay: the children, their colleagues and having inspiring challenges. The salary issues also featured in at least one of the headteachers' motivations to stay.

6.4.1 The children

'I stay because ... I love the kids' (David)

A theme, which ran through all of the interviews, was that of the children: 'the main drive is about the children in the school' (John) and 'everything I did was about the children and *their* learning and *their* wellbeing' (Josephine). Other comments centred on the headteachers' feelings about their relationships to and with the children in their schools, such as Graham, 'I care about the kids' and

Peter who said the job was all about ‘the smiles, the laughter of the kids’. David said: ‘I just *love* the kids, I *really* love the kids’. The heads’ commitment and attachment to the children is reflected in many studies on headteachers (for example: Bristow et al., 2007; Earley et al., 2011; Ylimaki et al., 2007). Earley et al. (2011) reported that the heads in their study had, ‘deeply held, children-centred values and commitment’ (p.18). Revell (1996) reported in a study based on his own headteacher experience and interviews with 24 headteachers, that all his respondents ‘revealed an intense rapport and enjoyment when recounting their time spent with children during the day’ (p.395). However, for my urban headteachers, there was an added dimension to their commitment to the children in their schools. The headteachers were clear that working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds was especially rewarding and a significant motivating factor for remaining in their schools.

What emerged in the interviews was that the heads were all too aware of the difficulties the children in their schools faced. The heads felt they and their schools were responsible for making up for what the children lacked in their own homes and providing stability for those children with turbulent family lives. David talked about the dependent nature of many of the children, ‘a lot of them aren’t given affection, so we have a reputation as a school that will hug our children’. David is so invested in caring for his children that he continues to care for them long after they have left primary school. ‘Our children from Beaumont who have left and then have got excluded know they can come back’. David’s attitude reflects McNulty’s (2005) argument that investing time and resources in difficult students is ‘a necessary investment in the creation of a decent

environment and respectable community' (p.142). All the headteachers wanted their schools to be places which felt like 'home' to the children and their families. Peter talked about how he would come in often in the weekends to run activities for the children. He explained how the Sunday before our interview, 'one of the Reception kids had a birthday party here, so I opened up the school so they didn't have to pay for the caretaker – I just want to do it for them'.

Although the headteachers were acutely aware of the difficult and often troublesome backgrounds of the children and families of their schools, they did not consider their schools or their children as 'victims' of their circumstances. Ylimaki et al. (2007) highlight this point in their review of a large international study which examined successful headteachers of challenging schools:

... while all of the principals recognized and had empathy for the barriers to learning that poverty can produce, none allowed these conditions to be used as excuses for poor performance' (Ylimaki et al., 2007, p.378).

Similarly the headteachers I interviewed had very high expectations of what the children could achieve. Eva said that it is because of the challenges that schools like hers are, 'more outward looking ... because we don't feel like we have all the answers'. But at the same time she stresses, 'that doesn't simply mean we're needy'. Eva firmly believes that schools like hers should 'strive for excellence [...] we don't make excuses for not achieving well'. She is quite clear that being in a disadvantaged school means that, 'you've *got* to believe that all children can succeed, because unless you believe that ... those children are not going to get there'. Peter also took up this theme and talked about having high expectations and belief in the children, 'Yes! You *can* do it with these children'. He said that

when he took the headship of the school, ‘there was this perception of ‘what do you expect from children at Gainsborough?’ Peter answered this emphatically, ‘actually I expect an awful lot’.

The most significant reason the heads gave for remaining in their jobs was to make a difference to the children in their care. Three of the heads (Eva, Graham and Peter) used the term ‘to make a difference’ for the children in their schools and they explained how they worked to do just that in their schools. Although David and John did not use the term, their interviews revealed that ‘making a difference’ was exactly what they were doing to help the children in their schools succeed against the odds. Many headteachers, regardless of the contexts in which they work, may also cite ‘making a difference’ as a key motivation for remaining in their posts. What distinguishes these inner London heads is that their commitment to principles of social justice are enacted on the ‘frontline’ of the London schools. As Day (2005b) argues, for urban heads such as those in my study the principles of ‘equity and social justice’ are integral to the headteachers’ practices rather than “‘value-added’” components of service’ (p.577). The heads in my study carry out their urban commitment each day in their schools, making often difficult decisions about children’s lives and futures with the vision that the children’s, ‘disadvantage and poverty [won’t] be a predictor of what they achieve later on’ (Eva).

6.4.2 Colleagues

'I've got strong relationships with members of staff here' (Peter).

As I discussed in Chapter 2, many studies attest to the importance of forming good relationships with colleagues in schools and these in turn influence a teacher's decision to remain working in a particular school (Dinham and Sawyer, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2009; Nias, 1996). For the urban teacher, good relationships with colleagues are a key reason in teachers' decisions for staying (Eslinger, 2012; McIntyre, 2010). Having supportive colleagues also strengthens a teacher's capacity for resilience, particularly in urban contexts (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Freedman and Appleman, 2009). It is, however, equally important for headteachers as it is for staff to form positive relationships in their schools (Bristow et al., 2007; Earley and Bubb, 2013). My headteacher participants all reported that one reason for remaining in their jobs was because they liked the people they worked with. This sentiment is reflected in Bristow et al.'s (2007) study of headteachers who reported that 'staff relationships were seen to offer high levels of reward and satisfaction' (p.60). This intrinsic reason for the heads to remain in their jobs is one which is highlighted by Nias (1989). She found that the new headteachers in her study didn't feel 'fully effective in their posts until they developed a reference group within them' (Nias, 1989, p.48).

All of the heads reported that they enjoyed working with their colleagues in the school. Three of the headteachers (including retired Josephine) talked specifically about their leadership teams. David said, 'I love the people I work with [...] I enjoy meeting them every day, I enjoy working with them'. Similarly Graham talked about how he enjoyed working with the people around him, 'I've got a

great leadership team [...] they've been there for me'. Although Peter also reported that he had good relationships with his staff, he talked more specifically about another 'reference group' in his school whom he referred to as his 'core group' of friends who supported him. He explained:

They're very good and actually none of them are teachers – they are the business manager ...she's my rock, and two of the TAs [Teaching Assistants] ... they're my tight group, they're my eyes and ears.

Peter relied on his 'reference group' not only to support him when he encountered difficulties but to also inform him when he was being difficult to work with. He said, 'they will tell me if I've come across a bit moody or whatever'. Bristow et al. (2007) found that nearly half of their participants relied on their administrative and support staff who 'acted as an important filter, reducing the pressures on the head by dealing with visitors, parents and administrative demands' (p.53). In disadvantaged London schools where staff turnover is characteristically high, the staff who tend to remain are the support staff and teaching assistants (who are often parents of children who attend or have attended the school). These members of staff are generally rooted in the local community. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Peter, who candidly talked about difficulties in his personal life as well as the pressures of leading his school, has made close attachments to the (stable) non-teaching staff in his school.

Certainly, at first glance, it appears that having a 'reference group' is as important for the heads as it is for the teachers if they are to stay in their schools. However, I found that the relationships heads formed with their colleagues were quite different to those of the teachers in my study. As Crawford (2009) suggests, for

headteachers the importance of being part of a 'group membership' in their school may be 'expressed in different and often subtle ways' (p.98). Crawford (2009) suggests that this may be because the headteacher's membership of a particular 'reference group' in their school can be 'more difficult in a high stakes, accountability culture' (p.98). This is perhaps because, unlike other members of the school staff, the role of the headteacher can be a lonely one (Earley and Bubb, 2013; Thomson, 2009; Webb et al., 2012) where, 'the status and overarching responsibility of headteachers/principals set[s] them apart from their staff' (Crawford, 2009, p.153). As a result, developing and maintaining friendships among the staff can be problematic for the headteacher.

The heads I interviewed also reported the problematic nature of maintaining friendships among their staff. Both John and Eva explained the tensions they faced in their positions as headteachers. Both heads had been deputies in their schools before taking on the headship role and they had built up good relationships and friendships with members of staff over time, often socialising with them outside of school. They both admitted, however, that they had to change the way they related to other members of staff in the school once they became heads. John explained, 'I've got staff that are friends [but] I don't socialize with them outside of school now' and added that he now has to make sure to 'create boundaries'. Similarly Eva found that it's not 'appropriate' to socialise with staff members in the same way as she did before. She thought that maybe others felt that she was being, '... not disloyal ... maybe changing because I was a head – I wasn't changing because I was a head, I was changing because it wasn't appropriate ... and that's the fine line'.

The headteachers also stressed the importance of having good friends or mentors among other heads, a point which is alluded to in literature on headteachers (Hayes, 1996; Maguire et al., 2006; Thomson, 2009). The heads in my study talked about seeking advice from other heads of similar schools and/or of schools in the same London borough. Graham explained:

There are two other heads that I know I can call in a crisis.
In a shot, I'd get their support, one is also a good friend
and also has similar challenges in her school around
having to deal with a lot of underperformance in staff.

In fact four of the heads specifically mentioned the support that they receive from other heads in the same borough and similar schools. For the London headteacher, this solidarity with other heads in their borough can enhance a sense of belonging and community. Both David and Josephine have had long headship careers in the same borough and Graham and Eva talked about their teachers collaborating with teachers of other schools in the locality. These relationships would no doubt reinforce my participants' 'London headteacher' identities.

Peter was perhaps the most forthcoming when talking about the emotional toll his job took on him and how his own personal problems emotionally affected him too. This meant that he has relied on the support of a coach and a counsellor as well as the kindness and support from his staff. He explained that managing his personal problems as well as his job has meant, 'I've had a couple of breakdowns, staff have seen me cry, I mean I'm human, I'm quite an emotional person, not afraid to show my sadness or my happiness'.

Having supportive colleagues and a supportive ‘reference group’ was important for the heads in my study. However, having supportive colleagues was not quite as straightforward as it was with the teacher stayers in my study. It was a more complex picture in terms of the headteachers’ role as they strived to find a balance between having good relationships with colleagues whilst at the same time being mindful of the fact that they are the ‘boss’.

Nevertheless, the headteachers did all talk about the collegiality in their schools which was vitally important to them. Creating a positive ethos and culture of belonging is hugely important in challenging contexts (Day, 2005a), a point made by my London headteachers. Research shows that schools which foster a culture of collegiality impact on teachers’ capacities to remain resilient (Gu and Day, 2007; 2013; Mansfield et al., 2012). Similarly research on headteachers shows that they too have a greater capacity for resilience if there is a collegial ethos in their school (Bristow et al., 2007; Earley et al., 2011). As McNulty (2005) found ‘there was camaraderie amongst staff, which in my experience, is rarely found outside of challenging schools’ (p.191). As chapter 5 has shown, it could be because teachers in challenging London schools share similar reasons for choosing to teach children from disadvantaged backgrounds; this common purpose may contribute to providing emotional bonds between staff. As Graham said, ‘I think people who are in disadvantaged schools are more likely to communicate why they want to be in disadvantaged schools’. Graham’s comment highlights the importance of collegiality in such urban contexts; the headteachers know that if they nurture positive relationships with their colleagues, then this fosters positive colleague relationships throughout the school. This in turn leads

to greater stability and continuity for everyone, the heads, the teachers and the school and its children.

6.4.3 Inspiring challenges

'If you don't have a challenge, you fossilize' (David)

Maguire et al. (2006) found that the headteachers in their study thrived on challenges they encountered in their jobs and suggested that 'the variety of challenges seemed to motivate and energise them' (p.121). I also found this to be the case with my headteacher participants. All the heads reported that they enjoyed their jobs and coming into work. The heads in my study revealed that they did not stay *despite* the challenges they faced in their schools, they stayed *because* of them. Indeed they even sought out further challenges to sustain their sense of purpose and commitment for the job.

The heads' experiences reflect Woods' (2002) suggestion that 'experienced motivated people who have things to offer feel they need new challenges' (p.6). Graham, Eva and Peter said that they had not quite finished what they had set out to achieve in their schools and still had a lot of work ahead of them to reach their goals. Peter talked about the fact that he was 'thrown in at the deep end' when he took his post, but that he enjoyed the challenge of 'changing practice that was poor and building a team'. Although Eva did concede that in schools, 'you've never cracked it [...] the minute you're complacent [...] you should go'. Indeed the sheer variety of the job keeps the heads challenged and motivated in their roles. Eva talked about the fact that being a head meant that she had to learn to do many things she had never done before. She explained:

I've got to be an accountant, I've got to be a project manager, I've got to understand HR procedures and risk procedures [...] and I suppose in a sense it's given me more confidence in myself that I can do things if I put my mind to it – I can learn [...] and I'm proud of what I've achieved.

Peter discussed managing the major building work which was taking place on the school grounds when I interviewed him. He said, 'this year I've got a two million pound budget but I'm not an accountant and I've got a massive building project – I know nothing about buildings!' With his investment of time and energy into this project, it may be that Peter's commitment to his school is further strengthened as he feels an increasing emotional attachment to the place as well as the people within it.

David, 25 years a headteacher in the same school, looks for external challenges to keep him stimulated. He explained, 'I have to have enough challenge ... the day-to-day challenges are fine, but I need big challenges. If you don't have a challenge, you fossilize'. When David arrived at Beaumont, the challenges with which he had to contend rushed in thick and fast and he said his 'mind was hyper active' all the time. He explained how he would walk into the school and he would have 'about 20 challenges and I would deal with them one after the other'. Woods (2002) discusses how established headteachers who have achieved what they have wanted to achieve in their own schools may 'turn outwards to other things' (p.6). David has chosen to engage in other roles outside of the school, and he has a high level of authority in the decision making of educational provision within his local authority (LA). Woods (2002) asks whether a head's change of focus means that he or she is more likely to leave the development of the school

to others. David hinted at this when he explained, ‘the curriculum is not my challenge, that’s my management team, they deal with all that’. But he also suggested that he ‘finds the money’ to put new initiatives in place. He is able to do this because of the authority he has in the LA. So while David actively sought out other external challenges, he continued to have the best interests of his own school at heart in doing so.

As previously mentioned, like teachers who need the extrinsic motivation of career development opportunities to sustain them in their jobs, headteachers also need a similar motivation to help maintain their commitment. However, in my analysis of interviews with the headteachers, it became evident that their ‘inspiring challenges’ cannot be seen simply as an ‘extrinsic’ motivation. Rather it would appear that their reasons for undertaking inspiring challenges is because at the core of their motivation is their sense of moral purpose and commitment to the school and its community.

Day’s (2005b) study on heads of challenging schools found that one of the main factors for motivating heads to remain in their schools was having a ‘sense of moral purpose and social justice’ (p.575). In particular, he found that ‘moral purposes, emotional and intellectual commitment and ethical and social bonds were far more powerful levers of leadership than extrinsic agendas’ (p.575). Having a sense of moral purpose is reflected in other literature on headteachers’ work and motivation (for example: Bristow et al., 2007; Webb et al., 2012; Ylimaki et al., 2007). Graham, who used the term ‘moral purpose’ seven times during his interview and explained how important it is as a headteacher to

‘vocalise your moral purpose’, said that, ‘my leadership is around culture, emotions and moral purpose’. What emerged from the interviews was that the heads’ desire for inspiring challenges not only contributed to their professional fulfilment, but was linked with their ‘mission’ for their disadvantaged schools and children. These challenges were a significant reason for my heads remaining in their schools.

6.4.4 The salary issue

‘We don’t get paid enough for what we do’ (Peter).

The headteachers I interviewed touched on an extrinsic factor for staying: the salary. Generally the heads responded to the salary issue when asked directly about its impact on their reasons for staying. However unprompted comments on salary as a financial reward for the job were relatively limited. I took this to indicate that other factors, as discussed above, featured far more significantly in the headteachers’ motivations for staying in their schools. As Pratt-Adams and Maguire (2009) found in their study on urban heads, perhaps my headteacher participants also found ‘that there was something less ‘acceptable’ about discussing financial rewards in a public sector occupation’ (p.123). This point was highlighted by Graham’s comment about his salary. He explained, ‘I’m at the bottom of the pay rate, so I asked for 5-7% pay rise. And I had to pluck up a lot of courage to ask for that’.

When asked, 4 out of the 5 current serving headteachers reported that they were not doing the job for financial rewards. Eva was quite clear she was not motivated by the salary or the status of the job, saying, ‘that’s really not my bag!’ Similarly,

Peter was not motivated by money and said, ‘you can’t do [this job] for the money’, although he did admit that he feels he is not paid enough and explained why, ‘Tomorrow a parent could trigger a no notice inspection and I could [lose my job]’. John was not motivated by the salary although he did suggest that heads are probably not paid enough, ‘for the amount of pressure, the demands, the public falls that you may have ...’ Graham felt he was paid enough, having received a recent pay rise, although he indicated that he was not paid enough compared to some other heads, ‘I also look at other heads who are on a lot more money than I am and think, hmmm ...’ Graham’s comment reflects the views of headteachers surveyed for a report by NCSL (2008) which found that for heads it was important for the ‘salary [to match] the size of the challenge’ (p.3). Graham did admit that, ‘Money is a little bit of a motivation – had I not had that pay rise, it would have affected me’. For Graham, salary appears to be a ‘hygiene’ factor (Nias, 1981, p.236). Although the salary is not a key motivator, dissatisfaction can result from its absence. The only headteacher who felt he could not leave his job because of the salary was David who is just a few years off retirement. He explained:

I’m on a high salary, so for another school to take me on board, they have to be able to afford me [...] I am paid very well, but I’m an expensive resource and the governors know it. They need to pay their heads well.

The issue of salary is not a clear-cut one and how important it is depends on individual circumstances. The heads generally agreed that headteachers are not paid enough. David is the exception and is the only one who admitted he was paid very well, in fact too well to leave his school. When asked about other

headteachers, David felt that there are too many ‘bad headteachers’ who are paid too well. There were some conflicting and contradictory views on the issue of salary which is in keeping with my findings of the teacher stayers (see Chapter 8). As discussed in Chapter 2, Smithers and Robinson (2003) found that salary was not so much a ‘push’ factor for teachers, but it did remain a ‘pull’ factor (p.52). In the context of the headteachers, for most of them it appeared that they would not necessarily leave their jobs for a poor salary, but a decent salary can act as an inducement to stay.

Certainly the issue of salary did not feature strongly in the heads’ decisions to remain in their schools, but it is an issue which should not be overlooked. In recent times of high stakes accountability where performance related pay has been implemented in schools, the headteachers’ salary has become more of a ‘hot topic’ particularly for heads in challenging contexts (Hodgson, 2014). Peter told me his thoughts on the subject, saying: ‘there’s a reason why people in the city get paid masses of money, because they could be gone tomorrow, it’s so cut throat. But actually it’s getting like that for heads’.

6.5 Identity and staying: What is it about *them* that makes them stay?

‘You just get on with it.’ (David)

As Graham pointed out, ‘headship is about *who* you are’. Indeed, in analysing my headteacher interviews, I realised that it is crucial to understand the heads’ sense of identity, and more specifically how their identity influences their commitment

and resilience, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of why the heads remain in their schools.

As I have previously discussed, being in a school with good leadership is a major factor influencing teachers' decisions to remain in their jobs (Hong, 2012; Miller and Chait, 2008). This is because the head of a school is instrumental in shaping the ethos and the emotional context of a school (Crawford, 2009; Wood, 2005). It follows, therefore, that *who* the headteacher is (their identity) plays a key role in building the culture of a school, affecting the lives of its children and staff and supporting the creation of the teacher 'stayer'. Graham suggested that his relationship with the people in his school is a 'reciprocal relationship' where he said, 'I've created a culture that requires them to behave in certain ways and that's informed the kind of leader I am'. The leadership of a school is, therefore, vital in 'sustaining a sense of resilience, commitment and effectiveness among staff' (Gu and Day, 2013, p.38).

When discussing what prompts them to stay, the heads all referred to the idea of perseverance or resilience in one way or another. David talked about how, over time, he has learnt how to 'just get on with it'. Two of the heads explicitly referred to resilience. Peter said he has 'an innate stubbornness and resilience' which he explained keeps him going. Graham talked about having the 'moral resilience' to keep going when facing challenges and difficulties. However, Gu and Day (2007) argue that resilience is 'not a quality that is innate. Rather it is a construct that is relative, developmental and dynamic' (p.1305). The

headteachers' stories often revealed mixtures of vulnerabilities and doubt as well as drive and resilience thus highlighting Gu and Day's (2013) argument that 'resilience itself is an unstable construct' (p.25). It is in the context of this complex relationship with identity, staying and resilience that I now turn to examine some key aspects of *who* the heads are which encourages them to stay in their schools.

6.5.1 A sense of passion and self-confidence

'It's about passion ...you've got to really believe what you're doing' (Eva)

As I previously discussed, the heads had arrived in their posts with a sense that they could do the job well, a trait which would presumably set them up for the challenges which lay ahead. In a study of 10 male headteachers in the UK, Jones (2008) found that her participants had a 'strong sense of their own abilities and in most cases an over-riding self-confidence' (p.693). This was true to some extent with all my headteacher participants, both male and female. Peter talked about the fact that he has: '... a stubbornness, some would call it obstinance, sometimes maybe arrogance. But actually I know that I'm good at what I do and I know I'm doing it for the *right reasons*' (my italics).

Peter's beliefs reflect his values for care and social justice as highlighted by his claim that he is doing the job 'for the right reasons'. I found that the heads' confidence to tackle some significant challenges was supported and fuelled by their sense of *passion* for the job of leading a challenging London school. Teachers and headteachers are emotional and passionate individuals (Crawford, 2009; Hargreaves, 1998) and their emotional investment in their work is

connected to their resilience for the job that they do (Gu and Day, 2007). The headteachers' emotional investment in their job, their sense of passion and the belief that what they are doing is for the 'right reasons' appeared to have a profound influence on their identities as heads (Crawford, 2009). Graham said, 'I try to display [...] that I'm passionate, that I care'. Eva echoed this sentiment and suggested that as a head, you can do anything 'through passion – you've got to believe it'. For Peter, having passion for his role is a key motivator as he explained, 'I'm very passionate about how they children [in my school] do'. As Nias (1996) says teachers do 'feel passionately about their pupils [...] about their colleagues and the structures of schooling' (p.293). The same is true for headteachers.

What sets the heads in my study apart from headteachers in other contexts, is that their passion for their jobs is deeply connected to doing the best for the children from disadvantaged backgrounds and helping them overcome the odds. Their passion appears to be for the particular type of school they work in. As John explained, he is passionate about, 'inspiring, giving warmth' to children 'who don't have the stability or the advantages that some others have'. Nias (1996) argues that feeling passionate about the job is not merely some 'romantic fiction dreamt up by progressive writers and teachers' (p.293), but, she claims, it reflects a teacher's conviction for the job that they do. In a study of headteachers Crawford (2009) found with the headteachers she interviewed, they communicated a 'passion for changing and influencing what went on in their schools ...' (p.149). It would appear that the term 'passion' indicates an emotional conviction and commitment to the job which guides the headteachers,

not only to achieve their goals and persist in their jobs, but which also contributes to their sense of identity and to staying in their schools.

Despite the fact that the heads revealed a certain self-confidence, it would be incorrect to assume that their sense of self-confidence is a stable construct. In fact this aspect of their identity is as fluid and as shifting as their sense of identity itself. Pratt-Adams and Maguire (2009) also found that the urban headteachers in their study revealed confidence about doing their job, but they suggested that ‘their capacity to manage well and assert themselves as heads involved a recognition of potential vulnerability’ (p.119). Certainly Eva’s confidence in her ability to do her job well was inextricably linked to her sense of self. She explained:

It’s sometimes hard to kind of hold on to your sense of confidence in what you’re doing because so many things come at you, so many things come from all directions, you can lose your sense of self sometimes.

But then Eva also talked about how taking on new challenges in her role and explained that, ‘the [challenges] have given me more confidence, in a sense, in one way, in myself that I can do things if I put my mind to it – I can learn’. Graham talked about how his levels of confidence were affected by both his personal and professional lives, and explained that since being a headteacher, ‘I feel a little bit more confident personally. Maybe they work hand in hand. Because things in my personal life make me feel professionally more confident and vice versa’.

Crawford (2009) suggests that having emotionally positive relationships with staff can affect the head’s capacity to sustain his or her role. I now turn to one aspect of

the heads' identity, which they all claimed as an important part of being a headteacher: being positive and having a sense of humour.

6.5.2 Positivity and a sense of humour

'You cannot run a school without a sense of humour' (David)

Mansfield et al.'s (2012) respondents reported that a sense of humour was part of what they termed the 'emotional dimension' of resilience. They found that it was important to be 'positive and optimistic, despite challenges' (p.361). All of the headteachers in my study talked about the importance of being a positive role model in their schools. All of them used 'upbeat' language to underline how important it was for them to instil these positive qualities in their schools, particularly because many of the children have difficult home lives. Eva talked about having a 'positive environment' and characterised her school as 'an optimistic school'. Graham talked about how he is 'friendly' and 'smiley' and explained how important it was to be 'constantly positive with kids, I'm constantly smiling'. Josephine also explained how important it was for the staff to see their head smiling, 'however bad things got, you just smile – you walk around the school smiling'. John talked about being 'happy' and creating a 'happy culture and happy ethos'. Maguire et al. (2006) found that the heads in their study reported needing 'energy, resilience, enthusiasm and a sense of humour' with the 'ability to laugh' (p.57) being particularly important in the role of headteacher. It is particularly important in an urban school where humour can help diffuse potentially challenging situations as well as relieve some of the emotional stresses which staff face working in such contexts.

The headteachers I interviewed were all cheerful and likeable people. Five of the six headteachers made jokes during the course of their interviews. David was adamant that having a sense of humour has been crucial to his identity as a headteacher and claimed that a sense of humour is needed to run a school, particularly one such as his, and added, 'you cannot deal with the stuff they throw at you without a sense of humour'. David, described himself as 'a lively chirpy chap' when he was a teacher, and when he became a head at Beaumont, he said: 'Dealing with everyone else's problems changed my perspective and when I came to Beaumont, I realised they needed someone they could rely on. They didn't need someone who was walking around moaning all the time'.

This appeared to be a significant moment in David's leadership style, for he seemed to align his own personal 'chirpy' demeanour to his role as a headteacher. David explained this transition in his early difficult days at Beaumont when, he described what his major strategy for leading Beaumont would be: 'I went in with a sense of humour [...] and was endlessly positive'. David also talked about morale, explaining that he 'spent the day walking the corridors, going in and out of classes, in and out, in and out [...] and raised morale the best I could'.

David emphasised how crucial it was (and still is) to remain positive and have a sense of humour. He used the term 'humour' a total of ten times in his interview, outnumbering any of the other headteachers' references to humour. Having sense of humour is also highlighted in the literature on headteachers, such as Franey, 2002, Crawford, 2009 and Kent, 2011 which discusses the importance of being able to laugh, especially in challenging situations. Through his years of

experience, David has clearly identified humour as not being merely a frivolous extra to a headteacher's identity, but rather a key factor in boosting staff morale and helping bolster and maintain a sense of resilience (both his own and his teachers' resilience), particularly during tough times.

However, humour may also be used as a resistance strategy in different ways. In their research of humour in a corporate workplace, Rodrigues and Collinson (1995) found that 'resistance through humour [...] constitutes a safety valve for 'letting off steam'' (p.743). They also found that humour can also be used to resist tensions or difficulties in an organisation. The heads appeared to use humour as a way to release some of the tensions of leading a challenging school as well as using it to strengthen bonds with staff and boost morale. In my participants' schools, where the daily challenges of urban school life can be at times overwhelming, the heads' use of humour in this way could also be interpreted as one way of resisting tensions and difficulties; perhaps by dissolving these tensions before they become too overpowering. In this way, they were able to sustain their own 'staying' and influence their staff to stay working with them in their schools.

6.5.3 Family and friends

'The family have been important' (David)

When the heads talked about the support of people close to them who had sustained them in being stayer-heads in their challenging schools, discussion invariably led to the importance of work-life balance. The heads talked about their *personal* selves in their personal lives and how this was linked to their roles as

headteachers. All the heads appeared to grapple with reconciling their personal lives with their professional lives. Although they talked about boundaries within their personal and professional lives, these limits were not particularly clear-cut.

One approach most of the headteachers take is to ensure that they reserve their feelings of doubt and anxiety for people in their personal lives. Pratt-Adams and Maguire (2009) found that their urban headteacher respondents did not ‘talk too much about fears and anxieties to anyone other than trusted and supportive partners outside of the school setting’ (p.124). David learnt early on in his career as a head that ‘you don’t show [your feelings] to the people who rely on you’. Certainly having a headteacher who appears to be ‘in charge’ of the school inspires confidence in teachers. This is particularly important in challenging schools as a confident and strong may also be instrumental in prompting teachers to stay. Indeed, when David was asked how he overcame the challenges he faced, he talked about the importance of his family. He explained how there was a time in his career when he was ‘having a hard time’, so he went to a very experienced headteacher in another similar school who told him it was crucial to separate his home and work life. He explained the moment when he realised he had ‘two different lives’, he worked hard to ‘try to keep them separate’ in order to sustain his energy and commitment to the job. He even suggested that he tries to ensure that ‘when [I] go home, work doesn’t exist’. However I think this would be particularly difficult, if not impossible, for any headteacher to achieve. David himself admitted that he has endured many challenging times in his school and he has turned to his family because ‘the family have been important’. At the time I interviewed him, the school was mourning the passing of one of its teachers and

David said that he was going through a particularly hard time. He explained how his wife and own children 'are being a hundred percent supportive – they just want to hug me when I come home'. It is apparent that in an otherwise relatively isolating role which is compounded by the challenges of leading a disadvantaged urban school, the heads are fortified in their resolve through the support and love of the people closest to them.

Similarly Eva found that there were times when she could not share her thoughts with others and said that, 'you can't show other people that you're wavering about things, or you're not sure'. In such challenging contexts, the headteacher who appears to be emotionally robust may help teachers, particularly less experienced teachers, feel 'safe' and thus prompt them to stay in their schools. For all the headteachers, keeping their thoughts to themselves was an isolating experience and thus the support of those outside of school was all the more crucial. Eva suggested that in these situations, 'you can lose your sense of self sometimes'. Apart from talking to her mentor, Eva said that she relied on 'people around me outside of school [who] shape my own belief in myself, of who I am'. She explained further what she meant by this saying that the people closest to her are 'like a sounding board for what you're doing and how you're doing it – and also to give you confidence in yourself'. Eva highlights Giddens's (1991) argument that a person's self-identity has to be 'more or less continually reordered against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life' (p.186). Eva appeared to be particularly self-reflective which was perhaps especially important for her as she admitted that 'sometimes you do doubt yourself'.

Nearly all of the headteachers I spoke to indicated that they had moments of doubt, but in varying degrees, which made them reflect on their judgments and themselves. John talked about moments of self-doubt and said in his interview that he does ask himself, “Am I doing a good job?” ‘Am I doing the right thing?’ Similarly Peter asked the same question of himself and explained, ‘I guess I have this façade that I’m quite brash and confident, but that’s not me ... I do doubt myself all the time’. Much of this is to do with the fact that the heads themselves rarely receive recognition for the work they do and like everyone else, they need the reassurance and validation that as heads they are doing a good job.

Peter was the only headteacher who revealed that his family situation contributed to his sense of stress. For Peter, to be able to show his emotions is important to him because the school is a place of comfort and safety for him where he feels he can ‘be himself’. Crawford (2009) suggests that in primary schools ‘there is far less margin for barriers between those in leadership positions and what happens to people emotionally’ (p.136). She also suggests that ‘compassion and sustainability are inextricably linked’ (p.137) and if headteachers’ emotional needs are not met, then it is harder for them to remain in their roles. Peter was acutely aware of the emotional toll that working in an urban school had on him and his staff and how his personal life ‘spills’ into his professional life and vice versa. He explained how he never ‘switches off’ and said, ‘you take it in your stride and you think, yeah, I’m doing OK, but there will be low days’.

Many of the participants in my study report that the challenging London schools in which they work are highly charged environments where emotions can be

intense and at times overwhelming. Peter's example of openly displaying his emotions to his staff is perhaps not what Crawford (2009) implied when she suggested that 'headteachers [...] are expected to express their emotions in a certain way' (p.131). Graham and Josephine perhaps reflect a more typical manner in which a headteacher expresses their emotions. Like David and Eva, they talked about keeping their feelings and concerns to themselves. Josephine referred to herself as the teachers' 'protector' whose job it was to mitigate the effects of emotional stress on the teachers. Josephine did admit that although she was good at keeping school problems away from her personal life, there were times where this was not possible. It was in these moments that her family were very supportive and of great comfort to her.

Graham also talked about the responsibility of a headteacher's job which involved keeping his own emotions to himself. He explained, 'I think I feel a lot more than what I display'. He talked about times 'where I've felt I've been hanging on by a thread' but at these moments he is good now at 'seeking other people who can support and influence me'. For Graham, close friends are important where he does not hold back his feelings of uncertainty and is not 'shy in saying 'I don't know what to do here''. In many ways, the support which the heads receive from family and friends sustains them in their headship role while protecting their teachers from their own doubts and insecurities. In doing this, the heads create a caring climate which contributes towards staying for both the headteacher and the teachers.

While most of the heads were keen to shield their teachers from their problems, Peter is comfortable about showing his feelings. It could be argued that as a result he is also creating a caring school culture where it is acceptable to open and emotional when the need arises. Sharing emotions can be a bonding experience and many of the teacher stayers in my study talked about the fact that there are not enough opportunities to express and talk about emotions. By fostering an openly emotional school environment where teachers feel free to express themselves in this way may well encourage some teachers to stay.

The headteachers in my study have transitioned from their class teacher identities, to headteacher identities. Some of them, such as Eva and John, appeared to be encumbered by aspects of their teacher identities when confronting difficult situations (such as having to reprimand members of staff). Other heads who have been stayers for much longer, like David and Josephine, while conscious of the pressures on the teachers in their school, had firmly established their headteacher identities. As with the teacher stayers in my study, the heads' professional identities as London headteachers appear to develop over time responding to different contextual situations, relationships and other influences.

Certainly, all the heads in my study drew strength from their own values and beliefs, or in other words, their sense of vocation. For the inner London headteacher, enacting their vocation on a day to day basis, often encountering the specific urban challenges as discussed in this chapter, can be emotionally exhausting. However these heads found that being among family and/or friends allowed them to reconnect with their personal identities and in doing so helped

them validate their professional identities. Perhaps being with those closest to them allowed the heads a chance to reflect on who they are and why they do what they do. In this way they reflect Giddens's (1991) argument that 'the reflexivity of the self is continuous as well as all pervasive' (p.76).

6.6 Chapter summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to cover many aspects of the role of the inner city headteacher. There are universal challenges which all primary school headteachers encounter, but the London heads in my study face distinct challenges. For example, recruiting effective teachers who will stay the course is an issue which all headteachers encounter particularly at a time of increasing teacher shortages. However, the inner London headteacher has the added challenge of finding teachers who can be effective in an urban classroom (or at least learn to become effective) and who has a steadfast belief that disadvantaged children will achieve. Indeed the teacher and headteacher participants in my study affirm that these are the qualities an inner London teacher *must* possess. Furthermore, many headteachers regardless of their context seek out new challenges in their roles, however the London heads in my study embrace inspiring challenges *in addition* to the daily ones they encounter that relate to the structural and material disadvantages faced in their local communities by the parents and children in their schools.

I have examined the heads' challenges, their rewards, their motivations and their identities and attempted to show how each aspect of their professional (and personal) lives are intimately linked in Figure 6.1. Here I represent these concepts

as dynamically interacting with each other. The headteachers lie in the centre of the diagram; their sense of identity (which includes all those aspects which shape their identity) dialogues with their motivations (which are influenced by different factors included in the oval shape). These concepts of identity and motivation simultaneously converse in a reciprocal relationship with the heads' sense of resilience. The dynamic reciprocal relationships between these concepts are represented by the two-way arrows. To show how these conceptual relationships work in the context of one of my stayer head participants, I take the example of Graham. His sense of identity, shaped by factors such as his principles about headship of a challenging school is also strengthened by and strengthens his sense of resilience (for example returning to school the day after a parent attacked him). These aspects also influence Graham's motivations for staying as a head in Ridgeway (for example, for the sake of the children who he believes deserve the best school experience he can provide). At the same time these same motivations strengthen his sense of identity and resilience to do the job he does and stay at his school.

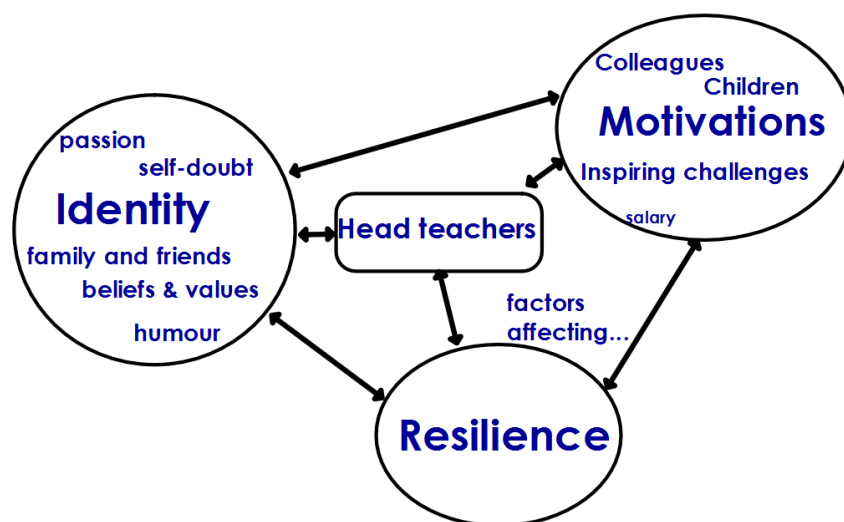


Figure 6.1 Headteachers – Identity, Motivation, Resilience

During my analysis, it became clear that the job of a headteacher is about *who* they are. They all have a ‘strong sense of identification with their jobs’ (Hayes, 1996, p.387). The key theme which permeated all the headteachers’ interviews was their passion and commitment to the children they serve. The headteachers were motivated to give their children the best possible start to their lives. The heads’ core values and beliefs about education informed many of their decisions and actions even when it was difficult to do so, such as in disciplining staff. Similar to the teacher stayers discussed in Chapter 5, these heads had ‘beliefs and assumptions about [the] self’ (Nias, 1996, p.297), which influenced their identities as urban stayer-headteachers. Indeed this chapter can be framed within the theoretical concept of identity and motivation underpinning the research. It would appear that the heads possess a core sense of identity embodied by their values and beliefs which they seek to defend and protect when making decisions about the type of London headteacher they are and wish to be.

However, although the headteachers reported how they were guided by, to use Graham’s term, their ‘moral purpose’, it is frequently tested in their daily work. In order to highlight the difficulties the heads face, I have presented the urban challenges of their schools and showed how their sense of identity can be shaped by these factors. However, as in the example of dealing with difficult parents, I have also argued that the heads can turn challenges into achievements and this in turn helps strengthen their resilience and shape their sense of identity as well as their commitment to staying in their schools. Yet the concept of resilience is not easily interpreted in the headteachers’ stories of staying. The heads are resilient in

the sense that they are persistent and keep going despite the challenges they face (for example, one can imagine it took some resilience for Graham to turn up at school the day after he was attacked by a parent). However, the heads also know when to demonstrate resilience through resistance (such as protecting staff from the worst effects of policy initiatives), and when to toe the party line (such as ensuring the children are ‘test-ready’). In this way they appear to demonstrate resilience not solely by ‘bouncing back’ from adversity, but also actively resisting challenges with which they are faced. The headteachers’ stories demonstrate that resilience, or staying power, is not a ready-made packaged skill but one which is challenged by their experiences and professional relationships, as well as being strengthened by them.

The headteachers gave many reasons for staying, but it is not hard to imagine that there are probably moments when they feel they cannot continue. It may be the case that on a day to day basis, the heads know there are many people in their school who rely on them to show up; to be there to make a range of different daily decisions, both large and small; and to offer guidance, support and most importantly leadership. Undoubtedly these are key factors in why the heads ‘keep going’ in their jobs. Significantly, theirs is a high stakes job; the heads are ultimately responsible for many people’s education, livelihoods, wellbeing and careers. The heads all appear to be acutely aware of this and of the fact that leaving their posts prematurely would cause significant instability and uncertainty in their schools. This is perhaps the ultimate challenge for the urban headteacher.

All the heads thought they would most likely be in their posts for the following five years, except for David who was just a few years from retirement. For all of them though, they had a 'job to do'; in that sense they had a 'sense of mission' (Freedman and Appleman, 2009) to do the best for their schools. The heads who were in post for less than 10 years felt that there was still work to do in the school before thinking about potentially moving on.

In West-Burnham's (2009) report on outstanding leaders, he suggested that the leaders in his study had a 'strong sense of vocation' (p.13) and they also have, 'a very clear, robust and realistic sense of self. They know who they are and they are confident and comfortable in that knowledge and possess a high degree of emotional intelligence' (p.13). I agree with West-Burnham's analysis to a point. The headteachers in my study do possess a certain sense of self-belief and self-confidence in their ability to do the job. However, as research tells us, a person's identity is fluid and shifting (Giddens, 1991; MacLure, 1993) and can also be stable and unstable depending on their circumstances (Day et al., 2006a). I found that although my headteacher participants had a strong sense of vocation and a certain 'robust' sense of self too (Giddens, 1991), they are all, nevertheless, subject to doubts and anxieties about their role and who they are as headteachers. They all demonstrated how they were emotionally intelligent in their roles, which meant that they were also reflective about themselves, who they are and whether they were doing a good job. The heads work in schools where there are complex webs of human emotions and relationships and where they need to actively attend to the needs of their whole school staff, the children and their families. It was clear from the interviews that this work can take an emotional toll. The heads

themselves know the impact this can have on their own emotional wellbeing. As Peter indicated headteachers are required to be self-sufficient, but they need to have their emotional needs supported as much as the teachers themselves.

The headteachers' strengths and vulnerabilities about which they spoke reveal their humanity. It is this humanity which no doubt attracted them to lead inner London schools and which, in turn, prompts them to stay. According to the teacher stayers in my study, the headteacher is a key factor in their decision to stay in their schools. The headteachers in my study highlighted the importance of demonstrating effective leadership which includes ensuring that good teachers are hired, nurtured and encouraged. It also involves paying close attention to the professional and emotional needs of their teachers, as well as understanding how their teachers can develop and grow professionally. Furthermore, it would appear that the *staying* head encourages teachers to stay, provided that positive relationships have been established and the teacher's own beliefs and values are aligned to the head's vision for the school. It would thus appear that a headteacher who stays is instrumental in constructing the stayer teacher.

Through my analysis of the interviews, it was clear that the heads believed that it is important for the right kind of headteacher to stay in disadvantaged urban schools. For example, Eva claimed that there is no place for the 'Super Hero Head' in these types of schools: 'I don't buy into the Super Hero type of head who thinks they can come into a school like this and quickly sort it out'. My headteacher participants revealed an ongoing emotional commitment to the children, staff and families they worked with. What characterises these heads and

perhaps distinguishes them from Eva's 'Super Hero Head' example, is that they are in it for the long haul; they are in it to help improve the lives of children and of their families over time who need their primary school headteacher to champion them.

Chapter 7

Personal and Professional Identities: examining the stayer.

7.1 Introduction

Many studies on teacher identity suggest that the construction of a teacher's identity is an active and dynamic process which involves the integration of both personal and professional identities (for example: Alsup, 2006; Nias, 1996). Day and Gu (2010) argue that:

... teachers' professional identities – who they are, their self-image, the meanings they attach to themselves and their work [...] are then associated with [...] their relationships with the pupils they teach, their roles, and the connections between these, their values and their lives outside of school (Day and Gu, 2010, p.34).

In this chapter, I present the stories of four stayers who are all at different points in their teaching careers and therefore at different points in their identity development. The participants whose stories I recount are: Rosa and Amelia, two currently serving stayers, at the time of their interviews; one retired stayer, Grace, and one former stayer/leaver, Liz (See Table 7.1). I have chosen not to represent the stories of any headteachers in this chapter as I have already dedicated a chapter to the headteacher stayers in my sample (see chapter 6).

Table 7.1 Table of vignettes

Name	School biography
Amelia	8 years at Beaumont Primary. Class teacher for first 7 years, then SENCO and special needs teacher.
Rosa	8 years at Meadway Primary. Class teacher and Assistant Head
Grace	Now retired. 40 years as a primary class teacher. Last school, Rainbridge for over 20 years.
Liz	10 years at Beaumont Primary. Class teacher. Left teaching.

In this chapter, I represent the stayers' narratives through vignettes. As Ritchie et al. (2013) suggest, 'vignettes introduce an element of consistency which can be useful, allowing comparison between [...] different participants...' (p.166). The stayers were chosen for specific purposes; my intention is to highlight the differentiated nature of stayer. There is no one *typical* London stayer. First I chose to examine Amelia's narrative: a stayer who made significant changes to her role and identity in order to stay. Next, I explore Rosa, who found it difficult to juggle her leadership role alongside her classroom teacher role. This resulted in her feeling unsettled about staying. Then I recount Grace's narrative, a retired stayer. She differs from other stayers in this chapter in that she is a 'veteran' stayer, having worked in London schools for 40 years. Grace provides a valuable retrospective account of staying. Lastly I examine Liz's story of staying. Liz differs from the other stayers in this chapter because she stayed and then left. Liz's narrative problematizes the nature of staying and I wanted to explore this dimension of staying in more detail. The stayers in this chapter have been chosen

to highlight the complexity of stayers and to draw attention to the diverse nature of staying in London's challenging primary schools.

7.2 Vignette of Amelia – changing to stay

7.2.1 Constructing a teacher identity - Biography matters

Amelia's decision to become a teacher was largely influenced by her experiences with children. She explained, 'I was always really good with children having been brought up with my mum as a registered child minder and generally always found it really easy being around children'. Although Amelia's initial motivation to become a teacher was to make a career for herself, working with children was also a significant draw. Amelia described herself as 'warm and open' and also someone who 'really cares' who wants to help others and 'make a difference to others'. She went into teaching (as opposed to any other profession) because she cares about children. Now as an experienced teacher in Beaumont, she is unequivocal in her feelings for the children, 'I absolutely adore the kids'.

The theme of caring is a key feature in many of my participants' reasons for becoming teachers and staying in their schools. Indeed Hargreaves (1994) highlights how a commitment to care features significantly in people's reasons for becoming primary school teachers. Studies on teachers working with disadvantaged urban children highlight how *critical* it is for teachers to show care and empathy in their classrooms, even when it proves to be difficult to do (Brown, 2003; Gordon, 1999; Haberman and Post, 1998). One of the reasons for this, as Brown (2003) argues is that, 'the personalized care children and adolescents need is sometimes missing from urban students' homes' (p.279). He

argues that for children to learn and focus in the classroom, the children's 'need for care must be met at school' (p.279). It could be suggested, therefore, that the urban teacher who stays working in challenging contexts may need to show a greater level of care, like a kind of 'ultra' care, for their students than those teachers working in less challenging schools. The level of care shown by urban teachers is highlighted by Nieto (2003) who asserts they have, 'a *deep and abiding* care for their students' (p.11, my italics). Nieto argues that this type of care is not simply 'a show of benevolence or a gift to "the needy"' (p.11).

Certainly Amelia placed great importance on the values of care, compassion as well as empathy for others and it is a theme to which she frequently returns in her interview. Amelia's interpretation of her own life experiences and biography has clearly enabled her to empathise with others. She explained:

I'm very very good at showing empathy and being a good listener and although those are qualities I innately have, doing work for the Samaritans and the people that I've met there, they've totally confirmed that for me.

In a report on selecting successful teachers for disadvantaged urban schools in the USA, Gordon (1999) highlights the link between an urban teacher's personal history and the care they show to their students. He suggests that 'such [dedicated] teachers have a history of investing in others and emotionally becoming part of their lives' (p.305). Gordon (1999) highlights how *over time*, the urban teacher becomes a crucial part of their students' lives. Amelia draws strength and resolve from her core values which appear to act as an anchor in her personal and professional life. These aspects of who she is and how she wishes to

see herself (and have others see her) may be a key determinant in her decision to stay (du Gay, 1995).

7.2.2 The teacher identity role in ‘Putting on a Show’

Amelia was a classroom teacher for seven years before she became a full time Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and Special Needs teacher. Amelia explained how she enjoyed making a difference to children when she was a class teacher but that she started to lose the enthusiasm for delivering lessons. She said that being a class teacher meant that, ‘I would be on show’ because as a teacher she was ‘in position of control and authority’. Amelia talked about how ‘there is definitely a ‘Performance Amelia’ among people that I don’t know very well’. Perhaps her need to put on a show reveals what Giddens (1991) refers to as ‘the ideal self’ which, he suggests, ‘is a key part of self-identity because it forms a channel of positive aspirations in terms of which the narrative of self-identity is worked out’ (p.68). In this perspective, Amelia is perhaps constructing an ‘ideal self’ where in her words, ‘people see me as far more confident than I am’. In wider complex urban London settings, teachers may feel emotionally vulnerable. Therefore ‘putting on a show’ can be essential strategy for teachers to sustain their commitment and stay in their jobs.

After a few years as a class teacher, Amelia felt much of the administrative and non-contact element of teaching was taking her further away from doing what she loved: attending to the needs of underprivileged vulnerable children. In Huberman’s (1993) work on teachers’ lives, he referred to a ‘crossroads’ in a teacher’s career where he found that they need to decide whether to continue or to

leave teaching. In his study, he found several key factors which contributed to a potential decision to exit teaching: ‘fatigue, routine, frustration [and] nervous tension’ (Huberman, 1993, p.145). In Amelia’s case, leaving teaching and leaving Beaumont was not something she considered despite the fact that she was beginning to feel frustrated in her class teacher role. Olsen (2014) suggests that those who come into teaching may undergo ‘emotional distress and professional angst’ (p.87) when they are faced with the reality of the type of teacher they *have* to be compared to the type of teacher they are *expected* to be.

This ‘crossroads’ moment in Amelia’s career also reflected a ‘crossroads’ in her professional identity. It may be that Amelia experienced ‘instability’ in her identity as a classroom teacher, which supports Day et al.’s (2006a) argument that professional identities of teachers are in flux. What did appear to remain stable was Amelia’s commitment to the children she worked with and a commitment to the school. She was prepared to continue with full time class teaching until she could assume a position in Beaumont Primary where she could affect the greatest change. She continued to stay in the classroom for a number of reasons. First and foremost was the promise of being able to work more closely with individual students and attend to their emotional and special educational needs in a more direct way. Unlike many urban teachers who leave their schools at an early point in their careers, citing deficit views of their students, Amelia characterises the urban stayer who stays *because* of the children (Hunter-Quartz, 2003). Secondly, Amelia liked her headteacher, ‘I really appreciate [the Head], I think he’s a good guy, he looks out for me and he cares about me’.

A further reason which Amelia cited for having stayed as a class teacher before becoming a SENCO is her resilience. She said, 'I think I'm really resilient' but she also added:

I think I am a bit of a creature of habit, I don't think I'm someone who gets very itchy feet, I think I'm quite tolerant even if things don't make me as happy as they should.

Her comment points to the fact that as difficult and challenging as urban schools such as Beaumont can be, a teacher may have become accustomed to what is familiar and thus decide to stay rather than risk the unknown. It could be argued that her commitment to the children reflects her core values and beliefs – her 'substantial' self which persists (Bullough, 2005) despite the changes in other areas of her teacher identity. It may be that, as Troman (2008) suggests, teachers like Amelia have to 'learn to adapt their substantial selves to incorporate each new situational identity they encounter and take over' (p.630).

7.2.3 Changing identity, changing role

Over time Amelia solely taught children with special needs with the rest of her time devoted to the work of a SENCO. Beaumont Primary is unusual in that it employed Amelia as a full time SENCO and Special Needs teacher without the responsibility of a classroom. In most primary schools, SENCOs receive limited time to undertake their duties and usually have other significant teaching roles alongside their SENCO duties (Cowne, 2005; Crowther, Dyson, and Millward, 2001). In Beaumont, such was the high level of children with educational, emotional and social needs that there was a demand for a dedicated full time SENCO. Being a SENCO and all that it entails reconstructed her teacher identity

and strengthened her motivation to stay at Beaumont. Studies such as Beijaard et al., 2000 and Sachs, 2001 attest to the importance that a teacher's role has in shaping their identity. Amelia claimed that, 'being in the role of SENCO which I absolutely love and where I excel, well it's this which is keeping me here'.

Amelia is completely committed to being a SENCO and explains that her job and her role are 'the driving force in my life'. For Amelia, who has had a number of personal relationship and health challenges, work is a 'stable force day in day out which I can put all my energy and focus into, and forget about all the negative stuff in my life but focus on somebody else'. Some studies such as McIntyre (2010) and Marston et al. (2006) found that teachers' personal problems affected their work in schools and that they often turned to colleagues for support to overcome personal challenges. However, for Amelia, her problems seemed minor compared to those of the children she worked with. When asked what her main motivation for staying at Beaumont is now, she replied that it is because, 'I really care, as cheesy as that may sound, but I'm actually making a difference in my role'. Amelia enjoys the fact that she is 'much more focussed' in making a difference to children's lives and to the lives of their families. She explained that, 'it's very very easy to forget about all your own worries and all your own problems when you are with young children who have way bigger problems than me'. She talked with admiration for the children she works with:

Despite everything the [children] still get on with things, they're smiling, they're enjoying themselves...so I come away at the end of the day and think how lucky I am to work with these children ... just being with them and seeing what they are faced with and how they cope with it.

This sentiment may be a crucial aspect to the motivation of stayers working in deprived and challenging schools. Amelia clearly finds the emotional rewards of working with the children in Beaumont to be significant. In fact it appears as if the relationships she has with the children (and their families) is a two-way process where she helps them in their lives as much as they help her. Receiving such emotional rewards contributes to Amelia's sense of self-efficacy, where she sees the positive effect her work has on the children.

Amelia suggested that in her role as SENCO, she makes *more* of a difference than she did as a class teacher. She explained that she is more focused on making a difference to a child's entire wellbeing and taking actions that 'would make a life-long change'. The 'SENCO Amelia' appears to align more closely to her sense of self than the 'class teacher Amelia'. She explained that as a SENCO, she is less inclined to 'put on a show' and instead more readily shows her vulnerabilities to parents. She explained how she deals with emotionally fragile parents and, 'although I don't divulge intimate details about my personal life, I have said to parents, "I know what you're going through", so I think they have seen more of my vulnerable side'. Being a SENCO draws on so many elements of Amelia's identity which she values and feels comfortable with – with investing in others, making a difference, being open and warm. Even when things got tough at Beaumont, it was her core values and beliefs about the essential nature of her role that sustained her and made her a stayer.

7.2.4 Facing challenges and coping with conflict

It is one thing to engage in discourses about ‘making a difference’, but quite another to enact these when the challenges are great. The issues that Amelia encounters in her job are common in similar urban contexts where there may be acute levels of deprivation and social exclusion (Tikly, 2013). Amelia encounters an array of problems every day, from dealing with highly disruptive and emotionally unstable children, but also many children who, she explained, ‘aren’t even on the Special Needs Register – but so many of them have got social needs which are tied into their emotional needs because of their background’. While a teacher of an urban classroom encounters many different types of children, and many who have social and emotional problems; Amelia deals exclusively with children with educational, emotional and social problems. The scope and scale of being a SENCO in an urban school and dealing with *all* children in the school with acute problems, places Amelia directly on the frontline of urban school life.

7.2.5 Colleagues – a help or a hindrance?

I have discussed in Chapter 2 and again in Chapters 5 and 6 the ways in which the school structure and its people play a key role in encouraging people to stay in challenging settings (Brunetti, 2006; Day et al., 2005). However, unlike most of the participants in my study, Amelia did not report having particularly positive relationships with most of her colleagues, except with the headteacher. She explained, ‘I stay here in spite of the atmosphere of the school. I think the atmosphere is very very cliquey and quite bitchy’. However, Amelia said that her role means that she is already ‘quite isolated [not being in class] so I’m quite separate from all the bitchiness. If I’m not included it’s because I’m not part of

that 'group' anyway'. She explained that 'very often or much of my day in school, I just ... get on with it'.

Nias (1989) found that a small number of her participants experienced 'tightly knit' and excluding staff social groups and thus sometimes felt 'driven out' of their schools (p.52). At first glance, it would appear that Amelia experiences a similar situation. However, she does have other colleagues on whom she can rely. These colleagues are professionals from outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and occupational therapist. For Amelia, these colleagues confirm to her that she is doing a good job as she said, 'the people I'm directly involved with are really supportive'. Nias (1989) suggested that 'reference groups' in school did not necessarily need to be large groups. They could consist of just one other person, as long as they 'confirmed the goals and aspirations of otherwise isolated individuals' (p.51).

It would appear that there is an intersection at which Amelia's personal and professional identities struggle to take the greater hold: her self-confessed personal feelings of low self-esteem versus her professional feelings of self-efficacy. This is important for Amelia, for as research on teacher self-efficacy shows, the influence of the school context, supportive colleagues, positive academic outcomes for students as well as positive relationships with students all contribute to a sense of self efficacy (Dinham and Sawyer, 2004; Hong, 2012).

Amelia's sense of self-efficacy is also linked to the emotional rewards she gains from helping the children and their families when the children tell her that they

'love' her or their parents thank her for what she has done for them. The impact of the emotional rewards of working in a primary school cannot be underplayed. In Lortie's (1975) work on school teachers, he found that primary school classrooms were more emotionally intense environments than secondary school classrooms. The 'psychic rewards' (Lortie, 1975, p.187) which can be translated as emotional rewards, are particularly intense in the urban primary school. For example, Amelia talked about how she would see children's lives being changed for the better after helping them and their families overcome difficulties or how children would sometimes come up to her in the street outside of school to hug her. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) suggest that positive emotional and psychological feelings can add to feelings of competence and self-efficacy. While there are many aspects of Amelia's work which may contribute to feelings of self-doubt, nonetheless a high sense of self-efficacy tends to win out more often than not which contributes to her decision to stay.

7.3 Does Amelia's teacher identity explain why she stays?

Olsen (2014) argues that 'a whole career in education is multi-faceted, dynamic and shaped by choice and chance' (p.88). Over the course of Amelia's career, she has had to continuously rework her identity in the light of her new roles and responsibilities. This has not been an easy task, and even though Amelia enjoys her professional career, it is not without its problems. It could be argued, that at times in Amelia's career, her teacher identity has reflected instability (MacLure, 1993).

Was Amelia really at ‘risk’ of leaving because of the challenges and dissatisfaction she encountered in her teaching role? She wanted to teach because of her core values and beliefs, but when she became a teacher, after a while, she realised that being a class teacher did not ‘fit’ with her values. Rather than quit or leave to become a SENCO at another school, her commitment to the children at Beaumont was such that she remained at her school. Another possible answer why Amelia has stayed in Beaumont lies in the context in which she works. Amelia has a contradictory emotional relationship with her school context, for while she does not have particularly positive relationships with colleagues, nevertheless she receives emotional support from colleagues outside of the school, from whom she also derives a sense of self efficacy. Also in the mix are personal and professional goals which sustain her in both her personal and professional life as can be seen in her comment that her work is ‘the driving force in my life’.

A further reason why Amelia may have stayed in Beaumont for as long as she has, could be to do with an increased attachment to a school that has developed over the years. The act of staying in one school for a number of years can influence a teacher’s identification with a school and their loyalty towards it (McIntyre, 2010). Over time, Amelia has developed a good relationship with the headteacher, who has shown care for her particularly when she had health problems. Added to this, over time, Amelia has become integrated into the local community where she knows the children and the families of the area well. It could be that despite the challenges she faces, she has a sense of belonging in the school and the local London community (as well as the wider London

community) which may be hard to replace. She explained that she was not someone who gets ‘itchy feet’ and is a ‘creature of habit’. Amelia does not desire the challenge of change too frequently, so it may be she stays because she is wary of the unknown. However, Amelia is also clear that she ‘love[s] the ethos of the school’. Therefore it could be that Amelia’s sense of belonging to Beaumont is linked to her identity (a *Beaumont* identity) and in particular those values by which she defines herself (Sachs, 2001). Amelia has managed to maintain the same fundamental goals and aspirations towards her professional contribution, but has worked out how to adjust her approach to achieving those goals and in doing so reconfigured her professional identity.

7.4 Vignette of Rosa - Wanting to stay, but wanting to change

7.4.1 Constructing a teacher identity – a commitment to public service

At the time of my interview with Rosa, she had taught for nearly 9 years at Meadway Primary. She is an assistant head and a year 5 class teacher. Rosa grew up in a small town in northern England and had always wanted a career which focused on public service. She had in mind to either become a teacher or a police officer. For Rosa, building good relationships with people is important in her life. She describes herself as being ‘caring’ and having ‘good empathy with people’. Meadway Primary serves children who come from families where there is, ‘lots of poverty, lots of deprivation [and] lots of instability’. She enjoys working in an inner city school because of the ‘challenge and the variety’ and added: ‘It’s never boring’. Rosa was clear how important the children are to her:

Oh I love the kids, I *really* love the kids and every year, no matter what kind of class it is, and I've had some tough classes, I've built really good relationships with them. My class now are the most difficult in the school, but they're lovely kids and I love the relationship I have with them.

Rosa indicated that the context in which the children and their families lived was a socially unjust one, where they did not have the advantages of some of their neighbours. Rosa became a teacher to serve the public, and in deciding to become a teacher, she chose to serve those who came from socially deprived backgrounds. Rosa did not cite a 'love' of children as a motivation to teach, but 'love' for the children became a reason to stay.

When Rosa talks about the 'love' she has for the children, she also makes it clear that she expects a lot from the children's behaviour and their academic progress. In a study by Alder (2002) on caring relationships between teachers and students in urban middle schools in the USA, she found that there are key factors which constituted a caring teacher. They are: the ability to instil a positive work ethic in students and have high expectations of them; delivering good lessons; and taking the time to build and maintain good relationships with parents as well as with students. Certainly Rosa demonstrates all these aspects in her work with the children in Meadway. She is given the 'difficult' classes to teach year after year because she creates clear behavioural expectations with the most challenging students in the school and she ensures that they learn and achieve well too. As with all of my participant stayers, Rosa clearly demonstrates a non-deficit view of the children she teaches. As Nieto (2001) suggests, teachers like Rosa have 'a solid faith in the capability of students to learn...' (p.14).

Another aspect of this ‘love’ which she demonstrates involves the time she takes to build positive relationships with the parents as well as with the children. She claimed that not all teachers can manage this successfully at her school because, as she explained:

The parents [are] *really* difficult, very very difficult, they will moan about anything and everything ... But I’ve always managed to have good relationships with the parents that I’ve worked with – for me that’s really important as well.

Creating partnerships with the families of the children in urban schools has shown to be instrumental in strengthening the students’ commitment towards learning and achieving academic success (Alder, 2002; Hunter-Quartz et al, 2010). Rosa embodies certain core values which prompt her to persist in teaching at her school, with her commitment to public service being the overarching reason for remaining in the teaching profession and in a hard-to-teach school.

7.4.2 Identity matters – tensions in personal and professional identity

Rosa’s beliefs about the value of inclusive education act as a cornerstone on which she constructs her teacher identity. She cares deeply for the children she teaches and believes that anything can be achieved by building trusting relationships with them. The value she places on relationships is demonstrated when she talked about how a year previously, she had the option of moving to a new school. She explained:

There was a time when loads of teachers left and the Head left and she offered me a job at her school – I was all for taking it. But then I thought, there’s literally going to be no staff left that the kids know. And I felt so bad that the

kids were losing a few of the core members of staff – I felt really sad for the kids. I felt I can't go yet, I would feel like I'm abandoning ship. The relationships you build are kind of very precious to lose ...

Rosa uses the word 'abandoning' in this extract which communicates a loyalty, developed over time, to the children, the school and consequently to the community. In a study on urban secondary school stayers, McIntyre (2010) also found that teachers were 'bound by ties of loyalty and professionalism to a particular community...' (p.611). Like McIntyre's (2010) teachers, Rosa's sense of loyalty is demonstrated by showing commitment and dedication. Also closely intertwined with loyalty and commitment is Rosa's sense of perseverance, persistence and refusal to give up. She explained:

It's not like I've set out to be the world's greatest teacher or anything, or the super head of London, but if I've committed to staying in a school or I've committed to staying as an Assistant Head, or I've committed to teach a class every day to a good standard, then I'm going to do it. I'm not going to quit because it's not fair, it's not fair on the kids, not fair on the school, not fair on the parents – you know, it's just not fair.

Rosa's beliefs in the value of loyalty, of commitment, and of being 'fair' are powerful motivators for her and should not be underestimated when understanding the reasons why she stays in her school.

Although Rosa suggests that she is not concerned about being 'the world's greatest teacher', being a good teacher and ensuring the children receive a good standard of education is very important for her and appears to form a crucial part of her identity as a teacher. She talked about how she always enjoyed being a class teacher and dedicated much time and effort in being the best teacher she

could: ‘There used to be a time when I would spend *hours* cutting and laminating, you know dressing up and buying outfits [for my lessons]. I’ve done all those creative whizzy bang lessons’.

However, Rosa indicated that her passion for teaching was beginning to wane, not least because of the increasing amount of bureaucratic accountability procedures which have become ever more present in the life of a class teacher. ‘I’m at the point that I get tired of a lot of the hoop jumping in teaching. I just think a lot of the pleasure has been taken out of teaching’. She explained why she thought this:

It’s not about how much the kids enjoy playing out in the garden, or coming outside for a story...the things kids should be doing at school. It’s more about, ‘has this child made this level of progress regardless of the fact that their mother died?’

As discussed in chapter 6, the increased emphasis on performativity has a marked impact on disadvantaged schools already facing an array of other pressures. As the expectations of teaching move away from the emotional connections with children to a greater accountability emphasis, Rosa has begun to feel detachment from what significant others (such as policy makers and inspectors) expect a teacher’s role to be. Indeed Rosa was beginning to experience a ‘professional angst’ as the teacher which she was expected to be collided with the teacher she wanted to be (Olsen, 2014, p.87). Rosa revealed a complex tension in her feelings about teaching. While she feels she is less passionate about teaching because of the bureaucratic demands of it, she still feels very strongly about being a part of what she believes to be important in a children’s success. She explained where the joy of teaching comes from for her:

It comes from the children, their personal stuff. Not “wonderful I’ve got him from a 2C to a 2A” [...] but the smallest thing like picking up a pencil and holding it properly, you think ‘Yay!’ or a child who has stood up for the first time in front of the assembly hall without crying because you’ve helped build up his confidence.

There appears to be a tension in Rosa’s professional identity, which could be interpreted as being unstable and possibly at risk (Day et al., 2006a). However, Rosa maintains that she still is very much ‘herself’ in the classroom despite the increased accountability measures she has had to implement in her daily teaching. Indeed as Nias (1989) argues, primary school teachers are adept at accepting ‘the paradoxical nature of the task [of teaching] and inexorably live with the tension’ (p.197). Rosa’s core beliefs about what is important for the children she teaches is something that she tries resolutely to hold onto despite the fact that other ‘hoop jumping’ aspects of teaching have begun to take greater precedence. Managing those conflicts in teacher expectations is proving difficult and, because she still has a commitment to the children, giving up teaching is not an option. Again the paradoxical nature of a primary teacher’s work comes into focus, where Nias (1989) talks about how teachers can be ‘in love with [their] work but daily talk of leaving it’ (p.191). With the performativity agenda being even more prevalent in UK schools, perhaps Nias’s comment is more pertinent now than during the time she was researching teachers in the 1980s. Despite the fact that teachers like Rosa can live with the paradox of teaching, she did communicate a tension in her commitment to stay. Rosa may be what Johnson and Birkeland (2003) suggest as being an ‘unsettled stayer’ (p.601). Indeed two specific issues emerged which suggested that Rosa is an ‘unsettled’ stayer: these are the increased accountability

measures and bureaucratic tasks required of a class teacher; and the conflict between teaching and taking on more management responsibility.

7.4.3 The ‘unsettled’ stayer

Similar to Amelia, Rosa appeared to be going through what Huberman (1993) termed as a ‘crossroads’ in her professional life. Huberman suggested that this often happens between eight to fifteen years of a teacher’s career. Rosa explained that she had, until recently, felt very settled as a class teacher. Now she was feeling less settled as her roles and responsibilities began to change. In a study by Johnson and Birkeland (2003) of 50 novice teachers in the USA, they employed the term ‘unsettled stayer’ to describe those who were either doubtful about remaining in teaching or were dissatisfied with aspects of their schools. As Rosa began to feel the nature of what was expected in teaching changing (more emphasis on bureaucratic tasks and achieving results), so she was beginning to resent the time spent on administrative tasks when she could be working on making a greater whole school difference in her leadership role.

When I interviewed Rosa in the summer term, she had been an assistant head since the start of the academic year. As Rosa’s professional role had changed, her professional identity also shifted and changed. Jorissen (2003) suggests that ‘career transition [...] involves a change in identity’ (p.43). Although Rosa relished her new management responsibility, she struggled to maintain a balance between her ‘teacher’ self and her ‘leader’ self. As an assistant head, she felt there was much more she could do to influence the way the school was run and the way the children were taught which she explained, makes her feel ‘like I’ve developed

something for the whole school [...] I feel like I've really *done* something'. Rosa has achieved a lot of recognition for her subject development in the school both internally and externally so she has a high sense of self-efficacy about her leadership abilities.

Day et al. (2007) argue that there can be 'competing interactions' between a teacher's professional identity which is influenced by 'what constitutes a good teacher' as well as other roles and responsibilities, and a situated identity which is 'located in a specific school [...] affected by pupils' and a personal identity (p.106-107). Rosa's narrative reflected the point made by Day that teachers' situated identities can be located in specific schools. Rosa enjoyed the 'challenge and variety' of the type of children she worked with, which are unique to inner London primary schools. She explained, 'some things are really much more challenging than they would be elsewhere, but that's what I know and I think that's what keeps people in it here'. Rosa's identity as a teacher has become attached to the type of urban school she works in, and more specifically to Meadway Primary, perhaps *because* of its particular challenges and also because it is a school and a context she *knows*. It may well just be too daunting to move to another completely different school with unknown demands and challenges.

When I interviewed Rosa, she appeared to be struggling with the conflict between the leadership and teacher aspects of her professional identity. However, she did not indicate she wanted to leave teaching. In fact she was hoping to be offered the role of an intervention teacher, where, she explained:

I would still have the contact with the kids, but I'd get that time for leadership too and I wouldn't have the responsibility of like – 'you've got to do all the assessment, you've got to decorate your class, mark sixty books from a morning' so I think that's quite appealing.

A consolidation in the leadership aspect of Rosa's professional role would help align her professional interests with her core motivation for why she became a teacher, thus satisfying the expanding dimensions of her teacher identity. Perhaps more importantly, this allows her to remain true to her values and beliefs.

7.4.4 Managing personal and professional identities

Rosa explained that she has 'very low confidence' in her personal life and contrasted this with her professional self where she explained, 'I'm confident in my job and I'm confident in my role'. However, this is something which has evolved over time and under two different headteachers who have fostered her confidence. Olsen (2014) suggests that teacher identity is a process where, 'experience shapes the situated self and how the self shapes experience' (p.82). Certainly Rosa's situated self, which includes her roles as a teacher and as a senior leader, play a significant part in how she constructs and extends her professional identity.

Beijaard et al. (2004) argue that a teacher's professional identity is not necessarily 'something which teachers *have*, but something they *use* in order to make sense of themselves as teachers' (p.123, own italics). One aspect of Rosa's professional identity was how much of it is 'performance' related. Giddens (1991) suggests that people 'preserve a division between their self-identities and the 'performances' they put on in specific social contexts' (p.58). Unlike Amelia,

Rosa did not suggest that she was ‘performing’ or ‘putting on a show’ in her professional role. Rather, she developed a confident professional identity over time which then seemed to be an integral part of how she conducted herself in school. Even though she admitted to being shy in her personal life, being confident in her professional life did not appear to be a struggle for Rosa. So how, over time, has Rosa developed a professional identity which has instilled her with confidence and a sense of accomplishment when personally, she struggles with confidence issues? In particular, how does this impact on her decision to stay?

One possible answer lies in how much a teacher’s personal self is invested in their professional self and vice versa. Rosa has close relationships with her colleagues in Meadway Primary. They contribute to her sense of professional self-efficacy as well as reinforcing her own positive personal qualities. She explained:

Everyone here is positive with each other [...] the deputy is always saying to me, ‘you’re a really good teacher, you look nice ... so people are always giving you that kind of encouragement and make you feel better.

The social context of Rosa’s school contributes to a sense of belonging and a sense of being valued, all of which helps shape the type of person and type of teacher Rosa is. There are competing aspects to Rosa’s professional and personal identities which dominate at different points in her daily work depending on situational influences. Indeed as Beijaard et al. (2004) suggest, a teacher’s professional identity ‘consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize’ (p.122).

7.4.5 Does Rosa's identity help explain why she stays?

There are several aspects to Rosa's personal and professional identities which have interacted with each other to produce a 'stayer'. Rosa has a core sense of self which is dedicated to public service (Troman, 2008). She possesses an identity which reflects core values of building positive relationships with others and providing care for those who need it. The care demonstrated by Rosa (as with other participants in this study) is a care which is actively practised in very challenging circumstances and situations where it may be difficult to show such care.

The children, the school context, her colleagues, whom she regards highly, all serve to help shape her teacher identity. So much so that she can overcome her shyness and lack of confidence in school which she associates with the positive aspects of herself. The different aspects of school life which influence Rosa's teacher identity combine to offer her a sense of belonging to a community for which she cares. In fact over time, Rosa's professional identity has been shaped by her specific school, so that Rosa might find it unsettling to move away from Meadway Primary where, at least, she *knows* the types of challenges she has to confront. However, it is too easy to conclude that Rosa stays at Meadway because she is apprehensive about going elsewhere. Rather her possible apprehension about leaving needs to be seen in the context of her other powerful reasons for staying year after year. Added to this is the role her personal and professional identities play in influencing, not only her reasons to stay, but her doubts and her frustrations in her professional roles.

At the time I interviewed her, Rosa appeared to be going through an ‘unsettled’ stage in her career, where she was attempting to negotiate the tricky terrain of commitment to the children and a desire to find fulfilment in her leadership role. However, this is not a simple choice to make, for other competing aspects of life at Meadway play a part in her decision to stay. She is surrounded by colleagues who contribute to her sense of professional self-efficacy. Not dissimilar to Amelia, Rosa is perhaps realising what Giddens (1991) refers to as the ‘the ideal self’ which, he suggests, ‘forms a channel of positive aspirations in terms of which the narrative of self-identity is worked out’ (p.68). It could be argued, therefore, that Rosa’s preferred self-identity is closely entwined with the identity of teaching in Meadway Primary which, perhaps, contributes to her reasons for staying there.

Rosa also revealed tensions between different aspects of her teacher identity. At certain moments in time, specific aspects of her identity are at the forefront of her decision to stay, and at some moments, other aspects of her identity take precedence and instil self-doubt. For example, there are times when her caring self, which encompasses her dedication to being a good teacher, building positive relationships, showing loyalty and commitment, take precedence in her decision to stay. At other moments, her lack of confidence and shyness may persuade her to stay where she feels ‘safe’ and comfortable. At times, different aspects of Rosa’s identity work simultaneously to produce conflicting responses to her career decisions. For instance, her commitment to being a good teacher (a reason to stay) conflicts with her frustrations of juggling being a class teacher and managing her leadership role (making her feel unsettled).

It may be that Rosa's core values and beliefs which are reflected in her substantial self will persist against any other negative influences in her identity. What does emerge is that there is no *one* way to look at the personal and professional identities of a teacher, such as Rosa. Rather they overlap and intertwine in some moments, and in others, pull apart and separate. Indeed Rosa's personal and professional identities appear to 'co-exist in a flexible state' (Bradbury and Gunter, 2006, p.498) as she attempts to negotiate the joys and the challenges of working in Meadway Primary.

7.5 Vignette of Grace – A teacher identity in retrospect

7.5.1 Creating a teacher identity

Grace is retired, having taught for just over 40 years in inner London primary schools – all located in socially deprived communities. Indeed, Grace could be described as a 'veteran' stayer who, according to McIntyre (2010) has remained teaching in the 'same (disadvantaged) community for 20 years or more' (p.596). She was a class teacher at her last school, Rainbridge Primary for more than 20 years. Grace came to London from Cyprus aged 9 speaking no English. She fondly remembers some teachers in her primary school who taught her to speak English during their lunch and break times. It was this experience which inspired her to become a primary school teacher.

When Grace entered teaching, she talked about herself as an 'outsider' and 'immigrant'. She explained how at the beginning of her career, she went to teach at a Church of England school, but said, 'I wasn't happy there, I felt I was the

outsider'. This changed when she arrived as a teacher at Goldhall Park Primary, where she stayed for a decade - the first inner London school she worked at. She talked about how the teachers were from different cultural backgrounds and although the diversity of children in the schools was not as great as today (Vertovec, 2007), she said that a high proportion of children who came from different countries. In schools like Goldhall Park and Rainbridge Primary, Grace did not feel like an outsider. She talked about how she would encourage the children to learn to read and write by telling them stories about her own experiences: 'Look at me, if I can do it, so can you'. Her identity was vital in shaping the kind of teacher she was. 'Because I was an immigrant, I felt I had to help them extra. I wanted them to achieve their potential, that they could really do it'. In Elbaz-Luwisch's (2004) study of immigrant teachers in Israel, she found that the teachers invested heavily in their relationships with their students and their parents for it was these relationships which gave the teachers a sense of belonging. Similarly Grace had a strong identification with the children she taught, their families and the communities they came from. Hunter-Quartz et al. (2010) suggest that this type of 'human connection [which is] rooted in shared identity and common experience, is a powerful reason to stay' (p.97).

For the immigrant teachers in Elbaz-Luwisch's (2004) study, relationships with colleagues featured less significantly. However, Grace's colleagues were instrumental in helping her feel 'at home'. She talked fondly about the staff: 'We had a laugh, always helping each other. There were English teachers, Pakistani teachers – they were lovely. The Head was Irish – you could have a laugh with her'. Grace's colleagues, who to some extent reflected the diversity of the school,

were essential in making her feel more of an ‘insider’. Grace’s experience of finding a ‘fit’ in her school supports Nias’s (1989) claim that people generally ‘prefer to work in environments in which our substantial selves are confirmed, both by the ways in which work requires us to speak and act, and by those with whom we interact’ (p.43). It could thus be argued that in an urban London school Grace found an environment where her professional identity reflected her core values (her care and desire to help children overcome disadvantage) and where her identity as an immigrant was no longer an ‘outsider’ identity but where she felt she belonged. In a study of over 2000 Norwegian teachers in primary and middle schools, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) found that, ‘teachers’ feeling of belonging is positively related to satisfaction and positive affect’ (p.1031) whereas teachers who did not have a strong feeling of belonging in their schools were more likely to leave. Certainly Grace felt she did not ‘belong’ to the Church of England school she first worked in, yet felt a much more powerful sense of belonging in her subsequent more diverse and challenging urban primary schools.

7.5.2 Grace’s ‘mother identity’

Grace talked about the fact that she had a special bond with the children she taught: ‘maybe it was how I taught them, maybe it was the way I treated them and talked to them – I was their mother’. Vogt (2002) suggests that “‘a caring teacher’ can become ‘associated with mothering and motherly love’ (p.261). Indeed other participants in my study talked about this notion of being like the children’s ‘mother’, but Grace was the most definitive about her mothering role as a teacher. She talked about how in her last school, despite the poor leadership of the school, she was not going to leave because, ‘these were *my* children’. She also explained

that for her, ‘the children at school, they were like my family. I worried a lot about them. I thought if these children failed, that was my fault’.

Grace has two children herself, but she appeared to integrate her ‘home’ mother role with her mother-teacher identity. She said, ‘When I came home, I looked after my family [...] I used to come home and tell my own family funny stories from school’. At the same time, home was not reserved solely for her own family. Grace explained: ‘I tell you, I did a lot of extra work [at home]. Sometimes I didn’t go to sleep until midnight because I was always thinking, what can I do that’s interesting to really get these children to learn?’

A study by Bradbury and Gunter (2006) with 20 primary headteachers, who were also mothers, found that the identities of ‘mother and headteacher are not combined or integrated, but co-exist in a flexible state’ (p.498). In Grace’s case, it could be that her ‘teacher’ mother identity and her ‘personal’ mother identity co-existed like Bradbury and Gunter’s headteachers; but that they also overlapped and became integrated from time to time. As Vogt (2002) argues, ‘the emphasis on parenting by teachers who are parents can be seen as a strategy to integrate different identities – teacher and parent into a coherent self’ (p.261). To explore this in more detail, it is useful to see the role that the children played in constructing the many aspects of Grace’s teacher identity.

7.5.3 The children – shaping Grace’s teacher identity

Grace described herself as being ‘open’ and ‘caring’ but also said that she was ‘a tough old bird’. For her it was vital that the children who came into her class were

made 'to feel important, I made them feel they weren't losers, they could achieve anything they want'. However, Grace faced many challenges in the schools she worked at. For the first decade or so of her teaching career, she was in a school where she had to teach, 'forty children crammed in a small room, very difficult, it was a deprived area'. She talked about violent incidences in the classroom and how 'there was no help; you were left on your own'. However, despite these difficulties, she talked about the freedom teachers had over the curriculum and she quickly grew to love the children and the staff in her school.

It was in this period of teaching when Grace became a mother. After a decade of teaching, Grace decided to move closer to her home. By now Grace was an experienced teacher, but her new school presented her with many behavioural challenges. She explained: 'it was chaos, the children were uncontrollable'. She explained how the children would make teachers cry, and added: 'I think many [of the children] came from really bad homes, but once you got to know them, they were really lovely characters'. Grace told many stories about individual children she taught years previously, whose names she still remembered, about how she helped them overcome their own educational and emotional difficulties. She talked about how excited she would become when a child finally understood something and that it gave her, 'a joy in my heart'. Indeed such was Grace's enjoyment of teaching and being in the class with children, she had no desire to become a senior leader in the school. Even though one headteacher encouraged her to become a deputy head in the school, Grace said, 'I didn't want it you know, I wanted to be in the class. I don't want to be doing office work. I loved being in my room. I thought I was in heaven when I was teaching'.

7.5.4 Grace's changing identities over time

Grace's identity was shaped out of significant aspects of her biography, of her core values and beliefs, of her caring 'motherly' identity, of her immigrant identity and of her desire to see children with few privileges achieve against the odds. Over time, Grace's identity was shaped by the fact she had stayed in Rainbridge Primary for so long. Without a doubt her personal and professional identities merged to a large extent. Indeed she said, 'I behaved the same at school as at home'. She said that she did not get stressed trying to juggle school life and home life. She explained that she did not really 'switch off, but I loved it so much that I didn't mind'. There was one significant point in her career, where she felt unsettled in her school because of a headteacher she did not get along with as well as managing an increasing workload. She said, 'there were times then I felt like leaving'. However, she explained that the children who 'were all so happy with me' and her colleagues encouraged her to stay.

Teaching the children at Rainbridge appeared to envelope Grace's life – both personal and professional. It could be that even though she felt like leaving, in actual fact, it would have been too great a price to pay. After all, Rainbridge with its mix of cultures, dynamic and vulnerable children and friendly staff had become inextricably linked with *who* Grace was, so that she would put up with a difficult headteacher which she may have viewed as merely a transitory phase in her life story of being a teacher at Rainbridge. Indeed Grace placed a great importance on staying in the school, explaining that, 'being there for so long meant that I had a real impact on their lives – the lives of lots of children'. She

had a high sense of self-efficacy as she said that as a teacher, ‘I was magic. Whoever came into my class [...] I made them believe they could achieve anything they want’. Grace also valued the sustained relationships she had with the children and explained that she always smiled and listened to them so they felt they could trust her. Of the parents and the families, she said, ‘The parents would come to me with all their problems and I would give them advice on how to raise their children ...’

Grace told stories about how over the years, she helped many vulnerable children and showed them that school was ‘a safe place to be’. Perhaps it was also a ‘safe place to be’ for Grace who felt that everything she valued and believed in was reflected in her professional role, in a professional context, which became like a ‘home’ to her with her own school ‘family’.

7.5.5 Does Grace’s identity explain why she stayed?

In some ways, exploring Grace’s identity throughout her career has proved easier than with my other currently serving stayer participants, not least because it is a career story told retrospectively. However, recounting a career in retrospect is not without its limitations. As Maguire (2008) found in her study of retired headteachers, ‘for reasons of self-maintenance, they have put a positive gloss on their extended time in one occupation’ (p.53). This could well have been the case with Grace too. Nevertheless, in the context of my study, it has been valuable data to examine. Grace has highlighted how a veteran class teacher stayer shares many similar motivations with a stayer who has served a fraction of the time. Grace has

also demonstrated the ways she managed her personal and professional identities were not all too dissimilar to current stayers.

Grace revealed certain key aspects to her personal and professional identities, which help to understand why she stayed teaching for so long. She had a strong vocation to teach children in multi-cultural and disadvantaged contexts which reflected her own upbringing as a child, where she arrived in London, poor and unable to speak English. Her own experience as a successful student (which she attributed to her own teachers) propelled her into teaching. Grace's desire to stay teaching in her inner city London primary schools was no doubt driven by her core commitments and sense of purpose (Hunter-Quartz et al., 2010). Indeed she revealed that central to her identity is the ability to make a difference, to be caring and to help others. These core values were demonstrated on a daily basis and were interwoven with the importance of education where Grace felt she could make her greatest contribution to society.

Unlike many teachers in challenging urban schools, Grace did not 'burn-out'. Howard and Johnson (2004) suggest that effective teachers take a 'direct action' approach to stress in order to avoid burnout. In other words, they are proactive in dealing with problems and organising their workload which can help remove the sources of stress. Grace *enjoyed* the work she did and therefore did not find it stressful to work late into the night on her lessons. It is, however, useful to point out that Grace started teaching in a different era, where the pressures of teaching were arguably not as intense as now, particularly with the growth of performative

cultures within schools. Grace's personal and professional identities appeared to co-exist, and did not seem to be in conflict or tension with each other.

Working as a primary school teacher is intense and demanding; teaching the same group of children all day every day requires a teacher to be skilful at building and maintaining trusting relationships with a wide range of children. As my participants stories reveal, this can be particularly demanding in an urban primary school where many children come with a challenging mix of emotional and social problems (Tikly, 2013). One way which Grace approached this challenge was by assuming a strong 'motherly' identity, where the children were referred to as 'my children'. The longer Grace stayed in her school, the stronger the 'mother' aspect of her identity took hold where, over time, she taught generations of the same families thus giving a 'history to [her] practice' (Olsen, 2014, p.33). Grace's identity as a teacher encompassed her life, so that home and school were extensions of each other. In Nias's (1987) words, Grace was a teacher who 'reduce[d] the boundaries between their occupational and other lives' (p.180).

Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) found with her teachers that it was precisely in 'making a difference that they make their places as teachers' (p.410). Grace had so completely immersed herself in the life and the world of Rainbridge, its children and their families, that very little (apart from retirement) would have induced her to leave. Grace had a powerful sense of belonging to her school community and being a teacher there appeared to reinforce who she is and who she wanted to be. Like Rosa and Amelia, the school enabled her to act out an 'ideal self' (Giddens,

1991, p.68). Now she is retired, she describes herself as ‘a retired teacher’ and explained she still teaches her grandchildren, ‘it’s in my blood, it’s who I am’.

It could be that because Grace has been a teacher for so long and has invested so much of herself in her work, that it eventually came to be ‘in her blood’ over time. However, Grace’s story reveals a teacher whose personal and professional identities are less ‘messy’ than those of my other participants who appear to struggle to manage different aspects of their identities at different times of their career. It could be that the actual reality was more confused and complex than Grace recounts or remembers it. As Maguire (2008) found with her retired headteacher participants, she was relying on their ‘retrospective, perhaps post-hoc rationalisations of what for some was a messy and murky emotional experience’ (p.53).

Grace was proud of being a teacher, she embraced every aspect of her teacher identity and appeared to live for her own family and her ‘school’ family. This was particularly evident when I interviewed her. Now in her fourth year of retirement, her sense of loss is palpable. She explained that when she retired, ‘I was so unhappy, I was missing them, missing everything’. Grace now looks after her husband and she told me, ‘you know if my husband hadn’t had a stroke, I would still be helping out in a school. I would love to do it’.

7.6 Vignette of Liz - Deciding to stay and deciding to leave

7.6.1 A focus on the children

Liz was a primary school teacher at Beaumont Primary for close to 10 years. When I interviewed Liz she had just left teaching and had moved with her young family out of London. Liz's motivations for wanting to become a primary teacher were similar to many of my other participants. She enjoyed working with children and she had many happy memories of her own time in primary school. Once she started teaching at Beaumont, she explained that she decided to stay there for two main reasons: the children she taught and the friendships with staff. She said:

You care about the children [...] you make relationships with them. One year group I taught three times, so you build a rapport with them and that was a good reason why I didn't leave...you just want them to do so well, don't you?

Primary school teaching is unique. A primary school teacher spends all day every day with the same class of thirty children. Inevitably teachers and students can develop close bonds (Hunter-Quartz et al., 2010). In the first seven years of her career at Beaumont, Liz taught the same class of children as they grew up and went through the school, in Nursery, in year 3 and again in year 6. As a result she had a close attachment to the school and its family of children. Liz communicated a clear sense of social responsibility for the children, whom she felt, had to face too many challenges in their young lives. She explained, 'you have this responsibility for those children. Many of them have hard lives [...] if they don't have those building blocks, then they will find it hard to achieve'.

The theme of 'care' emerges strongly in Liz's narrative. The way in which Liz demonstrated her care for the children was by taking seriously her responsibility

for their learning and development. Liz highlighted the urgency, which many teachers in challenging urban schools feel, to ensure every day of their school week was focused on helping the children be and feel successful. She explained: 'I always felt, I've got to make these children improve' and added, 'you're always pushing yourself forward'. Liz talked a lot about wanting the children to 'do well' and talked about the time she would devote to making sure the needs of each child were met. Caring for Liz, as with my other participants, was not what Nias (1989) referred to as 'a soft occupational option' (p.41), but rather it constituted persistence, commitment and the will to not give up even when things get tough. Liz was concerned that when the children left Beaumont, they would not encounter the same care as shown by their primary school teachers. She explained what she meant:

When they get to secondary school, they don't have the same relationships [with their teachers] and you just want them to be able to cope. And so many of them have such difficult lives that you can just see if they don't succeed in secondary school, you can perhaps see how their lives would turn out [...] you feel so passionately about the children you work with.

Liz repeated this theme several times during the interview and explained that for her, 'it's not just about making a difference'. She said, 'you want to make them love a subject and *inspire* them [...] or give a spark perhaps – a connection'. Perhaps Liz wanted to find another way to communicate how passionately she felt about the children's education and future wellbeing and happiness rather than use a term which many other participants would often term as being 'clichéd' or 'cheesy'. In Hunter-Quartz et al's (2010) study on urban teachers in Los Angeles, they discuss how primary school teachers see their work with children as, ' ...

part of a much larger cycle or project – the development of a human being’ (p.105). They add that what is interesting is, ‘the drive to define or pinpoint where teachers and teaching fit into this cycle’ (p.105).

7.6.2 Personal identity influences

Like the other participants in my study, Liz talked about how the children she taught elicited caring and nurturing aspects of her identity (O’Connor, 2008; Vogt, 2002). She explained:

I was very protective about certain children – they had a quality which you had to nurture. Almost as if they were your own children. And you wanted to make sure that they could reach their potential.

Not dissimilar to Grace, the retired teacher, Liz’s experience with the children had shaped her identity as a teacher which also aligned with a ‘mother’ aspect in her role as a teacher. Again, like Grace, this appeared to be combined with Liz’s own experiences at primary school where she remembered not understanding certain concepts being taught. What was clear about Liz’s interview, was the extent to which her own biography and educational experiences influenced the type of teacher she was and the type of teacher she wanted to be. As Olsen (2014) asserts:

The teacher relies on her past (consciously or not) to interpret the present, and folds together various personal and professional aspects of her lived experience as she makes sense of a particular situation in which she finds herself... (Olsen, 2014, p.85).

For Liz, like Grace and Rosa, building positive relationships with the children along with providing the best quality teaching for them, was central. The care and dedication that Liz showed was not solely as a result of wanting to do her job well, but because she had a passion for seeing these children do well. Liz’s

comments reflect the motivations of teachers engaged in teaching urban children (Durham-Barnes, 2011; Freedman and Appleman, 2009). Indeed, there is little to distinguish Liz from my other stayer participants in terms of her motivations and feelings about the nature of teaching children from deprived backgrounds. Furthermore, when examining Liz's sense of self more closely, there are many parallels to be found with other participants I have interviewed.

Liz persevered in the classroom even after the first five years of teaching, which is the point where a significant number of teachers leave their inner London primary schools (Allen et al., 2012). Those initial years were a challenge for Liz where she talked about the extreme behavioural difficulties she encountered with the children but with whom she persevered. Certainly the children and her passion for teaching remained as strong as when she started her career. Liz was not keen to become a senior leader and leave the classroom. She said, 'I like my own class, I like things done a certain way'. Seeing the children achieve well academically seemed to be a significant driver for Liz, who mentioned the children's academic success more frequently than other participants.

However, the increasing pressure of the workload as well as the pressure to achieve (often unrealistic) results from the children began to take its toll. She talked about the stress of 'target setting all the time, with pressure from management, also from the government, you feel pressure'. Up until this point, Liz's professional identity appeared to reflect that of other successful and effective urban teachers (Haberman, 1995; Freedman and Appleman, 2009). However, the pressure of ever increasing accountability measures became a

crucial game changer for Liz later in her teaching career. It could be argued that it was Liz's emphasis on the children achieving well which ultimately led to anxiety and stress which then led to her leaving teaching in her tenth year of her career.

7.6.3 Changing teacher identity and the pressure of accountability

Many participants alluded to the pressure and stress of having to achieve results quickly and strive harder to fulfil a continuous stream of bureaucratic demands and expectations. However, what appeared to differ between them and Liz, was the way in which the other participants (such as Rosa and Amelia) took on new roles within their school, which involved less classroom teaching. As a result, they were able to maintain their optimism for the job (Flores and Day, 2006). As the interview progressed and I probed Liz more on the reasons why she left, her language became more negative. Liz used the word 'stress', 'stressful' or 'stressed' to describe herself 13 times throughout the interview. Although the discourse of stress is often employed to refer to a range of emotional situations, with some more negative than others, it is also frequently used to describe the teaching experience, particularly in challenging urban schools (Wilhelm et al., 2000).

Liz's references to 'stress' stand out when compared with my other participants because of the number of times she referred to stress. 'Stress' was mentioned on average two times by my other participant stayers. Clearly this became a key concern for Liz as her career progressed. So why did the stresses of the job affect Liz so much that she eventually left teaching altogether? I think one explanation can be seen in her changing identity.

MacLure's (1993) study of 69 primary and secondary teachers found that a subset of her teacher participants presented what she termed 'spoiled' identities where these 'teachers reported a deep sense of alienation from the values and practices of their institution...' (p. 317). In MacLure's study the most 'troubled' of these teachers were 'no longer able to reconcile their identities with the job' (p.317). However, for Liz, her withdrawal from teaching appeared to be more complex than this. She still enjoyed teaching up until the very end of her time at Beaumont as she explained, 'I mean obviously I was passionate about teaching – I enjoyed it'. What shifted was how Liz managed the demands in her teacher identity. In the early years of her career, she was able to 'switch off' more easily from school. Over time, she found a correlation between heightened accountability measures and her inability to switch off from her work. She said that these aspects of her work made her feel very vulnerable and affected her confidence. She explained:

You were constantly judged [...] I don't know of any other profession that is so scrutinised as teaching. You're being judged on so many levels. I mean basically, you're held accountable for every single child. If a child is not performing, then it's your fault. It's not that maybe that child needs special help, it's 'what is it about your teaching that isn't helping that child reach the next stage?' Basically it's personal. It's your fault.

Accountability measures appeared to drill into Liz's identity as a teacher, making her question her sense of self and challenged her commitment to her job in the school. As Day (2002) argues, the performativity agenda can serve to threaten a teacher's 'sense of agency' as well as 'challenge teachers' substantive identities' (p.686). Certainly it appeared to diminish Liz's 'sense of motivation, efficacy and job satisfaction' (p.686).

The other stayers in my study appeared to be able to manage the pressures of accountability and find ways of protecting themselves from the worst excesses of bureaucratic demands. However, Liz found this harder to negotiate. There may be several reasons for this: first as an experienced teacher, Liz had clear ideas about how the children she knew well should learn, but her strategies did not always fit with the expectations of a prescribed curriculum. As a result, she felt she had less autonomy or control over her work, something which is vitally important for a teacher to maintain if they are to stay in teaching (Hunter-Quartz et al., 2010). Secondly, Liz was a year 6 teacher for a number of years, where end of Key Stage 2 SATs results are highly significant for the school (Troman, 2008). It may be that her investment in the children's academic success was such that any indication that they were not achieving as they should (according to levels and test scores) was particularly demoralising for her. Perhaps for Liz, who had become immersed in the accountability culture, achieving good tests scores had become a measure of how successful she was as a teacher. It may be that her school also relied on Liz to deliver good test results. Another reason, which may have contributed to Liz's decision to leave was her desire to achieve perfection in her teaching. She suggested that: 'all teachers have that sort of thing where they strive for that perfection, even though that perfection is unattainable. That constant battle...'

However, Liz was the only participant who referred to striving for perfection explicitly. She indicated that she struggled if her teaching, her results or her children's success was anything less than what she considered to be 'perfection'.

Liz clearly had high expectations of her children and even higher expectations of herself. While, this characteristic may be useful for a successful urban teacher to possess (Haberman, 1995; Stanford, 2001), it proved to be unsustainable for Liz. Undoubtedly, Liz took a ‘hit’ to her sense of self-efficacy and felt that she was not performing as well as she should which left her feeling frustrated and demoralised.

7.6.4 Personal and professional identities at risk – no longer able to stay

For a teacher like Liz, who, by her own admission, always ‘strived for perfection’ and wanted the best for every child in her class, where ‘no child could hide away’, the increasing performativity agenda appeared to threaten to her sense of self, negating the values she held dear. To be potentially accused of failing a child in her care whom she had been working so hard for and sacrificing her home life for, was devastating. Stoeber and Rennert (2008) found that perfectionism in teachers is ‘a personality factor that not only plays a role in teacher stress, but also in teachers’ burnout’ (p.49). Liz explained that her health then began to suffer because of the stress. Liz explained:

I think I wasn’t enjoying it in the same way that I had before ...I still really liked the teaching and the children. But it was the *other* elements I didn’t enjoy. The marking I had to do until midnight ... it was just that relentless nature of it I think, impacting on your home life, not having any free time, not being able to switch off ... you know the whole work life battle. On a Sunday night, not being able to sleep.

I would argue that for Liz, it was not just a case of complying with the school’s ‘norms and values’ which did not reflect her own values and beliefs about

education (Flores and Day, 2006), but it ran deeper: her job started to threaten her sense of self because she *over* identified with being a particular type of teacher. It was as if one aspect of her identity was swallowing up the other.

I identified myself as a teacher, it became my crutch I suppose – being a teacher was the identity I held on to. So those other elements of my identity, who I was, and the other things I enjoyed doing were taking a back seat because I wasn't doing anything else apart from working. So in a way being a teacher was my crutch, that's how I would define myself. As a teacher. Before then, being a teacher was just my job, but then it became everything.

She added:

I think as time went on, the two, the 'teacher' Liz and the 'home life' Liz began to merge. And that was part of the stress because those two had become intertwined really. I think there was that conflict there.

7.6.5 The (thin) line between leaving and staying

For my study, I decided not to interview a 'leaver' who had taught for less than five years in an inner London school because, as I have argued, there is a substantial body of research which explores the reasons why teachers leave challenging urban schools (for example: Rinke, 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011). However, Liz is different because she *was* a stayer. She showed perseverance, commitment, resilience and dedication throughout nearly ten years of teaching. Liz started her career able to sustain the challenges which working in an inner London school presented her with. She was driven by her commitment to the children she taught, she built positive relationships with parents and colleagues and received many emotional and intellectual rewards from teaching just like my other participants. What appeared to sustain Liz up to around the seventh year of her teaching career, was how she was able to manage different

aspects of her teacher identity – allowing time and space for personal growth and development, whilst fulfilling the professional aspects of her life.

Nias (1989) argues that over time, a teacher's personal and professional identities merge to a greater or lesser extent so they feel 'natural' or 'whole' when engaging in their work (p.185). Indeed, over time, according to Nias, those teachers who stay have managed to reconcile aspects of their personal and professional identities and they negotiate the competing aspects of their identities (often with the help of colleagues, children, family and friends) in order to sustain their commitment to their job. Certainly, Liz did sustain commitment to her job for a decade and shared similar motivations for staying as other stayers I have interviewed. In fact, there were even some similarities between Liz and Grace. Both stayers preferred to remain in the classroom and turned down senior management opportunities; both became mothers during their teaching careers; both highlighted their 'mother identity' as part of their teaching identity; and both emphasised the importance of working 'above and beyond' to see their students succeed.

Grace became a teacher in the late 1960s at a time when professions and jobs were for life. However, today, as Troman (2008) suggests, 'primary teaching may no longer be considered as a job for life' (p.631). He suggests that 'the new personal identity in teaching represents a more situational outlook, with the substantial self finding expression elsewhere' (p.631). It may well be, that in these increasingly pressurised times for teachers with a greater emphasis on performance, that a stayer needs to find a 'space' for their substantial selves

outside of their professional context. For Liz, however, her professional identity eclipsed other aspects of herself because the pressures became too great to bear. As a result she could not find a satisfactory way to reconcile competing aspects of her identity. No doubt this was emotionally exhausting, because it led to stress and ill health for Liz. Interestingly, Grace also talked about her teacher identity being all consuming, but she was happy to identify in this way. Nias (1989) argued that the more demanding teaching becomes of, ‘the imagination, insight, problem-solving, and professional skills, the more it offers an outlet for creative potential, thereby reducing the individual need to seek the latter elsewhere’ (p.18). This certainly seemed to be the case for Grace. However, this did not appear to work for Liz. She explained one of the reasons how some teachers can sustain the pressure of the job:

I think in teaching if you are able to do certain things naturally, you can cope with these things and continue teaching. So [those teachers] can separate their two parts of their lives because at the end of the day they aren’t so exhausted.

As Troman (2008) argued, it is because of many teachers’ ‘strong professional and vocational commitment’ to their work, that they can sometimes fail ‘to ‘juggle’ the personal and professional and with this failure [comes] an identity crisis’ (p. 631). As a result they may feel they can no longer stay in their schools and may eventually exit teaching altogether.

7.6.6 Does Liz’s identity explain why she stayed *and* left?

Liz was drawn to teach in a hard-to-teach London primary school, but ultimately she left due to the pressures of accountability. Indeed, these pressures placed on

Liz did not acknowledge the acute stress as well as the care-giving dimension of her role in the challenging context of a London school. Liz's story highlights the key role the personal plays in the professional identity of the teacher and how, if not carefully managed, it can lead to a sense of loss and vulnerability of the self (Kelchtermans, 2005). Palmer's (1997) argument that 'unlike many professions, teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life' (p.15) provides an insight into how fragile the relationship between personal and professional identities can be. Liz confessed that she was 'desperate' to leave teaching by the end and said, 'I was really happy when I left and for about a year after I left I said I would never go back'. However, she does miss elements of teaching, 'I do miss the interaction – and being mentally stimulated'. Liz has not ruled out a return to teaching in the future, but whether she would return to an inner London school is unclear. Certainly, she continues to feel socially motivated to work with children of deprived backgrounds, but she is uncertain whether she could withstand the additional challenges it would bring.

What is interesting about Liz's career story is how she has stayed *and* left. In her interview, she talked about the reasons why she stayed for as long as she did as well as the reasons why she left. I have suggested that a stayer is a teacher who remains teaching in their school for five or more years, but I have not suggested that a stayer should necessarily stay for their entire career. Liz stayed in a challenging inner London school and did so 'for the long haul' (Freedman and Appleman, 2009, p.323). Liz's story problematizes the nature of staying, and whether a teacher needs to stay for her entire working life to be considered *more* of a stayer than one who chooses to stay for ten years. Certainly, she stayed long

enough to make a real difference to the lives of the children who passed through her classroom year after year for nearly a decade. It is precisely because Liz made such a difference to children who very much needed a teacher like her in their schooling, that it is difficult to discuss Liz's career story without a hint of regret that a school like Beaumont has lost such a valuable teacher.

7.7 Chapter summary and conclusion

The teachers represented in this chapter underscore the point that although I use the term 'stayer' to describe them, they represent different types of staying. I have avoided using explicit categories to define what type of stayer they are for as this chapter demonstrates, there is not a set 'type' of stayer. Rather the teachers' act of staying changes and is in continual flux. For example, to only label Rosa as an 'unsettled stayer' would be a categorisation that would mask other staying traits which she displays. Therefore by examining the narratives of these different stayers in this chapter through the lens of their personal and professional identities provides a deeper and richer picture of the stayers' lives and of staying in London primary schools.

Palmer (1997) has stated that, 'We teach who we are' (p.15). Understanding *who* the stayers are has helped identify the reasons why they stay in their challenging inner city schools. When analysing the four vignettes contained in this chapter, it became apparent that the stayers' personal and professional identities had become so intertwined, that it could be argued at times there was little to distinguish the two. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) suggest that 'boundaries between the personal and the professional context become indistinct' (p.316) and argue that teacher

identity should not be seen as ‘where a teacher begins and where the teacher ends’ (p.317). In other words, personal and professional identities can be seen to co-exist. Nevertheless, I suggest that it is useful to refer to the concepts of personal and professional identity, however interlinked they are, if only to understand why some teachers stay and why others do not.

When examining my participants’ professional and personal identities, I was prepared to find a dynamic and shifting picture (Beijaard et al., 2004). I was also prepared to find, as Nias (1989) found, that teachers’ personal and professional identities merge to a greater or lesser extent over time until they feel they can be ‘themselves’ in the classroom. However, what I also discovered was the complexity in interpreting my stayers’ personal and professional identities in understanding the reasons why they stayed in their challenging schools. No doubt, this had much to do with the fact that their identities are so bound up in their personal histories, their personal biographies, their past and present experiences as well as how they express their core values and beliefs in their work. The theoretical framework of identity and motivation which this thesis posits is evidenced in the stories presented in this chapter. Staying in a London urban school is rooted in a teacher’s personal and professional identities which are influenced by their core values and beliefs. These core values can be interpreted as a stayer’s ‘core’ identity. Alongside this, there are various factors which influence teachers’ decisions to stay, but which also influence the stayers’ identities as well as being influenced *by* their identities.

When charting the changes and shifts of the stayers' identities, it became clear that the stayers had clear core values and beliefs which they appeared to refer to when making their career decisions. One interpretation would be to see these beliefs and values constituting a 'core identity' or 'substantial' identity (Gee, 2000; Nias, 1989). Although I do not argue that the stayers in my vignettes necessarily share similar 'core' identities, nonetheless what they seemed to share was a capacity for care, empathy, love and a deep commitment to building and sustaining relationships in their schools. These qualities permeated all the interviews and were repeated by the stayers as they talked about their work and their lives. The stayers' values acted as clear gridlines to which the stayers strived to align their professional selves in order to 'remain true' to who they are and thus maintain their satisfaction in their work. As Nias (1989) found with her teacher participants '...the personal values [...] incorporated in individuals' substantial selves play an important part in the way they conceptualize and carry out their work' (p.41). What appeared to happen in the case of the stayers, was that their work as teachers reinforced these core values as much as their values informed their work. Thus through their work, these values were further strengthened and in the process, the teachers' desire to stay also strengthened. As Nias (1989) points out, 'despite their differences, primary teachers see themselves in similar ways' (p.27). Perhaps, therefore, it is unsurprising to find that teachers who stay in disadvantaged contexts all share a similar aspect to their identities.

The stayers in the vignettes also highlighted how they looked to change in order to stay. Amelia did not want to leave her school, its children or her work with them, so over time she negotiated a significant change in her professional role.

When times became tough for Grace, she also refused to leave her school but found another way to channel her energies into her teaching and drew on other aspects of her identity to help sustain her commitment to her role. Rosa, while currently unsettled, identified a change in her professional role (if the leadership of the school agrees) which will help her maintain her commitment and motivation in her role. Rinke (2014) found similar paths being taken by the stayers in her study (although they were not stayers in one particular school). She suggested that when one aspect of her stayer participants' professional lives did not go according to plan, 'these teachers chose to continue searching for another manner by which they could make their contribution' (p.64). Some of my participant stayers found alternative ways to make their 'contributions' to some extent in their schools, such as Amelia and Rosa.

It would be easy to sentimentalise staying and choose to interpret the stayers as selfless and sacrificial individuals who see promise and positivity in every day they attend their schools. What these vignettes have highlighted is that the reality of staying is far less clear-cut. Staying can be intensely rewarding and uplifting, but it can also be fraught with tensions, difficulties and fatigue. On a good day, week or month, staying in a challenging London school may be the best thing a teacher can do. Staying means a teacher may feel a powerful sense of belonging, where they are embedded in the community and life of the school; staying can give the teacher a sense of value and worth; staying means a teacher has a sense of continuity and pride in having made a difference to generations of children. Staying can highlight the effects of a stayers' sense of moral purpose, passion and resilience and of an abiding care for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, staying can also mean frustration and exhaustion at having to battle with the challenges urban schools bring. Staying can mean fatigue from increased responsibilities, conflicts and problems with staff and children. Staying can also mean boredom and repetition where teachers are required to work within the confines of internal and external policy directives. The stayers I have interviewed have experienced all these feelings about staying, and depending on individual circumstances, the picture of staying can change.

Other dimensions of staying which, although hinted by some of the participants, were not frequently or as openly discussed by the stayers in my sample. Those include stayers feeling ‘trapped’ into staying due, perhaps, to financial commitments, housing issues, the security of having a good job or simply due to an apprehension of leaving for the unknown. However, despite these myriad reasons and the changing nature of staying, these vignettes have shown that those who do stay appear to be guided by a belief in the *value* of what they do on a daily basis.

Given the complexities inherent in staying in hard-to-teach London schools, understanding teachers’ personal and professional identities is crucial. Over time the stayers have become increasingly rooted in their London schools and their attachments to the school and wider community have also developed. As a result their identities as London teachers have become situated in their contexts. What the vignettes of the stayers shows is how aspects of their personal identities weave and flow through their professional selves, often informing how they engage in their work and influencing how they relate to those around them. They harmonise

their personal identities with their professional identities in order to sustain their commitment for the job and stay in their schools. My participants' stories demonstrate how the interplay of personal and professional identities interact with their experiences as urban stayers. As Olsen (2014) argues, teachers' 'identities [are] changed by their experience even as the meaning they construct from those experiences is shaped by their identities' (p.89). However, Liz's story serves as a warning to educators, leaders and stayers themselves. Liz did not cite solely extrinsic reasons for her decision to leave teaching; such as raising her own children, instead there were a number of reasons why she left. However, she did highlight identity issues as being a key factor in her decision to leave.

Olsen (2014) argues that experience is only part of the process of teaching. A teacher with experience also needs to be given opportunities to understand and make sense of identity changes and conflicts during a teaching career, otherwise they may not remain in their jobs, particularly in complex and challenging urban contexts. When teachers are left to negotiate their own identity conflicts, Olsen (2014) warns that it can 'lead to confusion and frustration, such that their professional growth is affected negatively and their desire to remain in the profession is undermined' (p.90). Certainly, then, later on in their careers, these stayers working in challenging and demanding contexts need to have an understanding of how to shape and expand their own teacher identity to meet the challenges and expectations they encounter. In this way, we may then encourage our most valuable, experienced and effective teachers to stay in inner London schools.

Chapter 8

Findings and Analysis

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has set out to examine why teachers stay in challenging London primary schools through the lenses of teacher identity and motivation. The intention of this chapter is to draw together my findings and reflect on the data presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7. In doing so I discuss and analyse responses to the research questions which I posed at the start of my thesis. This chapter presents 6 key findings elicited from the data:

- 1) There are four ‘plus’ key motivations for staying.
- 2) The stayers’ biographies, family backgrounds and early (educational) experiences frame their beliefs and values and influence career decisions.
- 3) Stayers value staying in challenging inner London schools.
- 4) Stayers have a high sense of self-efficacy and demonstrate resilience and persistence.
- 5) The stayers’ personal and professional identities co-exist relatively harmoniously, although they are ever-changing, dynamic and flexible.
- 6) Stayers internalise values of urban education and demonstrate loyalty to their schools and communities.

I begin my analysis by responding to the question: What motivates the stayers to stay? Here I examine the four ‘plus’ key motivations which my stayers gave for remaining in their schools. Next I turn to discuss a further five findings which respond to the question: What is it about the stayers which makes them stay?

Finally by problematizing the concept of the stayer, I interrogate my first research question posed at the start of the thesis: What is a ‘stayer’ and who are the stayers?

8.2 There are 4 ‘plus’ key motivations for staying

The first finding I examine highlights the common motivations which the stayers gave for remaining in their schools. From my coding and analysis of the transcripts I identified four common motivations which the stayers gave for remaining in their schools (see Table 8.1). I have included an additional ‘4 plus’ column which indicates a cluster of extrinsic reasons for staying: salary, housing and job security. However, from the data I gathered, it appeared that the reasons in the ‘4 plus’ column do not bear the same weight as the other four reasons, yet they play a role in the story of staying. The 8 stayers in this column explicitly discussed the importance of salary, housing and/or job security in their decisions to stay at their schools. Although these stayers only represent a third of all my participants, extrinsic reasons are factors that need consideration when exploring teachers’ reasons for remaining in their schools.

First, the issue of salary featured in nearly all the participants’ interviews. Stayers viewed salary as a ‘satisfier’ in their jobs rather than as a specific reason for staying. In other words, while a decent salary is not a reason for staying per se, the stayers would be dissatisfied without it (Nias, 1981b). Second, many stayers appeared reticent to talk about their own financial situations, preferring to talk about London teachers’ financial considerations more generally. Such reasons could well have been more important to the stayers than they indicated.

Discussing extrinsic reasons such as salary and job security with teachers was complex, sometimes awkward and was not always easy to pin down in my interviews. This may be in part because their coyness in discussing matters of salary. However, I believe this issue is too important to exclude, hence I have decided to add it to my reasons for staying.

In the following sections I set out and discuss each of the four ‘plus one’ motivations for staying. The motivations I analyse are as follows: ‘Making a difference’; the headteachers; colleagues; professional and career development opportunities; and salary, housing and job security.

Table 8.1 Top 4+ reasons for staying¹

Name	1. Making a difference/ love for children	2. Colleagues	3. The Headteacher	4. Professional/ Career development	4+ Salary/ housing/ job security
CURRENT TEACHER STAYERS					
Rosa	✓	✓			
Amelia	✓		✓	✓	✓
Isabelle		✓	✓	✓	
Alice	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Caroline	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Maria	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

¹ The ticked cells show reasons given for staying. The shaded blue cell indicate the corresponding reason was not given for staying. The table contains all current teacher stayers and former stayers. Former stayers were asked why they *stayed* for as long as they did in their previous inner London schools.

Name	1. Making a difference/ love for children	2. Colleagues	3. The Headteacher	4. Professional/ Career development	4+ Salary/ housing/ job security
Sian	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stephanie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stella	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tom	✓	✓	✓		✓
Jack	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Penny			✓	✓	✓
FORMER STAYERS					
Freya	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Paula	✓	✓			
Grace	✓	✓	✓		
Liz	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Josephine	✓	✓	✓	✓	
HEADTEACHER STAYERS					
David	✓	✓		✓	✓
Peter	✓	✓			
Graham	✓	✓		✓	
Eva	✓	✓			
John	✓	✓		✓	

'Making a difference' to disadvantaged children and 'love' for the children.

Many of my participants (22 out of 24) highlighted altruistic motivations for staying - they wanted to make a difference. They wanted to make a difference, in particular, to the lives of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many of the stayers were explicit about doing socially just work and contributing to social change. In the preceding chapters, I show how some other stayers talked about having a 'conviction' or a 'vocation' and wanting to engage in some kind of 'public service'. Many of the stayers used value-based terms referring to concepts such as love, caring, fairness and loyalty to explain why they remained in their schools (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Frequency of 'value' based terms used to indicate altruistic reasons for staying

Word/words	Number of times used across all interviews
Love	84
care/caring	39
fair/fairness/being fair	28
make/making a difference	23
loyal/loyalty	19

While many of the stayers were explicit about the 'love' they had for the children they work with, many (although not all) stayers also talked about the high emotional costs of staying in their schools. For example, Amelia likened the emotional charge of working in her school to a 'never-ending tornado'. Despite this, some of the stayers (for example, Rosa, Alice and Grace) talked about not

wanting to ‘abandon’ or ‘give up’ on the children. It is these powerful sentiments, as expressed by many of the stayers, which demonstrated how their teaching practice and professional identity, ‘takes shape through involvement in work that has social meaning and value’ (Hansen, 1994, p.263).

The headteachers

In line with findings from other studies (Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Towers, 2011; Watt and Richardson, 2008), my data analysis reveals that headteachers play a central role in teachers’ decisions to remain in their schools. For this reason, in Chapter 6 I examined why headteachers stay in challenging schools and explore if and how a staying head encourages their teachers to stay.

Twelve out of the fourteen current teacher stayers mentioned their headteachers as a strong reason for remaining in their schools. These stayers talked about headteachers who nurtured them both personally and professionally. For example, Maria commented on how working in challenging circumstances requires an encouraging headteacher who will provide the right kind of support, ‘I help others, but also I need looking after’. Maria’s description of her headteacher highlights the crucial role a head plays in their teachers’ evolving identities. A headteacher, like Maria’s, creates an environment where the teacher feels guided and nurtured to enable them to forge new personal and professional paths. As Day (2005b) has argued, successful headteachers in challenging contexts demonstrate, ‘the importance of defining and maintaining individual and collective identities, renewing trust and their passion for the work of educating’ (p.576). The headteacher is key to ensuring that their teachers have the opportunity to thrive.

The fact that the heads in my study are rooted in the London context, having been teachers in similar or the same challenging London schools, is instrumental in how they shape the culture of their schools and support their teachers.

Eleven out of the fourteen current teacher stayers valued the leadership of their headteachers (2 stayers, who are both assistant heads, explained that although their headteachers were not especially excellent leaders, they had good personal relationships with them). It is important to note that although some of the stayers talked about their headteachers' shortcomings, such as Sian who commented that her headteacher can 'drive her up the wall', they nonetheless still felt loyalty to their headteachers. A good headteacher in an inner London school can support teachers to meet the challenges of their work so that the teachers feel enabled to stay. Indeed the stayers' headteachers enable their staff to capture and follow through a vision for the school.

Through my analysis of the interviews with the headteachers, I found that they themselves are also continually constructing and reconstructing their stayer identities which are influenced by their personal and professional circumstances as well as by pressures and challenges. The headteachers claimed that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Head and the staff which is an integral part of the school experience for everyone (Day and Gu, 2010). For example, Graham talked about how he creates a supportive environment where the teachers can take on professional challenges. In turn Graham said his staff have 'continually given me the courage to be the leader that I think I can be'. Without a doubt, the dynamic and mutually enriching relationship between the headteachers and the

stayers contribute to everyone's sense of commitment, dedication and loyalty to the school, which in turn reinforces the stayers' decisions to stay, both heads and teachers.

Colleagues

Many studies attest to the importance of supportive colleagues in a teacher's decision to remain in their school and, in particular, in challenging urban schools (for example: Eslinger, 2012; McIntyre, 2010; Stanford, 2001). The importance of good colleagues is reflected in my study where all but 2 stayers claimed their colleagues play a key role in their decision to remain in their schools. Two stayers (Amelia and Penny) did not generally have positive relationships with their colleagues. However, when probed, they alluded to small 'reference groups' (Nias, 1989, p.51), who helped them maintain their sense of self-efficacy and enthusiasm for the job. In other words, none of the stayers felt completely isolated in their schools. In preceding chapters, I have discussed how many of the stayers referred to their colleagues as 'friends' and even likened them to family. Over time, as relationships with colleagues become more established, so stayers become more established in their schools. This in turn strengthens the stayers' sense of belonging and loyalty to a school. Indeed as Jack pointed out, some stayers may feel they do not want to 'let their own colleagues down' by leaving.

Having close, like-minded colleagues when working in challenging urban schools appears to be important in staying. According to McNulty's (2005) experience as a headteacher in a challenging inner city school, teachers in these schools enjoy a 'camaraderie [which] is rarely found outside of challenging schools' (p.191). This

sentiment was reflected in my data, when Jack suggested that teachers in these schools tend to have a ‘closer bond’ because of the particular challenges they all face. Similarly Isabelle echoed this point when she suggested that in urban schools such as hers, colleagues provide a particular kind of support and understanding after a ‘rough day in the classroom’. It can also be argued that the London factor invites an added dimension to collegial relationships in these challenging schools. Stayers in these schools either already possess or have developed a deep understanding of the complexities, intricacies and peculiarities of working in London schools. Thus collegial relationships are also influenced by the London context. In the majority of cases, the stayers’ colleagues play a key role in their decisions to stay. Nine out of the fourteen current teacher stayers suggested that they would be inclined to leave their schools and would find it harder to cope if they did not have such positive and supportive relationships with colleagues.

Professional and career development opportunities

Having opportunities to develop professionally in their jobs is crucial to the stayers. In these London primary schools there are many opportunities to progress relatively swiftly up the career ladder (Maguire et al., 2006). However, many of the participants talked about how pivotal their headteachers are in providing them with professional development and career opportunities. By engaging in professional development, the stayers found ways to grow and change in their schools. Indeed, it appeared that the stayers *have* to change if they are to sustain their enthusiasm and energy for their work. Consistent with Rinke’s (2014) findings, all of my participants engaged in actively exploring different avenues

within their careers, in order to maintain ‘meaningful career trajectories’ (p.66) in their schools. Out of the 14 current London teacher stayers, 8 took on assistant headships and deputy headships in the schools where they were once full time class teachers. Those stayers who did not take on senior leadership roles became either key stage leaders and/or were responsible for leading a significant curriculum area. As their careers progress (and they take on new roles and responsibilities) so the stayers are continually in the process of reworking their personal and professional identities. The shaping of these professional identities interacts with their changing personal and professional goals.

In the case of the urban stayer, what appears to be important is the impact they can make on the lives and the opportunities of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, whatever their roles and responsibilities. For example, Rosa talked about how she could make much *more* of a difference to the children and their school experience if she were to be in a leadership post. Whereas Grace and Tom suggested that they would have more of a direct impact on the children if they remained as full time class teachers.

Salary, housing and job security

In this category I have grouped the key extrinsic reasons which were referred to in the interviews. While some of the stayers mentioned all these aspects in their interviews, others mentioned one or two extrinsic motivations. Eight of the stayers explicitly talked about how extrinsic reasons have a bearing on why they stay in their schools (see Table 8.1). It is important to note, however, that these 8 stayers also gave at least three of the other four main motivations for remaining in

their schools. In terms of money, as discussed above, many of the other stayers viewed salary as a ‘satisfier’ in their jobs. However, it is useful to note that 5 stayers were clear that money did not feature *at all* in their reasons for becoming a teacher or for staying. For example, Caroline reported: ‘I don’t care about the wages of this job. Money has never been a motivation. Ever’.

The stayers who did discuss extrinsic reasons for staying had reached a point in their careers where they felt they were reasonably well paid. A number of the stayers referred to the ‘London Weighting’ allowance as a welcome bonus to their pay, particularly as living in the capital is costly. Three of the stayers (Stephanie, Penny and Mary) referred to their family circumstances – these stayers had recently had children or were about to. They said that they stayed, in part, because of the attractive maternity arrangements offered by their school. They also explained that they were able to maintain a decent salary in their current schools and that they could not be certain that their maternity arrangements, hence job security, would be provided in the same way by another school. Stephanie suggested it would be ‘too expensive’ to be taken on elsewhere in her current role. However, Penny was the only stayer to indicate that housing costs in London may make it prohibitive for her and her growing family to remain in London in the future. Two stayers (Amelia and Tom) had key worker homes and financial commitments which meant that they were effectively tied to teaching in London. David, who is nearing retirement, stated that no other school would be able to ‘afford’ him. The remaining 2 stayers (Jack and Maria) said if they left their schools, they would have to ‘prove [themselves] all over again’ for a similar salary elsewhere. If they decided to leave teaching they suggested that would

‘have to start again’ and take a significant pay cut. This affected their decision to remain in their schools and could be interpreted as a pressure to stay in their schools.

I concede that it is difficult to measure to what degree salary influences my participants’ decisions to stay, but the stayers did generally view extrinsic reasons such as salary and job security as a ‘plus point’ (Purcell et al., 2005, p.22) which needed to be present in order to persist at the job. Of course the importance of salary and job security is highly dependent on the stayers’ individual circumstances, but the general sentiment expressed by the stayers was that having a decent salary was a reward that ‘represents recognition and respect’ (Margolis and Deuel, 2009, p.281).

The following 5 findings respond to questions on what it is about the stayers’ identities and motivations which prompts them to stay in their schools.

8.3 The stayers’ biographies, family backgrounds and early (educational) experiences frame their beliefs and values and influence career decisions

The coding and analysis of the interview data shows that the stayers’ personal histories and early influences impact on the stayers’ subsequent career decisions, their sense of identity and their motivations for staying in their London schools (Chapter 5). Out of the 24 participants, 19 came from teaching backgrounds or backgrounds which showed strong connections with young children. Others reported that they had early educational experiences that influenced their choice

of occupation. Of the 8 teachers who came from teaching families, 3 of them had initially resisted becoming teachers. Two stayers (Caroline and Freya) reported that they wanted to teach from a young age. For most stayers, their ‘vocation’ to teach came later in their lives.

Some of the stayers’ early experiences featured in their decisions to teach in an urban school, and to teach in London in particular. The stayers in my study come from many different locations; from the communities where they now work; from rural locations in other parts of the UK; from other urban communities and from outside of the UK. Five stayers moved from other parts of the country deliberately to teach in challenging London schools. Other stayers (11 out of the 24) had grown up in London (where most of them trained to be teachers) and so staying in London was an obvious choice for them; they already possessed a London identity. Of these London-raised stayers, 4 of them grew up either in the same or similar communities to those where they opted to work.

The stayers’ early influences can also explain why they decide to remain in their schools. For example, Alice’s background and family experiences featured significantly in her decision to teach and stay in Beaumont Primary. Alice had spent her entire life in the community where she still teaches. For her, choosing to teach (and stay) in her home community suited her because as she explained: ‘I like to be in my surroundings, I like to know my environment, I like to be familiar with it’. It appeared to be important for Alice to be comfortable in her familiar locality where all her family and many of her friends lived and worked.

Wherever the stayers came from, many of them identified a moral dimension to their decision to stay working in their challenging schools. Nearly all the stayers expressed common beliefs and values about serving socially and economically deprived communities. Although the stayers gave a range of (predominantly altruistic and intrinsic) reasons for remaining in their schools, many of their reasons underscored their own values and beliefs about their profession and the wider world. For example, the link between Dan's decision to teach in a disadvantaged school and his reasons for staying are supported by his core values, which in turn can be traced to his family background and past experiences. Dan's family influences instilled in him a sense of moral purpose, to 'make a difference' and to be 'selfless'. As a result of these core values, he deliberately chose to work in a disadvantaged setting in London (in contrast to his rural home background). When he found teaching in Meadway Primary particularly challenging, he indicated that it was his determination fuelled by these values and beliefs which kept him going.

Challenging personal experiences and backgrounds can influence values and beliefs in a positive way. For example, Amelia experienced difficult times with her health and personal relationships. Her experiences have led her to value empathy and compassion for those who are experiencing difficulties. Her work as a Special Educational Needs teacher in Beaumont, as well as her work outside school with the Samaritans, shows Amelia 'acting out' her beliefs through her work and her life.

The vignettes presented in Chapter 5 show how a stayer's biography and early experiences influence their beliefs and values about the world. However, I argue that the stayers whom I interviewed may have adopted a kind of rationalising 'biographical talk' (Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.24). This is sometimes done in order to make sense of personal histories and place them in the context of present (and future) career choices. Even so, by charting the stayers' early influences including what they say about their values and beliefs, a pattern in their stories emerges. This pattern starts with the stayers' initial motivations to teach, and leads them to work in a challenging school and then deciding to stay there. These London stayers have developed what I have identified as a 'stayer identity'. This identity is characterised by a sense of stability and loyalty as well as a commitment to the values of social justice which leads the stayers serving some of society's least privileged children. What distinguishes these stayer identities from stayers in other types of schools or localities, is that their identities have been shaped by and in the unique London context, a theme previously discussed in chapter 1. In other words the teachers in my study exhibit *London stayer* identities. For many of the teachers and headteachers, such as Alice, Amelia, David and Josphine, their identities are also bound up with the London boroughs in which they work.

8.4 Stayers value staying in challenging inner London schools

The majority of the stayers (20 in total) were unequivocal about why they think it is important to have stayers in schools like theirs. Most of their responses focused on the positive and stabilising effect which stayers have on children who come

from backgrounds of instability and uncertainty (characteristic of challenging urban schools). Other responses focused on the positive impact that stayers can have on the families of the children and on the wider community. Stayers are often an integral part of the school community where they are active participants in representing the school in the local setting. This is particularly important in the London context where communities, such as the ones in which the stayers work, can be divided along social, economic and ethnic lines. In this case, the school and its stayers can be a consistent unifying force for a community. This in turn can reinforce the stayer's commitment to remain in the school and serve its community. Whether stayers come from similar London communities, or whether they come from outside of London, staying in a school over a long period of time means they become integrated into the local community. This enables the stayers to be part of the fabric of London community life.

The participants in my study placed a high value on staying. For example, Stephanie suggested that the school's identity is subject to change over time, but that with enough stayers providing a sense of continuity, the school's identity can 'essentially stay the same'. Other participants such as Freya, Liz and Mary talked about how stayers ensure that the school's 'personality' or 'ethos' remains intact. The stayers collectively frame an identity for the school and build what Day (2005b) refers to as a 'collective memory of purpose, process and success' (p.577). Certainly, the stayers in a school are *integral* to the construction of this collective memory. For Freya, maintaining the school's 'personality' is essential, for otherwise it may become more 'like a business rather than a school'. The stayers I interviewed had positive views about their schools' 'personality' and

‘ethos’. However, it is useful to note that a school’s ‘personality’ may be overbearing and have a negative influence on its teachers. For the stayers I interviewed though, schools are not just places where lessons are taught, but where a community of children and staff are nurtured, cared for and provided with the best opportunities possible to lead fulfilling lives. Indeed, some stayers also suggested that there is a sense of ‘trust’ and ‘faith’ which children and parents have in a school if there are a core group of stayers. The stayers are aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with families and communities who may distrust professionals. School provides consistency in the lives of children who often have to contend with turbulent and unstable home lives. Staying is important for the stayers in my study, not least because they also have corresponding values about the importance of commitment over time and providing continuity for those children and families in communities where these attributes are most needed.

8.5 Stayers have a high sense of self-efficacy and demonstrate resilience and persistence

The stayers’ positive relationships with the children, with the children’s families and the wider community, as well as their relationships with other members of staff and their headteachers, all contributed to a sense of self-efficacy. Nearly all of the stayers talked openly about the challenges they faced in their work and a sense that they were doing ‘a good job’ appeared to be of key importance to them. Indeed research indicates that having a high sense of self-efficacy increases motivation and commitment in teachers (Canrinus and Fokkens-Bruinsma, 2011; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Not only does having a high sense

of self-efficacy impact on a stayer's commitment to their job, it is essential for the children they teach, *particularly* for children in urban schools. This is because as Chester and Beaudin (1996) found, teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more effective in teaching a wide range of children with varying abilities (often found in many urban classrooms), including those 'low-achieving students in failure situations' (p.236).

Resilience is linked to a high sense of self-efficacy, and the theme of resilience and persistence to remain in the job runs through my stayers' stories. My data highlighted the 'multifaceted and dynamic' (Gu and Day, 2013, p.40) nature of the stayers' resilience. Many of the stayers referred to specific factors that enhanced their resilience, such as the children, the headteacher, their colleagues and their sense of self-efficacy. For example, Stella (assistant head at Beaumont Primary) talked about how important the headteacher and her colleagues are at bolstering her commitment when she feels particularly low or defeated. David (headteacher) referred to how the children and the staff keep him going through difficult times. Others identified resilience as a quality they needed to possess or develop. For example, Sian discussed how she was working on becoming more resilient in order to be the best teacher she could be for the children she teaches – leaving her school to teach somewhere 'easier' was not an option for her. For most of the stayers resilience was more than 'the capacity to survive and thrive in adversity' (Gu and Day, 2013, p.40), but was about creating rich teaching and learning environments and ultimately 'making a difference' to the children in the stayers' schools. It was also about resisting some of the more onerous demands made on them and finding strategies to create new ways of working which were

rewarding and meaningful for them. In this perspective, the stayers' sense of resilience and persistence to stay is self-constructed and can be seen not only as a dynamic and ongoing process (Gu and Day, 2013) but also as an empowering force which sustains them in their challenging schools.

8.6 The stayers' personal and professional identities co-exist relatively harmoniously, although they are ever-changing, dynamic and flexible

From my analysis of the data, I pieced together a complex picture as regards the stayers' personal and professional identities. The stayers' identities were multi-faceted, ever-changing, were woven into their personal histories and worked dynamically with their changing situational contexts. First, the stayers were divided in how they expressed their personal and professional identities. Some of the stayers, like Caroline, John, and Alice explained that their personal and professional identities were one and the same. Indeed a few stayers, like Eva and Peter suggested that it would not be 'authentic' of them if their personal and professional identities were different. Other stayers like Amelia, Stella and Jack felt that while they were 'themselves' in their professional role, there was still an element of 'putting on a show' in their professional roles and that there were times when they felt more 'themselves' and occasions when they were 'playing a role'. These stayers suggested that although teaching and school was all consuming, they could separate their personal and professional selves when they needed to. Only one stayer, Stephanie, said that she completely separated her personal and professional identities. In fact, whether the stayers have either consciously or unconsciously separated or merged their personal and professional

identities, these two aspects of the stayer's identities can be seen to 'co-exist in a flexible state' (Bradbury and Gunter, 2006, p.498).

Second, as a consequence of my coding, it became apparent that the stayers' identities are inextricably linked with their London urban setting and experiences. As Rodgers and Scott (2008) have argued, identity is 'dependent upon the contexts in which we immerse ourselves' (p.734). The disadvantaged and challenging inner city context is suffused with problems, contradictions and conflicts – all of which are reflected in the urban landscape (Lipman, 2013). As such, the context for teaching and learning in disadvantaged settings carries pressures in addition to the usual routine teaching duties. For example, relationships with children, parents and colleagues can be intense and draining (Riddell, 2003); the activity of teaching children, who may present emotional, behavioural and educational challenges, can be demanding and highly pressurised (Tikly, 2013). The stayers' personal and professional experiences of all of the challenges and pressures they encounter, as well as moments of reward and satisfaction are woven together to construct a London urban teacher identity which enables these stayers to thrive and be active agents of their identity construction in their environment.

Furthermore, identity can be understood as being 'intrinsically tied to place' (Easthorpe, 2009, p.71). The stayers' relationship with the diverse and exciting city of London provide opportunities for self-reflection and self-development and a site for their evolving identities to be reworked (Manzo, 2005). Within London, the stayers found a place (the school and its community) in which they were able

to ‘carve out their own niches [...] where they could feel a sense of belonging or insiderness’ (Manzo, 2005, p.83).

8.7 Stayers internalise values of urban education and demonstrate commitment and loyalty to their schools and communities

Stayers in challenging London primary schools not only internalise and normalise daily, termly and yearly school structures, but they also internalise and normalise working life in challenging urban settings. The challenges the stayers encounter are part of their ongoing construction of identity and meaning. A stayer’s commitment to their school is closely linked to the type of community they serve and the value they place in what they consider to be worthwhile and meaningful work. The schools *are* challenging places to work, but the schools and the children have become such an integral part of my participants’ identities; nearly all the participants could not imagine working in other contexts such as ‘in the ‘burbs’’ (Paula) or ‘in the leafy schools’ (Freya). Stephanie articulated this by explaining that she is proud to be an inner city teacher; working in a challenging urban school ‘defines the kind of teacher you are’. Some of the stayers, such as Rosa and Stella were clear that they would not want to work in more affluent schools because it is the type of school and the type of intake which motivates them to stay where they are. It should be noted that although some stayers said that they would not be driven to work with children from more privileged backgrounds, 3 stayers said that they would not feel particularly ‘comfortable’ working in a ‘leafy’ school. For example, Grace did not feel she ‘fit’ into the middle class school where she once worked in for a short time.

Many of the stayers (including all of the headteachers) indicated that they stayed in their schools *because* of the challenges their schools presented. My data shows that as the stayers remained in their schools for a significant period of time, so their loyalty for their particular school grew, and in turn so did their commitment to their school and the children. Most of the current serving London teacher stayers (9 out of 14) reported feeling more connected to their schools and the school community than they did to their profession. They echoed McIntyre's (2010) finding where her participants were 'bound by ties of loyalty and professionalism to a particular community' (p.611). In my study, the affection the participants have for their schools is clear. Many stayers, both teachers and headteachers, said that for them their school was 'like home' and that the school community was like 'family'.

Twenty-one of the stayers expressly claimed that the urban *London* context is a significant reason why they stay in their schools. All the headteachers and many of the teacher stayers talked about their enthusiasm for working in schools which are characterised by the challenge of diversity and difference (Vertovec, 2007). For example, David talked about how the school 'celebrates' the many communities which make up the school. He said that it is exciting and rewarding to work in an environment where 'every ethnic community in this school [is] involved...'. Indeed some participants such as David highlighted this unique aspect of working in a London primary school. Paula talked about how children in London are characterised by what she referred to as a, 'city edginess... that you just don't get [elsewhere]'. Others talked about being drawn to working and living

in London because the capital city was an environment where they personally and professionally ‘fit’. Indeed Nava (2006) writes about the specificity of London as a post-modern city in which the ‘core element in the identity of London’ is reflected in the fact that ‘national and ‘racial’ differences have become ordinary’ (p.42).

Many of the stayers (13 in total) were not brought up in London, but were drawn to working in the city for job opportunities (such as Caroline and Rosa). These stayers, who came from other locations, moved to London for the desire to live and work in an exciting and dynamic capital city. Once they establish themselves in the city, they adopt a particular ‘London’ identity which permeates their professional and personal lives and identities. One example of a stayer assuming a London headteacher identity is John, who came from the north of England. He talked about how he is ‘committed to London’ both in his personal and professional life, and repeatedly referred to the city as ‘home’. Two former stayers, who had left the capital, were able to reflect on their careers in London from a different time and space perspective. Through analysing their responses and comparing them to those of current stayers, London appears as a unique environment in which to live and work as an urban teacher. London fosters its own particular *community* of urban teachers – London teachers.

While I have drawn from the data some clear commonalities between the London stayers in my study, the staying stories of my participants have highlighted the differentiated nature of staying. As a consequence the stayer and staying cannot be easily defined, or categorised. Indeed staying can be volatile as it can be stable

and unstable at different periods of a stayer's career. What constitutes staying can be problematic.

8.8 Problematizing Staying

A key issue which arises from the reporting and analysis of the data is that the concept of staying and who the stayer is prompts further discussion. Staying is a somewhat problematic concept as it can be volatile. There are stayers who are 'unsettled stayers' (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003), but there are also stayers who may not necessarily feel 'unsettled' all the time, but still harbour doubts about staying from time to time. At the time of the interviews, 5 of the stayers were unsure whether they would still be in their schools in 5 years' time. In the challenging job of working in hard-to-teach schools in London, it is perhaps unsurprising that stayers' experience doubts about their work and futures in their schools.

Some studies on teacher identity such as Nias, 1989 and Bullough, 2005 suggest that a teacher possesses a core self which is impervious to change. The claim is that, although a teacher's identity can be influenced by a range of situated and individual factors, identity is essentially stable. An opposing view proposed by researchers such as MacLure (1993) argues that identities are in fact inherently unstable. Day et al. (2007) consider both viewpoints and argue that identities can be both stable and unstable (to a greater or lesser extent) at different times depending on the teacher's personal and professional circumstances. When examining my stayers' attitudes towards staying, there appeared to be a similar pattern whereby 'staying' could be stable (the stayers were sure of their

commitment to staying), but could also be unstable (the stayers were unsure about staying). The teacher identities of my participants can be seen as both stable and unstable at different moments in their careers (Day et al., 2006a). In most cases, the stayers 'recover' from moments where their identities are unstable. They find ways to re-engage with their work and re-commit to staying.

Some stayers, such as Paula and Freya, found that moving to another (disadvantaged) school fulfilled their changing personal and professional goals. However, former stayer and leaver, Liz, illustrates how an unstable teacher identity can eventually lead to a teacher leaving the profession altogether. Staying is not a linear process; it involves engagement, disengagement and re-engagement.

Another problematic aspect of staying which I extracted from the data is what I term the 'paradox of staying'. Some stayers, such as Rosa, Maria and Jack highlighted how unstable their staying was even though they also talked about how much they value their work. To reiterate, as Nias (1989) found, teachers can 'be in love with one's work but daily talk of leaving it' (p.191). In a more formal interview setting, the participants may understandably want to 'present themselves in what they believe will be seen as a favourable light' (Sikes, 2000, p.264). Whilst I believed my participants' reasons for staying, many of them may not have wanted to dwell on any negative thoughts about staying.

Drawing on my own current experience as an inner London teacher where I informally talk to teachers on a daily basis, the struggles, doubts and feelings of

vulnerability which teachers (and stayers) have, are all too familiar. Indeed some of my stayers made comments which indicated that, for all the admirable reasons they gave for staying in their schools, staying could also be an uphill struggle. For example, Maria mentioned how she often felt ‘overwhelmed’ in her job and used the word ‘desperate’ at one stage. Stella openly wept in her interview with me because of a confrontation she had with a parent that day. Even headteacher Peter admitted to feelings of loneliness when explaining, ‘I have to look after myself pretty much on my own’. Rosa indicated that she was finding class teaching monotonous and uninspiring. Jack was perhaps the most open about his doubts, and explained that although he enjoyed teaching, he was not sure he could ‘continue like this forever’.

Challenging urban schools have what Riddell (2003) refers to as a “relentlessness” about them, even when things seem to be going well’ (p.59). This ‘relentlessness’ can be trying for the most committed of urban teachers. Most of the stayers talked openly about the challenges they encounter regularly in their schools and their jobs, but not many expressed any serious doubts about their work. If these stayers did harbour moments of doubt about their capacity or ability to remain in their schools, these were masked in the interview. However, 5 stayers hinted that their decisions to stay for positive reasons are also mixed with the wariness of the unknown. It may be that for these teachers, staying is less challenging than leaving. For example, Amelia was one of the few stayers who said that for her leaving would be, ‘... quite daunting and real hard work’. As much as the pace and work in their hard-to-teach schools is ‘relentless’, the stayers at least know and understand the work they are engaged in. Thus it may be that an aspect of the

‘paradox of staying’ is linked to stayers’ feelings that leaving and moving to a different type of school is just too daunting for them. Despite the challenges involved in staying, it is this very ‘act’ of staying that provides a sense of stability which schools, teachers and children all need.

8.9 Gender matters and the primary teacher

In any research on the lives of primary school teachers, it is important to attend to the gender considerations that influence teachers’ work although I am aware of the complex and contested nature of gender attribution (Skelton, 2002). As I discussed in chapter 5, in a predominantly feminised occupational setting it may well be that the concepts of caring and love have gendered connotations (Thomson and Kehily, 2011; Vogt, 2002). Indeed I argue that there may have been gendered expectations about some of my participants’ motivations to become primary school teachers. In chapter 7, I discuss the ‘mother’ identities of some of my participants (Alice, Grace and Liz) and suggest that these aspects of their lived identities contribute to shaping their teacher identities. Indeed while many of the participants employed what may be considered to be ‘maternal’ language when discussing the children they teach, some of the mother participants (such as Alice and Liz) discussed how their maternal identities and their working identities were interconnected. It is useful to note, however, that some of my male participants also talked about their own children and alluded to their paternal identities (for example David, Peter and Tom). These male participants also employed caring language in their discussions about the children.

In this study I chose not to place an overt emphasis on gender, largely because I did not find a direct and significant ‘gender story’ in my data, apart from the fact that my participants are mostly female. Nevertheless, although this study has not closely focused on the gendered aspect of the stayers, it is a topic which does merit further analysis and discussion in future research in the context of stayers and staying in challenging primary schools.

8.10 Chapter summary and conclusion

Although staying can be volatile and uncertain, the stayers I interviewed did communicate certain values which appeared to be stable, such as their desire to make a difference for disadvantaged children. Generally, their core beliefs appeared to act as an anchor which helped them make sense of why they stay in their schools. My stayer participants all communicated (to a greater or lesser extent) similar beliefs to explain their decisions to teach and stay in their schools, even though the ways in which they worked out those beliefs evolved and changed over time. There were stayers who were more unsettled in their roles (such as Rosa), or who indicated that they may not remain in their schools for many years to come (such as Jack and Isabelle). Although holding certain beliefs and values do not guarantee that a stayer will stay in the same school, they may increase the chances of a teacher staying, or at the very least staying in urban education. I am hesitant to suggest that the stayers’ beliefs and values are unshakeable, but perhaps there is something stable about certain beliefs and values, and these are things which, in combination with other factors which I have discussed, could enhance the ‘staying power’ of a teacher.

There is nothing static about my stayers' careers. Rather they are continually in the process of constructing and reconstructing their teacher identities and continually in the process of constructing and reconstructing their own motivations for staying. The 'stitching' together of different aspects of the stayers' biographies, personal and professional experiences (both past and present), their values and beliefs, their relationships with others and their future goals, is what they do (be it conscious or unconscious) when *constructing* their identities. Throughout their careers, my participants have encountered many twists and turns, both negative and positive. These various vicissitudes of their teaching life have demanded different responses from my participants as they endeavour to make sense of their personal and professional identities. A study by Xu (2015) on the identity constructions of students moving from mainland China to Hong Kong, can be mapped onto my stayers' contexts. Of her student participants, Xu (2015) notes, 'the fluid identity constructions process has been imbued with tensions, retreat, resistance and persistence' (p.71). In terms of my stayers, similar internal and external forces are at play in creating such 'fluid identity constructions'.

A key feature of my findings relates to the specificity of the context: London. The situated dimension of my stayers' identities is rooted in a challenging London context. The 'Londoness' of the stayers' experience is reflected in the uniqueness and diversity of the children they teach; the like-minded colleagues and headteachers who also choose to work (and in some cases stay) in hard-to-teach London schools; and the wider school community located within this expansive capital city into which the stayers become established over time. There is a

symbiotic relationship with the stayers' contexts, where the London challenge of their schools influences the construction of their identities, and thus motivations to stay. At the same time the stayers themselves contribute to the shaping of a London primary school identity which incorporates the values that the stayers communicate in their work.

The findings discussed in this chapter present an intricate tapestry of interlacing threads, with some woven together seemingly at random while other threads create more obvious patterns. The stayers' narratives signal a differentiation in staying and what it means to be a stayer for each participant varies according to circumstance and context. In these findings, I have argued that staying can be about dedication to children, staff and community, which is linked with stayers' values and beliefs about public service. However, as my findings have shown this is not the sole motivation for staying in disadvantaged London schools. These values and commitments are also intertwined with pragmatic motivations such as salary, job security, housing and family. As I have discussed in this thesis, the stayers' motivations shift and change at different times depending on personal and professional contexts and situations. Stayers' identities become reworked and reconstructed in concert with changing motivations. Stayers need to feel they are doing a good job, but this is as much influenced by colleague relationships as it is by their professional practice and development.

My stayers all articulated, in one way or another, what they believed was the critical nature of their work. The findings presented in this chapter highlight the core values of care and love, of vocation and commitment as demonstrated by the

stayers. These core values and beliefs which the stayers either explicitly articulated in their interviews, or demonstrated through their career stories, carry a great weight in urban schools. In these schools, children rely on teachers who can compensate for all those things that are not offered outside of school. Many children rely on the stability and continuity that the stayers in their primary schools offer. Most importantly, children of disadvantage rely on these stayers who have an 'abiding faith in the promise of education' (Nieto, 2003, p.53).

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The lives and careers of primary school teachers have always interested me since the early days of my own career as a London primary school teacher. As I myself became a stayer, my interest in other stayers grew and developed into researching their lives as London primary school stayers. Along the way I have collected a great deal of data and I have immersed myself in the stories of my stayer participants. I have heard many accounts that have been heart-warming, sad, complicated and evocative of my own times as an inner London primary school stayer. However, life is often more complex than we can account for in written texts, so in this final chapter I will only be able to detail some of the major findings from my work. I take an analytical stance to these findings, particularly in considering why I found what I found and why my participants said what they said. I can only identify those findings and conclusions that have most impacted my research, leaving other details for another time.

In this final chapter I start by summarising my thesis and revisiting my research questions. I then set out my concluding responses to my three research questions. Following this, I discuss the methodological limitations of my study, specifically those limitations related to the interview process and the sample set. I then discuss how these limitations may be addressed in future research. Next, I explore the implications of my study for urban schools: I consider policy implications for

teacher retention; and I discuss implications for teacher professional development. The concluding section presents some final thoughts about my research study.

9.2 Summary and restatement of research questions

This thesis has set out to examine an under-researched aspect of teacher retention; it considers why teachers choose to stay teaching in challenging primary schools, rather than why they choose to leave. This study highlights a gap in our understanding of the lives of urban primary school ‘stayers’, and in particular, what motivates them to remain in highly challenging contexts in an already demanding profession. My study takes identity theory as a critical lens to probe how a stayer’s personal and professional identities influence their decisions to remain in their schools. I have been guided in this study by three core research questions:

RQ1: Stayers: What is a ‘stayer’ and who are stayers?

RQ2: What motivates stayers (or has motivated them in the past) to stay in disadvantaged inner London primary schools?

RQ3: How, and in what ways, does a stayer’s identity (professional and/or personal) influence their decisions to stay?

In the first part of this thesis, I presented the background to my research study, considering the London context in which my research is located (chapter 1). Identity and motivation theories provide a framework to my study and are employed as analytical tools to investigate why the stayers stay and what it is about who they are which influences their decisions (chapter 2 and 3). In chapter 4 I set out the methodological framework and methods for my data collection.

Over the course of a year and a half, I conducted in-depth semi structured interviews with 24 participants (class teachers, senior leaders, headteachers and former teachers) to examine the responses to my research questions.

My intention in this study was to explore the personal narratives of my stayers in order to gain an understanding of the stories behind their career choices. At the heart of the thesis, (chapters 5, 6 and 7) I recounted some of the stayers' stories examining the relationships between their motivations and identities that constituted towards their staying. The final part of the thesis drew together the key findings from my data where I found that staying is dependent on a number of professional, personal and situational factors which are related to identity and motivations. As such, staying is a complex and multi-faceted process. Whilst most stayers expressed strong commitments about staying and staying in the future, some were less certain and expressed doubts about staying in the years to come.

9.3 Responses to the research questions

My data highlights how researching an aspect of a person's life cannot result in a single truth or answer (Cohen et al., 2011). However there are multiple truths and responses which serve to illuminate the research questions that I have posed in this study. By drawing on identity theory to examine teachers' motivations for remaining in challenging London schools, my study investigated the personal and professional elements of teachers' experiences, beliefs, values and practices and discovered that they are integral to one another. As with people in all jobs and professions, aspects of biography play a significant role in teachers' identities and

their motives for choosing to remain in their schools. However, in this study the stayers' 'biographical talk' (Taylor and Littleton, 2006, p.24) has been central to understanding their personal and professional choices. This biographical talk has enabled me, as the researcher, and the participants to explore their personal and professional identities and gain a rich and nuanced picture of their reasons for staying in their London schools. Examining the stayers' responses to my questions has challenged any preconceived ideas I might have had that teachers have a clear-cut rationale for their decisions.

RQ1: Stayers: What is a 'stayer' and who are stayers?

The stayer is a contested concept which I have explored in some detail in chapter 3 and have returned to throughout my thesis. My stayers are a diverse sample and I did not find there was a *typical* London stayer. Indeed what characterises a stayer and the key attributes a stayer possesses may be open to dispute (Hunter-Quartz et al., 2010; McIntyre, 2010). However, from my findings I present my understanding of who the stayers are in my sample and study. First, at the point of interview it was clear that my participants shared similar values and beliefs about the importance of their work with disadvantaged children. Therefore one conclusion I draw is that my urban stayers share *similar beliefs and values* about the nature of the work they do.

Second, my stayers share a *London* identity. My stayers all highlighted the importance of working with children in London schools. Over time, all my stayers have adopted London as their home and working in challenging London schools has become the norm for them. As Rodgers and Scott (2008) assert: 'We do not

necessarily perceive contexts (which include ways of thinking and knowing) as much as we absorb them, often taking them for granted as what is 'real' (p.734).

Third, while there are shared attributes among the stayers in my study, I have avoided employing overarching typologies to describe them. For example, it could perhaps have been possible to construct stayer typologies and categorise my participants according to different markers such as: their length of service (Marston et al., 2006); whether they are 'settled' or 'unsettled' stayers (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003); whether they are retired stayers, or former stayers who are 'movers' or 'leavers' (Elfers et al., 2006). One key reason for avoiding utilising typologies in this way was because I was keen to highlight the differentiated nature of what it means to be a stayer. Nevertheless, creating typologies based on shared attributes can be useful to help to understand complex social realities (Kluge, 2000). In an attempt to understand the stayers' initial motivations and early beginnings, I did employ typologies to signpost the start of their staying stories. I acknowledge however that these typologies served to understand their beginnings as teachers and were not intended to serve as descriptors about the type of *stayers* they had become, or are in the process of becoming.

The stayers may be idealistic in the visions they hold, but they are simultaneously pragmatic about the nature of their work. In other words, they enjoy the fact that their work is meaningful and 'makes a difference', but they are also realistic about the challenges and conflicts they face and are willing to put in the hard graft that their work requires.

RQ2: What motivates stayers (or has motivated them in the past) to stay in disadvantaged inner London primary schools?

The motivations for staying which my participants gave are broadly similar, although the importance given for these motivations are weighted differently depending on the individual teacher's circumstances. As Rhodes et al. (2004) suggest, 'levels of job satisfaction, motivation and commitment to work are likely to vary both between individuals and within individuals over periods of time' (p.76). The prime motivations for staying included: making a difference to children's lives; the bonds and dynamic relationships formed with colleagues; the effectiveness and support of the headteacher and opportunities for career progression, growth and development. Many of these stayers also asserted the importance of having a good salary, having affordable housing and job security including having suitable working arrangements compatible with childcare. A teacher may explain, for example, that the main reason for staying in their school is 'for the children', but then they may go on to suggest that the salary keeps him or her from moving to another school where the role and the salary might not be so desirable (Nias, 1981b). A tension of holding two contradictory ideas together is not unusual; motivations for staying are not always presented in a straightforward way. All of these motivations are presented against the backdrop of the stayers' context: London. The uniqueness of the London factor is reflected in the types of school the stayers work in, the types of children they teach and the types of colleagues they work alongside.

In their responses the stayers may have (either consciously or unconsciously) employed a discourse familiar to most primary school teachers which centres on

an ethic of care for the children they teach and their commitment to work in their schools (Vogt, 2002). It may be unsurprising, therefore, that altruistic reasons for staying feature prominently in teachers' decisions to stay. Certainly such altruistic motivations are borne out in extant research as discussed in chapters 2 and 3. This key motivation is further explored in chapters 5, 6 and 7, where stayers' altruistic motivations are underpinned by their values and beliefs for making a difference to society and to the lives of underprivileged children. Altruistic motivations for staying in challenging London schools should therefore not be underplayed.

An altruistic act is often self-rewarding where an individual's act of altruism can in itself be fulfilling and energising for the individual. However, the self-rewarding aspect of altruism can be extended to argue that it may also serve the individual's 'personal growth needs' (Brown, 1992, p.194). For example, Amelia finds that working with disadvantaged children helps her cope with her own personal challenges; she talked about school being the 'driving force' in her life. Furthermore, altruistic motivations can also meet stayers' professional needs. For example, Rosa professes her unswerving commitment to the children in Meadway where year after year she teaches the most challenging classes. On the one hand her dedication to these children may indicate a 'selfless' act of commitment, but on the other hand, her success in facing these challenges enables her to grow in professional confidence and stature, something which she believes she lacks in her personal life. There may indeed be different underlying reasons for my stayers' altruistic motivations for choosing to remain teaching in challenging London schools, but as this thesis has shown there are many influences and factors which impact on people's decisions and behaviour. As such, I am hesitant

to conclude that there is a 'right' kind of altruistic motivation which a stayer should possess for it is impossible to separate a person's motivation from who they are.

Linked to the stayers' altruistic motivations for wanting to make a difference is the theme of love, which features repeatedly in all the stayers' narratives. The teachers' love for their children should not be underestimated as I argue that this 'love' plays a key role in shaping the urban stayer's identity. Talking about 'love' for the children they teach appears to be particular to primary school teachers, especially in challenging urban contexts. The London stayers I interviewed who proclaim a 'love' for the children all understand what this form of love means. As Troman and Raggl (2008) suggest, the love which teachers express for their students reflects a 'humanist nurturing respect for [the] children' (p.85). The children's disadvantage can be acutely visible in these London contexts as schools are often located in neighbourhoods where, as Rosa notes, 'you have beautiful houses and then a massive council estate so it's very unstable [...] they live in a pretty rotten world now'. While the stayers may not have deficit views of the children they work with, they are very aware of the deficit of privilege which characterises many of the children's lives. Thus the 'love' the stayers profess for the children may be in part a response to compensate for the disadvantage in children's lives.

The love the stayers have for the children is also revealed through teachers' high expectations for the children. These teachers also enable children to have high expectations of themselves. Eva exemplifies this sentiment when she said that

their work is aimed at ensuring that the children's 'disadvantage and poverty [is not] a predictor of what they achieve later on'. Therefore I suggest that the 'love' many of the participants express for the children they teach, is love *with a purpose*.

The concept of love in this context is under-researched and one which merits further critical analysis and discussion. Although there is not the scope to do justice to this complex topic here, I acknowledge that future studies on urban primary school teachers would benefit from additional analytical discussion on love in primary schools.

The data also indicated that stayers' motivations for staying could be explained by the fact that the stayers may be rooted by a sense of 'comfort' in their roles. Over time, the teachers' confidence in their roles and teaching ability grows, thus strengthening their sense of self-efficacy. Admitting to not leaving because of wanting to remain in the 'comfort zone' can be construed as being a negative reason for staying, but it may be that some of the stayers are 'comfort-zone stayers'. It should be noted that I did not detect any 'over-stayers' in my sample. It is, however, the case that teachers can 'overstay' in a school and this can be problematic for the school and the teachers (Dinham and Sawyer, 2004). Indeed, the motivations of 'over-stayers' may not be as positively charged as for my participant stayers. However, in the current UK educational context 'over-stayers' whose commitment and effectiveness have waned are less likely to be retained as schools are given more freedom to manage teacher performance including placing under-performing teachers on capability procedures (DfE, 2012). In the case of

my stayers, I did not find that any of them were complacent in their schools. I argue that being 'comfortable' in their schools does not necessarily need to be viewed as negative. 'Comfort' for the stayers may mean being strengthened by the work they do in their schools. This may be further enhanced by the fact that they are needed in their schools and so they feel they have to stay, for as Rosa explained she 'can't abandon the children'.

A few stayers hinted at the fact that they stayed because of an apprehension of the unknown, but there was nothing static about these stayers. I found that the stayers actively pursued opportunities to develop, grow and change in their professional roles; all the stayers talked in one way or another about the drive to improve, to strive for better and to become more effective teachers and headteachers. This desire for professional development and improvement was very much linked to a strong work ethic. Indeed many stayers suggested a teacher cannot survive in an urban school if they are not willing to be very hard working and go that 'extra mile'.

It is important to note that my responses to RQ2 highlight the key themes which I have elicited from the data, but there are limitations to my responses. Thus, within this concluding discussion of RQ2, I acknowledge that there are limits to my analysis. There is not the scope in this thesis to attend to every aspect of the themes drawn from the findings which I have reported.

RQ3: How, and in what ways, does a stayer's identity (professional and/or personal) influence their decisions to stay?

The stayers' personal and professional identities lie at the heart of their motivations to stay in their schools. A myriad of factors, which weave through the stayers' lives, influence their actions and decisions throughout their careers. One significant factor influencing the stayers' personal and professional identities is their professional and social relationships. For example, the stayers' colleagues, who are often referred to as 'friends' or likened to family, play a central role for nearly all the stayers in determining whether they stay in their schools. These colleagues, including their headteacher, create a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in their schools, which I have argued is particularly crucial in hard-to-teach urban schools such as theirs.

The headteacher is vital in creating an ethos where collegiality flourishes (Crawford, 2009). Where this happens, so does professional collaboration, both formal and informal, professional and emotional support and a sense of loyalty and belonging to a school. In chapter 6 I examined the professional lives and decisions of headteachers in inner London primary schools, to explore in what ways their motivations and identities contributed to creating the culture of their schools. The heads I interviewed understood the work of their primary school teachers, the conflicts and struggles which teachers face as well as the emotional costs and rewards of working in these schools. After all they were urban classroom teacher stayers themselves. The heads' influence is crucial at a time when external policy initiatives and accountability measures can impact on the professionalism of teachers (Frostenson, 2015). By fostering a school environment where teachers are not afraid to show their vulnerabilities and where

they can take professional risks, the heads enhance their teachers' sense of autonomy and agency which in turn can prompt teachers to stay.

Despite the importance the stayers placed on having sympathetic collegial relationships and supportive headteachers there are tensions and even contradictions within these dimensions of teachers' lives, all which impact to a greater or lesser extent upon their identities. Apart from the obvious difficulties of working in a challenging London school, it should be noted that the schools in which the stayers worked were not necessarily always harmonious places to work. Indeed I found that from time to time the stayers also contend with elements of strife and discord in their schools. There are conflicts with other members of staff, disagreements and even resentments with members of the leadership team, or with the headteacher. As my participants revealed, teachers can also create difficulties for their headteachers or other members of staff. For example, Sian, in her role as an assistant head, talked about a difficult member of staff, who could 'poison' the atmosphere of the school. Headteacher John talked about how some members of staff abused his trust and were not planning effectively for the diverse needs of the children. Most notably, Amelia talked about how unkind some of her colleagues were towards her; it is not inconceivable that some of those colleagues are other stayers too. As much as sustaining positive and dynamic relationships with colleagues is crucial for the stayers, experiencing relational conflict is also part of the reality of working in a primary school (Acker, 1999). Although the rewards of teaching in challenging urban schools are high, it would be misleading to paint a 'rose tinted' picture of these schools and of the teachers working in such schools.

The stayers were adept at managing the tensions and conflicts of working in their schools; they developed strategies to manage personal and professional conflicts and tensions which are inherent in school life. The autonomy they have as teachers in their schools also translates into their professional working relationships. The stayers are autonomous 'actors' in the drama of urban school life; they are not merely 'spectators'. At times (such as in Amelia's case) they are at the centre of tension and disharmony. However, despite such challenges and difficulties, most of the participants were anchored in their schools. This may be in part due to a sense of agency in the work they do in their schools; any feelings of powerlessness in their school context appears to be outweighed by a sense of autonomy and the power to change things. This certainly appeared to impact on the stayers' 'staying power' and making a sustained difference over time.

The stayers' narratives, demonstrated their 'staying power' in moments of challenge, discord and disharmony. Some of the stayers explicitly talked about their capacities for resilience. Although the concept of resilience is not a focus of my study, in examining the interpretations of the concept of resilience it is useful to address the role it plays, or appears to play, in my stayers' decisions to stay in their schools. Resilience is a problematic concept, not least because it has become a fashionable 'buzzword' in many personal and professional arenas (Pizzo, 2015). Indeed it is a difficult concept to pin down and identify. However in examining the concept of resilience in the data, there were a combination of factors which the stayers identified that kept them going in their work. One of these key factors is the stayers' sense of self-efficacy, which itself is as multi-faceted a concept as

resilience. The stayers' sense of self-efficacy is as much about feeling they are 'doing a good job' (albeit with moments of self-doubt which most participants experienced), as it is about their relationships with children, staff and parents. A high sense of self-efficacy drives and is driven by motivation and identity. In my stayers' stories, feelings of self-efficacy tend to manifest in stayers' assertions of 'being confident' or 'knowing what I'm doing'.

Many of the participants remained working in their school *because* of the challenges that their schools presented. Yet, the stayers themselves acknowledged that they did not identify themselves as 'saints' nor 'martyrs'; they are ordinary people working hard, often in stressful situations. One of the most significant challenges that urban teachers frequently report is that of poor pupil behaviour (Riddell, 2003; Tikly, 2013). The stayers could recount incidences of difficult, and in many cases, extreme behaviour from children and parents. It would appear that having worked in urban contexts over time, the stayers had begun to normalise this type of challenging behaviour to some extent. For some stayers, the daily school dramas which they encounter can be an exciting aspect of working in their school. These dramatic 'events' may act as an antidote to the routine of school life. Indeed such school dramas can be particularly complex and continue in various forms for a period of time; they may often have a long history involving several children, families or teachers (Acker, 1999). Stayers are often intimately acquainted and invested in the characters and personalities involved in school tensions thus giving what Acker (1999) refers to as a 'soap opera flavour to school life' (p.90). This local connection may also appeal to the stayers; the

challenges and conflicts do not discourage the stayers but rather bind them in to these conflicts.

Many of the stayers' daily duties include diffusing difficult situations, whether it be among children, parents or other members of staff. While some teachers unaccustomed to urban teaching life may feel overwhelmed by such situations, the inner London stayers thrive within the context of these emotionally complex interactions in school life (Day et al., 2007). Through all this, a stayer can 'pursue their goals' (ibid, p.111) which in turn strengthens their sense of agency and confidence in their work and themselves as professionals. Certainly, it is empowering to have the ability (and status) to take charge and diffuse highly charged emotional situations. This may be what the stayers indicated when they talked about how they have grown in 'confidence' in their roles over the years; with a greater sense of confidence comes a greater sense of satisfaction.

Having a high *status* in a school (a 'stayer status') is a powerful aspect to a teacher's professional identity. The majority of the stayers held senior management posts but for others being a long-serving teacher to whom newer teachers may come for advice, gives them prominence within the school. In addition, the stayers may feel they have a certain status in the community or their personal lives because they teach in challenging urban schools. Certainly the headteacher stayers have a prominent status in the school and local community. The stayers have achieved this standing over time; with this comes a considerable sense of achievement, which in turn influences their motivations to stay.

For many stayers, leaving their schools would be a significant upheaval, not least because over time they have constructed a professional identity linked to their status and to staying. Furthermore, a stayer's relationship with their school is a symbiotic one. The upheaval of leaving for the teacher would not be solely because of a change of role, a change of scene or a change of school culture, it would involve a fundamental shift in their identity. They would leave a place where they are well known, respected, and valued, to a school where they would have to 'prove' themselves and establish a new professional identity. Similarly the school undergoes a shift in its dynamics when long standing members of staff leave. If a long-serving headteacher leaves, the school can experience a seismic upheaval and has to reconstruct its ethos and identity.

My research has shown that staying is complex and this study raises further questions about *why* and *how* teachers stay in challenging schools. The act of staying involves commitment, dedication and continuity, but within staying is the capacity to live in paradox; the 'paradox' of teaching is where a teacher can be 'in love with one's work, but daily talk of leaving it' (Nias, 1989, p.191). This can be re-interpreted as the 'paradox of staying'. Staying can be stable and unstable at different times of a teacher's career depending on circumstances, and depending on a variety of 'staying' factors. Stayers have to live with the tensions and contradictions of staying; at times they feel unshakeable in their commitment to stay and at other times they may feel less secure about staying. In my study, there was a continuum of stability in staying. There were those who were certain in their commitment to the school - it would take a lot to unseat them from staying. There were those who felt stable about staying but conceded that if certain factors

changed, they may have to move on. Then there were those (very few) who, although clearly valuing the work they were doing, communicated less stability in their staying. Wherever the stayers could be placed on the continuum of staying, they all showed a capacity for persistence and resilience in their work, which was largely driven by a notion of professionalism and a value for the work that they do. Certainly though, staying cannot be straightforwardly defined. Neither stability nor instability underpins staying, rather both can be involved in staying to a greater or lesser degree depending on context and circumstance.

A final and significant point to draw out in response to my research questions is the influence of London on my stayers. The daily backdrop to their lives is the London context. It may be that living in London frames a type of ‘London-ness’ which the stayers possess. The stayers have assumed a London teacher identity which is inherently linked to the type of London children they teach in their London schools. The stayers who come from a variety of different backgrounds have found they ‘fit’ in their schools. It could be argued, they have developed a collective London teacher identity thus reflecting the assertion that ‘contexts inevitably shape our notions of who we perceive ourselves to be and how others perceive us’ (Rodgers and Scott, 2008, p.734).

Since beginning my study in 2012, the educational policy context in the UK has undergone rapid and substantial change (Lupton and Thomson, 2015). Although a number of my participants did refer to the impact which certain education reforms have had on their motivations to stay, this topic did not emerge as a significant focus for *all* the stayers at the time of the interviews. Since then, new educational

initiatives have taken hold and have begun to affect the landscape of teaching in primary schools. As a consequence, there are specific implications for further study in this area.

9.4 Methods - Limitations of the study

While this study provides valuable insights into the reasons why teachers stay in challenging urban primary schools, several limitations are evident, due to the complexities inherent in researching people's identities and motivations. Here I consider two main limitations to my methodological approach: the first relates to the interview process; the second to the sample construction.

9.4.1 The interview approach

The interview process highlighted the problematic nature of categorising motivations. In this thesis I have employed three categories of motivations (altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations) as a starting point to frame my study of stayers' motivations (see chapter 2). While these categories have proved useful in describing my participants' motivations, in the interviews the stayers' motivations were not always so neatly categorised. The personal and professional motivations which the stayers' described often intertwined or merged. Although the participants expressed some clear 'types' of motivations, such as an altruistic 'making a difference' motivation; or an extrinsic 'salary' motivation, it is important to note that some motivations dominate at different times of people's lives and this fact cannot always be adequately reflected in a one-off interview. Indeed the interview itself is a 'unique event' (Nunokoosing, 2005, p.704) and reflects a participant's perspective of their lives in that one moment in time. What

the interview process did reveal however, was a patchwork of motivations where some factors clearly influence and are influenced by aspects of the participants' identities (such as a stayer's biography and family context), and other less obviously so (such as personal insecurities or self-doubt).

Given that the interviews in my study were 'one-off' events, the participant may have wished to present themselves in a 'favourable light' (Sikes, 2000, p.264) and (consciously or subconsciously) sought to conceal unfavourable aspects of themselves and their career choices. Such an issue is particularly pertinent in my study, where the interview focused on aspects of the participant's identity. Convery (1999) argues that when listening to teachers' stories: '... [their] narratives have a performative rather than a referential function, and are concerned with presenting and creating a preferred identity rather than recovering a single truthful version of events' (p.141).

It may be that the stayers had other reasons for choosing to stay, which they may have considered less acceptable to admit in an interview. Certainly there is evidence from other studies that report that some teachers choose a teaching career in the absence of anything else to do (for example, Huberman, 1993). Thus it is not inconceivable that a teacher may stay in their career in the absence of an alternative career. Other studies show that some teachers feel 'trapped' in their careers (for example, Baars et al., 2014; Day et al., 2007). None of my participants expressed they felt 'trapped' or were remaining in their roles due to the absence of any alternatives. However, even if the participants did feel trapped in their jobs at specific times, my evidence has shown such a reason cannot be a

sole motivation for staying. If motivations for staying are seen in the context of the ‘paradox of staying’, we can understand why stayers have several (and often contradictory) reasons for staying and leaving. Staying is not static; neither do motivations for staying remain the same over time.

Issues of misrepresentation through interviews can occur whichever way the interviews are conducted. A longitudinal study where participants are repeatedly interviewed over a longer period of time may give ‘a better understanding of the individual, if not the ‘truth’ of that person’ (Thomson and Holland, 2003, p.238). Following a teacher’s career during the actual process of staying over a period of time could build a more holistic picture about a person’s personal and professional identities. If my participants were to be interviewed now in the light of very recent changes to the education system, it would be informative to discover if their responses would differ in any ways. Despite the limitations and challenges involved in employing interviews for data collection, in the case of my study, this method of research has been fit for purpose.

9.4.2 The ‘stayers’ sample

Recent reports warn of ‘crisis’ levels in teacher recruitment and retention in England (see: Hodgson, 2014; Rice, 2015). Teacher turnover in hard-to-teach schools remains higher in disadvantaged schools than in those which are less disadvantaged (Allen et al., 2012). For challenging London schools, retaining the best and most effective teachers has always been and remains a critical issue. For this reason, my sample has been a relatively ‘hard to reach group’ (Cohen et al., 2011), so therefore I had to be somewhat opportunistic in selecting my

participants. The sample did not yield many stayers whose tenure extended much beyond ten years in one school; I located only one current stayer who may be considered a 'veteran' stayer (David) - a teacher who has served for more than 24 years (Day and Gu, 2009). The majority of my participants have stayed from 5 to 10 years in their schools, thus the sample did not reflect stayers from every stage of a teaching career. Had I access to a larger range of schools and teachers, I may have had the opportunity to select participants from each professional stage of their careers as in other studies. For example, Huberman (1993) noted five stages in a teacher's career spanning 40 years; Day et al. (2007) found six professional career stages for teachers for a career spanning over 31 years.

A study which could compare and contrast the motivations for staying among a cross section of teachers in different professional life stages may have yielded data from which wider generalisations about the nature of stayers could have been made. To add to a deeper understanding of teachers' career decisions, it would also be valuable to compare those who stay with a subset of teachers, across the professional career stages, who decided to eventually leave, after many years of staying. By widening the sample set, further research could produce even more nuanced data in this area of study. As it is, I have gathered some rich and illuminating snapshots of stayers' lives in this study and my research is well placed to contribute to the existing research area of teacher retention, but also to contribute to new knowledge to the wider research area of teacher retention.

9.5 Contribution to theoretical knowledge

In this thesis, I have employed identity and motivation theory as tools to understand the reasons why teachers stay in their schools. As referred to earlier in this thesis, there is a body of research which employs identity theory (for example, Olsen, 2008; Sfard and Prusak, 2005) and motivational theory (for example: Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Watt et al., 2012) to explore teachers' lives and career decisions. However, there are fewer research studies which explicitly employ both identity and motivational theories to examine teachers' lives (Day et al., 2007). Furthermore there is a dearth of literature which researches the reasons why teachers stay in their schools through these theoretical lenses. My thesis builds on existing theories in these fields by examining the interconnectedness of teachers' motivations and identities. However, my study has highlighted the complex and hybrid nature of this connection by deploying these theoretical frameworks to examine an under-research area: teachers who are stayers. Researching teachers' reasons for staying through these interwoven concepts has contributed to illuminating an under-researched area and contributed to a detailed, nuanced and rich picture of staying. As such these theoretical concepts have contributed to new knowledge about how to deploy this framework in this context.

9.6 Contribution to research

It has been a privilege to meet and hear the career stories of my 24 London stayers. My study offers vital insights into the career decisions of stayers, specifically why they choose to persist in teaching in their challenging contexts in a knowledge field in which there is a dearth of research on 'staying'. It is

imperative that those who are responsible for education policy, at whatever level and in whatever position, take on board the reasons and influences that frame the decisions of teachers who stay in the most disadvantaged London primary schools. This study has shown that teachers' lives, career choices, identities and crucially their motivations are neither straightforward nor clear-cut; they are often complex, multi-faceted, highly contextualised and subject to change. My study has shown areas of common ground that promote 'staying'; an example of this is that a headteacher is crucial in fostering a culture that encourages the stayers. A key finding from my study is that each stayer has their own narrative of staying and these stayers have chosen to stay each in their own way. As a result, school leaders and policy makers need to acknowledge and support teachers as they continuously construct their personal and professional staying identities and visions. A nuanced and carefully considered approach to policy making in this field is required if schools are to attract and retain effective teachers who will commit to 'staying'.

9.6 Implications of the study

9.6.1 Policy implications for teacher retention in urban schools

Writing some time ago in the context of teacher shortages in the USA, Merrow (1999) made an observation which provides an apt description of the current teacher shortage in England: 'The [teaching] pool keeps losing water because no one is paying attention to the leak. That is, we're misdiagnosing the problem as "recruitment" when it's really "retention."' (para 7, n.p.).

My thesis examines the reasons why teachers stay in their schools and thus some findings from my study can indicate suggestions for how to retain teachers. I acknowledge there are no neat solutions which can be derived from my work. Nevertheless here I discuss what specific steps educators and policy-makers could take to respond to the need for greater teacher retention in urban primary schools in light of some key concerns.

The first policy area to consider is ensuring that inner London primary schools attract and retain effective and appropriate headteachers. My study has shown that the leadership and culture of a school matters so recruiting and retaining good and effective headteachers is vital in the challenging London primary school. Recent statistics have shown that workload pressures induced by increased demands for accountability and performance have contributed to a rise in teacher attrition in England (NAO, 2016). Therefore there is an urgent need to retain effective and committed teachers in London's challenging primary schools. In many schools in the UK, teachers are facing intense demands which are focused on assessment and performance. These demands can distract teachers from their work with children beyond those tasks which are required to be measured. This is a concern which those working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds feel acutely (Hutchings, 2015). What was apparent from my study was that many of the stayers managed to either resist or find ways to work around the increased demands on their workload. Much of that was as a result of how their headteacher leads the school and its staff. As Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010) found in their study of policy enactments in secondary schools, policy practices are 'framed by the ethos and history of each school' (p.558).

Teachers are more likely to stay if the headteacher creates an ethos of collegiality, support and openness as well as providing opportunities for teachers to develop and expand their professional identity. The majority of my participants were drawn to teach in challenging urban contexts, primarily through their own commitments to combat social disadvantage in society. Schools need to harness these teachers' commitments and enthusiasm for working in these schools so the teachers experience, over time, that although the challenges are great, so too are the rewards. The good urban headteacher is well placed to nurture and foster this dedication and commitment (Day, 2005a).

Moreover, heads of these urban primary schools, who may often have had experience of being class teachers in such schools, have a professional and personal understanding of what it is to be an urban primary school teacher. This can influence how a head leads their school. Emotionally intelligent headteachers who offer strong leadership and build effective and inclusive senior leadership teams in their schools are themselves more likely to stay in their schools, and in turn nurture the stability and continuity which challenging inner London schools most need.

The second structural and material policy area to address involves financial and housing issues related specifically to living in London. Teachers are more likely to stay in their schools if their practical needs are met. In my study, the stayers generally agreed that they would be dissatisfied if they were not remunerated adequately for the work they do. Housing is a crucial issue for all teachers in the

capital and one which must not be overlooked. While living costs in all urban areas are generally higher than living elsewhere, there are key differences between London and other urban areas which mean that living and working in London is substantially more expensive for individuals and families (Trust for London, 2015). Therefore London primary school teachers working in disadvantaged schools not only need to receive a commensurate salary to afford the higher costs of living in London, but they also need to have adequate and affordable housing. This means that the housing crisis needs to be urgently addressed if London is to retain more of its key workers, including teachers, in the capital (Mayor of London, 2016). Newly qualified teachers in London primary schools may be more likely to stay in their schools if they can live affordably at a reasonable proximity to their schools in the London community to which they feel they belong.

9.6.2 Implications for teacher professional development and urban schools

Most of my participants (teachers and headteachers) claimed that they do not often have many opportunities to discuss their teacher identities. Although the subject of teacher identity may, or may not, be visited in different teacher educational programmes, it is not a subject which is discussed in schools with teachers. My research shows how crucial it is for teachers themselves, and for headteachers, to have a deeper understanding of what their own teacher identity 'looks' like. It is only by being able to reflect on their reasons for doing what they do and considering how they shape themselves as teachers, that they can reflect more meaningfully on their practice (Olsen, 2010). Teachers are not automatons

(Olsen, 2010), but in the current educational climate and the race for results, teachers are encouraged more and more to consider their performance and output, rather than focus on their inner selves, their values and their reasons for what they do. Teachers are continually encouraged to reflect on their classroom practice and their *role* as teachers or senior leaders (Mockler, 2011), and much less time is dedicated to how they interpret their identity as teachers. Olsen (2010) warns that it is imperative for teachers to examine their ‘interpretive frame’ if they are to become better and more reflective teachers.

In a positive way, our embedded interpretive frame acts as a useful guide for our professional practice. But in a negative way, it can become a set of biases – a set of personal perspectives developed long ago and then somehow hidden in the shadows of our consciousness even while still actively guiding our views of the world. If we do not unearth, examine, and adjust our interpretive frame as we become teachers, then it controls the kind of teachers we become (Olsen, 2010, p.45).

Teaching is a deeply personal endeavour, where the teacher is as important (or more important) than what they teach (Day, 2012). Therefore continuing professional development provision in schools would benefit from being reconceptualised to take on board the concept of teacher identity more seriously. There needs to be greater opportunities and spaces for teachers to reflect, in both formal and informal ways, on the reasons why they teach and why they teach (and stay) in challenging urban schools. In his consideration of the future of continuing professional development in schools, ‘especially those which serve disadvantaged communities’ (Day, 2012, p.14), Day calls for more relevant professional development that concentrates on ‘the commitment, resilience and health needs of teachers in each of their professional life phases’ (p.14).

Ensuring that disadvantaged schools, particularly in London schools with high rates of turnover, to have at least some effective stayers is crucial. As noted in chapter 8 one participant, Freya, suggested, ‘If there are new faces every year in a school, the school becomes like a business rather than a school’. Freya’s comment highlights the crucial point that all schools are communities in their own right; they are not commercial enterprises. The school community must therefore be properly nurtured to enable all those within it to flourish educationally, professionally and personally. Having effective stayers in a school is one way to ensure continuity and stability for children. Schools are all about people, so it is vital they remain caring, vibrant, creative and social institutions. In these schools there is a need for inspiring, resilient and caring teachers, who are in it for the ‘long haul’; teachers who are part of the history of the school, who know the children and their families well, and who contribute to providing a safe and familiar environment for young minds to think creatively, critically and independently.

9.7 A final word

This year I returned for a year to the school where I began as an NQT and where I was a London stayer. Throughout the year of my return, I was constantly reminded of times past in that school. All the way up the six flights of stairs to the top floor of the Victorian building hang large framed pictures of children and staff taken over the years. Whenever I pass those pictures, I look at the faces of the children I taught, or whose siblings I have taught. Some children remind me of particularly challenging teaching moments – although, as time has passed, I now

remember them with a knowing smile. There are the faces of children to whose lives, I hope, I have made a difference. Certainly those children have made a difference to my life and my identity as a teacher. I look at the faces of the teachers, many who have long gone, but a few who are still there working hard in their classrooms. There are faces of colleagues and friends who (mostly) contributed to creating a warm, welcoming and happy school community, which I enjoyed being a part of for so many years. I look with affection at the pictures of the school building and the playground which provided a safe home for so many children over many years. I feel a palpable sense of belonging, being part of the history of the school, being part of the fabric of a place and its community. The building remains largely unchanged, but the people working inside it, including me, have undergone changes to their careers, their personal lives, their relationships and their identities. Perhaps over time their values and beliefs, about the work they do, remain steadfast; or may even become strengthened. Perhaps other stayers in the school, who take a moment to look at those pictures, experience similar emotions to myself; a host of various emotions which come after devoting many years to one school.

This thesis has discovered that there are many different and often complex reasons why teachers remain in their hard-to-teach London primary schools. Staying involves struggles that are sometimes enervating and sometimes energising; staying involves wanting to stay and wanting to leave; staying can be stable and unstable. The paradox which underpins staying is what makes researching stayers' lives and career decisions so worthwhile. This study has revealed that there are many unexplored aspects of who the stayers are and

reasons why they stay which is illuminated by shining a light on teachers' identities and their motivations for staying. This study has demonstrated that long-serving committed, caring, dedicated and effective teachers are not just important for the children who attend our challenging schools, but that they are *essential* for the educational and emotional development of these children. The schools, in which the stayers serve, are far richer places because of their commitments.

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Appendices

Appendix A

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

25th October 2012



Dear Emma

REP(EM)/12/13-6 'Identity and Stayers: Looking through the lens of identity to examine why teachers and headteachers stay in London primary schools' (draft title)

I am pleased to inform you that the above application has been reviewed by the E&M Research Ethics Panel that FULL APPROVAL is now granted.

Please ensure that you follow all relevant guidance as laid out in the King's College London Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/index.php?id=247>).

For your information ethical approval is granted until 24/10/15. If you need approval beyond this point you will need to apply for an extension to approval at least two weeks prior to this explaining why the extension is needed, (please note however that a full re-application will not be necessary unless the protocol has changed). You should also note that if your approval is for one year, you will not be sent a reminder when it is due to lapse.

Ethical approval is required to cover the duration of the research study, up to the conclusion of the research. The conclusion of the research is defined as the final date or event detailed in the study description section of your approved application form (usually the end of data collection when all work with human participants will have been completed), not the completion of data analysis or publication of the results. For projects that only involve the further analysis of pre-existing data, approval must cover any period during which the researcher will be accessing or evaluating individual sensitive and/or un-anonymised records. Note that after the point at which ethical approval for your study is no longer required due to the study being complete (as per the above definitions), you will still

need to ensure all research data/records management and storage procedures agreed to as part of your application are adhered to and carried out accordingly.

If you do not start the project within three months of this letter please contact the Research Ethics Office.

Should you wish to make a modification to the project or request an extension to approval you will need approval for this and should follow the guidance relating to modifying approved applications: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/applications/modifications.aspx>

The circumstances where modification requests are required include the addition/removal of participant groups, additions/removal/changes to research methods, asking for additional data from participants, extensions to the ethical approval period. Any proposed modifications should only be carried out once full approval for the modification request has been granted.

Any unforeseen ethical problems arising during the course of the project should be reported to the approving committee/panel. In the event of an untoward event or an adverse reaction a full report must be made to the Chair of the approving committee/review panel within one week of the incident.

Please would you also note that we may, for the purposes of audit, contact you from time to time to ascertain the status of your research.

If you have any query about any aspect of this ethical approval, please contact your panel/committee administrator in the first instance (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/contact.aspx>). We wish you every success with this work.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Butcher
Research Ethics Officer

Appendix B

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Reference Number: REP(EM)/12/13-6



YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

'Identity and Stayers: Looking through the lens of identity to examine why teachers and headteachers stay in London primary schools' (draft title)

We would like to invite you to participate in this postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Aims of the research and possible benefits

In my research, I will be exploring why long serving teachers (teachers who have taught for 5 or more years) have decided to remain working in their primary schools. I will explore in detail what reasons teachers have for staying and I also hope to discover to what extent the teachers' perceptions of themselves influence their decisions to remain in often very challenging situations. My research will address the wider subject of teacher identity. By researching the subject of identity in further detail, I hope to ascertain if there is an identity particular to the London primary school teacher.

In order to understand more fully the identities of London primary school teachers, I will examine the inner city London primary school. The focus will be on primary schools serving communities with high levels of poverty and social deprivation. I intend to explore the issues surrounding urban schools, including problems with high teacher turnover.

Who I am interviewing

Participants involved in the study will include class teachers, headteachers, retired teachers and teachers who have moved out of

London and relocated to another part of the country. All participants will have had more than 5 years teaching experience in a challenging inner city London primary school.

If you agree to take part

You will have an interview for approximately one hour. The interview will take place at a convenient time and place for you.

Any risks involved in taking part

There are no significant risks in taking part in this study. Your interview will be dealt with in strict confidentiality. All information recorded at the interview will be stored in a secure place and password protected. Pseudonyms will be used for you and your school.

Possible benefits

You will receive a final copy of the report should you wish to have one.

Arrangements for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality

Interviews will be recorded, subject to your permission. I will transcribe the interviews and recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription. In compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998, transcriptions will be kept securely in a password protected computer or electronic device. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

Anticipated plans for dissemination/publication

There is a possibility that results from this research will be disseminated for wider publication and use, for example in journals or for use in seminars. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

Name and full contact details of the researcher

Emma Towers, Department of Education and Professional Studies, Waterloo Bridge Wing, Franklin-Wilkins Building, Waterloo Road, London SE1 9NH. Email: emma.towers@kcl.ac.uk

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, please let us know beforehand if you have been involved in any other study during the last year. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason. You may also withdraw any data/information you

have already provided up until it is transcribed for use in the final report.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details: NAME, Department of Education and Professional Studies, Waterloo Bridge Wing, Franklin-Wilkins Building, Waterloo Road, London SE1 9NH. **Email:** emma.towers@kcl.ac.uk

If this study has harmed you in any way, you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information: Professor Meg Maguire, Department of Education and Professional Studies, Waterloo Bridge Wing, Franklin-Wilkins Building, Waterloo Road, London SE1 9NH. Email: meg.maguire@kcl.ac.uk

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.



Title of Study: 'Identity and Stayers: Looking through the lens of identity to examine why teachers and headteachers stay in London primary schools'

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP(EM)/12/13-6

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to the point of the writing of the final draft of the report (January 2014).
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998.
- I consent to my interview being recorded using an audio recording device

Participant's Statement:

I _____
agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed

Date

Investigator's Statement:

I _____

Confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

Signed

Date

Appendix D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE for teachers

Identity and Stayers: Looking through the lens of identity to examine why teachers and headteachers stay in London primary schools – Draft title

Aide Memoire for interviews with teachers

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I am currently undertaking a study on why teachers who have been teaching for more than 5 years in inner city London primary schools decide to stay in their jobs and what it is about their identity which influences their decisions to stay. Everything that is said in the interview will be confidential and as I write up my research I will ensure all responses will remain anonymous. It would be very helpful if I can tape-record the interview, unless there are any objections. If at any point you would like to terminate the interview please let me know. Thank you.

(1) Can you tell me a bit about your career to date?

- How many years have you been teaching for?
- How long have you been teaching in your current school?
- What position do you currently hold?
- Have you had time out during your career? (eg. maternity leave)

(2) a. Can you tell me about your motivations for becoming a teacher?

b. Can you tell me what your motivations are for remaining in the profession?

- What were your initial motivations for becoming a primary school teacher?
- Do you have any early memories of wanting to be a teacher?
- Why did you decide to work in an inner city London school?
- What are the principal factors which have influenced your decision to stay teaching here?
- Do you think your motivations for staying in this job have changed during the course of your career?
- In what ways?

(3) Can we talk a bit about how you see yourself both personally and as a teacher?

- What kind of person would you say you are? (How do you see yourself?)
- What kind of teacher do you think you are?

- So, would you say there is a difference between the ‘teacher you’ and the ‘personal you’?
- What things are similar?
- Do the roles (for example your subject/management role etc) you have as a teacher in your school contribute to the kind of teacher you are (your professional teacher identity)?
- What do you think it is about ‘you’ which has motivated you to continue teaching in your school?
- Would there be anything that would cause you to leave teaching?
- Would you say you are more/less or equally committed to your profession as a teacher as you are to your particular job at school?
- Why do you think that is?
- Outside of school, do you think your friends, family and people in your personal life influence the way you see yourself as a teacher?

(4) Can you tell me a bit about your school environment?

- Do you have a particular group or set of colleagues at school who support/encourage you?
- If so, how important are they to you in your decision to remain teaching in your school?
- Do these colleagues help in making you feel successful/doing a good job as a teacher? In what way?
- How does the leadership in the school affect your decision to stay in your school?
- Does the leadership in your school have a bearing on how successful you feel in your job?
- Would you say that the general atmosphere of the school has a bearing on your decision to stay in the school?
- You are an experienced teacher. Are you appropriately challenged and stimulated in your job?
- Do you have opportunities for further career progression? Is that important to you?
- Do you think being a man/woman in your job has affected the progression of your career in this school? In what way?
- What would make you leave your job?

(5) Can you tell me about the children you teach?

- What is the intake of your school like?
- What challenges (if any) do you face with the children you teach?
- In what way do the children you teach affect your experience of teaching in your school?
- Do the children you teach make you feel you are doing a good job?
- In what way?
- Have the children in your school affected your decision to stay?

(6) Can we talk a bit about the emotional aspect of your job?

- As a teacher in an inner city school, do you experience many emotions in your job?
- What kind of emotions? Do you ever feel vulnerable for example?
- Do these emotions influence how you see yourself as a teacher?
- Do you think they have a bearing on how successful you feel in your job?
- Do you talk about your emotions of the job to your colleagues?

(7) Can we talk about the financial considerations of your job?

- Are you provided with further financial incentives for staying in an inner city school?
- Does your salary have a significant bearing on why you choose to remain in your job?
- Do you or have you availed of the key worker living loan to help you with your accommodation?
- Are you the main breadwinner in your home?
- Are you affected in any way by the house prices in London?
- Would financial considerations influence you to leave London?
- Has the current economic climate influenced your decision to stay in teaching?

(8) What are your plans for the future?

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- (For teachers who appear to be 'unsettled' stayers) Are there any factors in your current job that, if changed, would affect your feelings for the job?

(8) a. Who or what kind of inner city primary school teacher do you think chooses to stay in their jobs?

b. Who or what kind of inner city primary school teacher chooses to leave their jobs?

(9) Do you think it is important to have stayers in inner city London schools?

What kind of stayers do you think schools like yours need?

(10) Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't discussed?

Thank you for taking time to be interviewed.

Appendix E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE for headteachers

Identity and Stayers: Looking through the lens of identity to examine why teachers and headteachers stay in London primary schools – Draft title

Aide Memoire for interviews with headteachers

(1) Can you tell me a bit about your career to date?

- How many years have you been a headteacher for? How many years were you teaching before you became a Head?
- How long have you been at your current school?
- Have you had time out during your career? (eg. maternity leave)

(2) a. Can you tell me about your motivations for becoming a headteacher?

b. Can you tell me what your motivations are for remaining your job?

- Did you always want to be a Head?
- Did you actively choose to work in a school like this?
- What are your motivations for remaining in this school?
- What makes you want to continue being a Head?

(3) Can we talk a bit about how you see yourself both personally and as a teacher?

- What kind of headteacher do you think you are?
- Could you see yourself being a headteacher before you became one?
- So, would you say there is a difference between the ‘teacher you’ and the ‘personal you’?
- What things are similar?
- Does your role as a headteacher influence how you see yourself? (your professional teacher identity)?
- What do you think it is about ‘you’ which has motivated you to continue in your school?
- Would there be anything that would cause you to resign from being a Head?
- When you encounter significant challenges in your school, what is it about ‘you’ which overcomes them and keeps going?
- Outside of school, do you think your friends, family and people in your personal life influence the way you see yourself as a headteacher?
- Do people outside of school provide the support you may need in your role?

(4) Can we talk a bit about the expectations of your role and how you cope with the demands of being a headteacher here?

- Currently there are many new policies and government initiatives being put into place, how do you manage these new changes in your school?
- Is there or has there ever been a time when new changes and policies run counter to your beliefs and values about education?
- If so, how have you dealt with this?
- Have you ever doubted yourself as a headteacher and the decisions you've made for the school?
- How do you overcome this?

(4) Can you tell me a bit about your school environment?

- Do you think you have been influential in creating the school environment? In what way?
- What do you think it is about who you are that has made the school the way it is?
- Do you have a particular group or set of colleagues at school who support/encourage you?
- If so, how important are they to you in your decision to remain in your school?
- Do these colleagues help in making you feel successful/doing a good job as a headteacher? In what way?

(5) Can we talk about the school community, its children and parents?

- You have chosen to work in a school which serves a disadvantaged community, what is it like to be the Head of a school in a community like this?
- What is it about the community/parents/children which influence your decision to remain here?
- Do you think it takes a particular type of person to be a headteacher of a school such as this one?

(6) Can we talk a bit about the emotional aspect of your job?

- As a headteacher in an inner city school, do you experience many emotions in your job?
- What kind of emotions? Do you ever feel vulnerable for example?
- Do you ever feel lonely in your role?
- Do you talk about your emotions of the job to your colleagues?
- Do you find that the teachers you work with display their emotions?
- How do you deal with this when this arises?

(7) Can we talk about the financial considerations of your job?

- Does your salary have a significant bearing on why you choose to remain in your job?
- Has the current economic climate influenced your decision to stay in your role?
- Do you think headteachers of schools such as this are paid enough?

- (8) What are your plans for the future?**
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- (8) a. Who or what kind of inner city primary school headteacher do you think chooses to stay in their jobs?**
- b. Who or what kind of inner city primary school headteacher chooses to leave their jobs?**
- (9) Do you think it is important to have stayer headteachers like yourself in inner city London schools?
What kind of stayers do you think schools like yours need?**
- (10) Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't discussed?**

Thank you for taking time to be interviewed.

Appendix F

Open Coding of interview

Open coding of interview – excerpt from Caroline's interview

Emergent themes from excerpt (colour coded):

- Biography/family
- Career development in urban school
- Urban/London school and children
- Love of job/love of children

	<p><i>I thought we could start by talking a bit about your career. So how many years have you been teaching?</i></p> <p>This is my 8th year, 9th year next year.</p> <p><i>And all that time you've been a class teacher?</i></p>
Urban school- Quick promotion	<p>Yes, but I took on a management role in my NQT year in the January of that year and I became PE and PSHE co-ordinator. <i>So the management role was in my head already.</i></p>
Prof. identity	<p><i>Was that a goal for you?</i></p>
urban children	<p>Well...I love teaching PE. Apart from Maths, PE is my favourite subject to teach, so when I heard there was an opportunity to lead PE, I mean there aren't many primary teachers that like PE, and I really love it and <i>I think it's really important for our kids especially who never get out of their house.</i> So when I heard it was going – well <i>there were people who said that I shouldn't do a management role in my NQT year.</i> But I wanted it – I love PE, so I did it.</p>
career progression ~ prof identity	<p><i>So what other positions did you take on after that?</i></p>
urban school- promotion (quick)	<p>Well since then <i>I took on different subjects for three years</i> and after three years <i>I became team leader of the Excellence and Enjoyment team</i> which leads the foundation subjects. <i>I also took on science and ICT.</i> But <i>I have a team</i></p>

of people – we all work together on the subjects. And, well... they all have subject responsibilities but only for mail purposes, so...um, and whatever we do whether it's sports day or a project that comes up - Health Week, Peace Week...so it's very collaborative.

So in terms on your motivation of becoming a primary school teacher, what were they?

Well, I've always wanted to be a teacher, my mum's a teacher, both my aunties are teachers – I've been surrounded by teachers forever. I've never really wanted to be anything else. I don't know where it came from really, it was in-built... like, in there was no doubt in me that I wanted to do anything else. I had a real conviction.

→ early vocation

So, can you recall any specific early memories of wanting to be a teacher then?

Ah, well I used to spend my days teaching my teddies and dolls in my house when I was little. I used to go and pick up brochures in the tourist office to teach 'my children' about it – that is my teddies and dolls! (laughs) But I don't remember thinking at that point, 'Oh I really want to be a teacher'. But I clearly did and I was doing it then. I don't know whether you inherit those things or if my mum brainwashed me as a child (laughs).

So you trained to become a teacher - was there any reason why you decided to come to London and to this school?

Well my experience of coming to Canbury was a bit random. Um...well... I'd never been to London before, I trained in

Biography
Habitus/
family

commitment
in biography -
'conviction'
teacher/vocation

Internalised -
not articulated

No initial
attachment
to London -

Caroline -
not English

Narrative -
serendipitous

staying in
London
school ~
(new home)

- Love

- Attachment

Manchester, um... and one of the friends I had on the PGCE course said she was moving to London and she was going to get a flat down here – her boyfriend lived down here. And she wanted a flatmate, so I said, 'OK, I'll come'. I had no attachment to anywhere in England, um, so I did and I

↳ Pragmatic - coming to London

decided I was coming here and I saw the post advertised in the TES. Um... so, came down to London for the first time ever for my interview. It was the day of the London bombings, um, so I got dropped off in Watford, not knowing what the hell was going on, rang the school and told them I was really sorry, I was in Watford and already 2 hours late because I couldn't ring or get through on my phone. I was to have my interview in Canbury in the morning and I had an interview in Tower Hamlets in the afternoon so I said, 'I'm not going to be able to come because I've got this other interview in the afternoon'. And the Head at that point said, 'Don't go there, come to us, I'll pay for a cab'. And I thought I should probably do that because I didn't know where I was or what I was doing. Terrified that bombs were going to go off any minute. But I got here, walked in, taught my lesson but the kids here didn't know anything about what was happening out there until the end of the day. And it was awful out there. But I got on with it and taught my lesson. And I loved it. Just the vibe of it, and it was when I thought 'This is where I want to be'. And then I got the job and that was it. And I haven't left!

LOVE -
making a
difference

London
children

Love
(maternal...)

urban school
children

Emotional
attachment to
children/
stability.

Stability v.
chaos

School = beacon/rock.

What a story!

I know, I wasn't even going to come here – I was so glad.

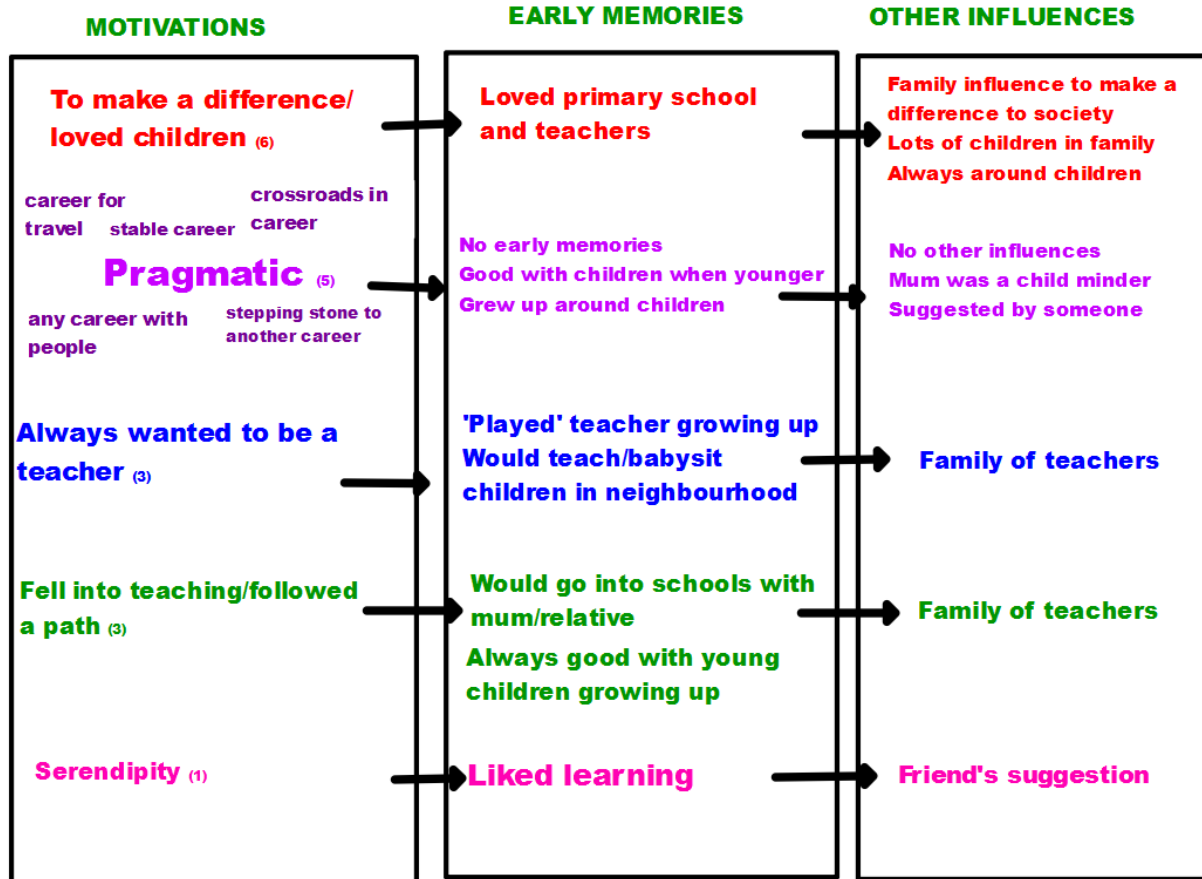
So now what are your motivations for staying here then?

I love it here, I love the people, I love the children. I don't know whether it's the same in any other school but they are children who make you feel like you make a difference and that's the part of the job which I really love. I don't see the point of being in front of a class that don't make you feel like you are doing something for them. Um... there is... you can tell that these children go home every night and learn something new. Because they tell you about it. I love that about these kids. I love the fact that they are all different. I love the fact that they all come from different places in the world. Um... I mean I know this sounds clichéd but I'm like their mum, that's how it feels.

How would you describe the children then?

They are very disadvantaged children with very traumatic home lives, um...who have seen things that they should never have seen at the age that they are. Um, and that's for 80% of them. They are hugely underprivileged. Some of them are not even clear who's their mum and who's their dad. There are ones that live with their 7 cousins and all their aunts and their dads – you ask them who they're living with and they give you a different answer every day. It's all a bit mad. So they have this chaos at home and they come in here and get stability.

Seeing self as a teacher - the beginnings



Appendix H

Influences on Teacher Identity

