# The Ability to Bounce Back: The Relationship Between Resilience, Coping, and Positive Outcomes.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Psychology

at Massey University, Auckland,

New Zealand.

Nicola Frances Lees 2009

### **ABSTRACT**

Resilience is a term of increasing prevalence in many aspects of society including the workplace. This thesis has sought to examine the relationship resilience has with coping, engagement, and life satisfaction. Data was collected via a survey that included standard measures for the variables of interest and two open-ended questions targeting sources of stress and sources of satisfaction. Findings show a positive relationship between resilience and task-focused coping, engagement, and life satisfaction. No relationship was found between resilience and maladaptive coping or social support.

Additionally, it was found that resilience acted as a full mediator in the relationship between task-focused coping and engagement, but had no mediating effect in the relationship between task-focused coping and life satisfaction. The open-ended questions identified that the same demand frequently acted as both a source of stress and a source of satisfaction.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The completion of this thesis is not solely the result of my effort as there are a number of people who have supported me through this time and to whom I am very grateful.

To my supervisor Dr. Dianne Gardner, I thank you for your advice, support, your time and effort, and the tolerance you have shown to my many emails and questions. You have guided me through the journey that has been my thesis.

To the participants of this thesis and the lecturers that granted me access to their class, this thesis would not have been possible without your support.

This thesis has also been enhanced from the support an input of many friends and colleagues – I thank you all. Helen, a special thank you goes to you for proof reading this thesis, you assistance and support is very much appreciated.

To my family, Mum, Dad, Dave, Jay, Kathryn, Brenda, Stuart, John and Colleen thank you for your words of encouragement and support. Mum and Dad your reading, re-reading and feedback has been invaluable and very much appreciated.

Most of all I thank my wonderful husband David who has always believed in me and supported me through the tough times of this thesis journey. You have been my rock and I could not have done this without you.

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Positive Psychology	1
Thesis Structure	8
CHAPTER TWO: MODELS OF STESS AND WELLBEING	10
General Adaptation Syndrome	10
The Person-Environment Fit Model	12
The Demand Control Support Model	15
The Transactional Model	18
Primary Appraisal	20
Secondary Appraisal	22
Coping	23
Individual Differences	26
CHPATER THREE: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF WORK	
DEMANDS	29
Stress and Burnout	29
Engagement	32
Engagement and Coping	36
Subjective Wellbeing	36
CHAPTER FOUR: RESILIENCE	39
Development of the Resilience Concept	39
Psychological Capital	42
Characteristics of Resilient People	43
How Resilience Differs from Other Constructs	45
Resilience at Work	51
CHAPTER FIVE: METHOD	55
Approaches to Research	55

Ethical Considerations	59
Data Collection	59
Participants	60
Measures and Scale Development	62
Coping	62
Resilience	66
Engagement	66
Wellbeing	67
Sources of Stress and Satisfaction	67
Data Analysis	67
Moderation	68
Mediation	68
Thematic Analysis	69
CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS	71
Between Groups Comparisons	71
Correlations	72
Moderation	74
Mediation	76
Thematic Analysis	78
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION	85
Resilience	86
Sources of Stress and Satisfaction	94
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	98
Limitations	99
Implications for Research	100
Implications for Practice	101
REFERENCES	104
APPENDIX	115

## **LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES**

Figure 1. Types of Fit in the P-E Fit Model of Stress
Figure 2. DCS Model of the Stress Process
Figure 3. Transactional Model of the Stress and Wellbeing20
Figure 4. Primary Appraisal, Process and Outcomes
Figure 5. The Relationship Between Burnout and Engagement34
Figure 6. The Relationship Between Burnout and Engagement58
Figure 7. Sources of Satisfaction Thematic Map Showing Three Main Themes
and Four Subthemes80
Figure 8. Sources of Stress Thematic Map Showing Two Main Themes and Six
Subthemes82
Figure 9. Frequency of Main Thematic Categories83
Table 1 Demographic Information61
Table 2 Factor Loadings for the Three Factor Solution64
Table 3 Bivariate Correlations
Table 4 Resilience as a Moderator in the Relationship Between Maladaptive
Coping and Life Satisfaction75
Table 5 Resilience as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Task-Focused
Coping and Engagement76
Table 6 Resilience as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Task-Focused
Coping and Life Satisfaction
Table 7 Initial Thematic Categories for Sources of Satisfaction79
Table 8 Initial Thematic Categories for Sources of Stress81