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The Reported Experiences of Adult to Adult Bullying in K-12 New Jersey Public Schools

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THE REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF ADULT TO ADULT
BULLYING IN K-12 NEW JERSEY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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2018

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THE REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF ADULT TO ADULT
BULLYING IN K-12 NEW JERSEY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

THE REPORTED EXPERIENCES OF ADULT TO ADULT
BULLYING IN K-12 NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by Julia R. Mazzarella

This is a qualitative study which investigated the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying by other certified school professionals in a K-12 New Jersey public school setting. The study focused on: 1.) How bullies bully; 2.) The behavioral, psychological, somatic, and career manifestations for the targets of bullying; 3.) The support or lack of support experienced by those who were bullied; 4.) Characteristics of school and school district cultures; and, 5.) Survival techniques used by the bullying targets.

The main findings of this study are described here. First, adult to adult bullying by professionals in schools can take many forms and is a traumatic event. Bullying behaviors as reported by participants took the form of harassment, formal observational and evaluative impacts, ostracism, direct and public comments, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment. A second finding was that many targets experienced severe somatic and psychological complaints, some of which lasted for long periods of time (up to two years). They worried that having been bullied would impact career options, but this was largely found not to be so, with the majority of the participants being hired for, and being successful in, other positions. Supports and school cultures greatly impacted the targets’ abilities to decide to leave or to remain in the same school district. The final finding involves how the subjects of bullying behaviors survived their experiences. Most made
sense of what was occurring and de-personalized the actions of the perpetrators, many left the situation in which they were being bullied, and others developed new approaches and new skills for dealing with the bullying experience. All of these results contribute to the literature and, hopefully, will lead to schools which are more kind and more gentle institutions for the adults who work there and the students who learn there.
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The Reported Experiences of Adult to Adult Bullying in K-12 New Jersey Public Schools

CHAPTER I: RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Researchers often choose topics close to their experiences (Merriam, 2006). This certainly holds true in my case. The process by which I chose the topic for this dissertation was grounded in personal experience and based on what I had witnessed and experienced during my career in education. I observed colleagues being bullied in schools. I saw young teachers bullied by older, more experienced, more entrenched staff members who dominated, humiliated, and threatened them covertly and overtly. I had watched as older staff were ridiculed and dismissed by newer and frequently much younger staff. I observed school administrators intentionally victimizing subordinate staff through negative evaluations, constant criticism, and the use of their authority and attendant power. I watched veteran teachers walking out after forced retirements. At one point in my administrative career, I was accused of being a bully by a disgruntled staff member when performing the evaluative component of my job, which further raised questions for me related to the topic of this study.

During my time as an educator and school counselor, addressing issues of bullying among students was an almost daily exercise for me. However, not until I myself was bullied by being “encouraged to retire,” ostracized, and threatened was I able to more formally question the prevalent focus on student bullying in schools and to identify my desire to investigate adult to adult bullying in K-12 education. I knew this was an infrequently discussed topic within the schools in which I had worked and
wondered what was not being said or researched about the experiences of other certified professional school staff members.

In reviewing the literature on harassment and bullying, I discovered a primary focus on student to student bullying in schools and numerous references to Heinemann’s 1969 and Olweus’ 1973 seminal research on this topic (e.g., Eslea & Smith, 1998; Heinemann, 1969; Limber, 2011; Olweus, 1973, 1978, 1979, 1994, 1997, 2005; Roland, 1993; Smith, Smith, Osborn, & Samara, 2008). Although a little-researched topic until the late 1960s and early 1970s, bullying had been informally addressed. For decades, literary fiction has been filled with references to bullying behaviors, despite authors not necessarily using vocabulary to specifically reference bullying. In 1852, for example, Harriet Beecher Stowe attacked the cruelty of slavery and the attendant violence, bullying, and harassment in a disguised anti-slavery book entitled Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Mark Twain’s 1884 depiction of the bullying and mistreatment of the boy Huck Finn and of Jim the slave in Huckleberry Finn (1884) was another example. Salisbury’s notorious novel of the 1950s, Lord of the Flies (1954), provided images of violent bullying behaviors exhibited by boys stranded on an island. The story was later made into a movie which gave even more graphic portrayals of the cruelty caused by bullying.

More recently, successful and well-known authors, such as Margaret Atwood, have described bullying as one of life’s challenges in fictional works. Two of Atwood’s novels, identified in the article Traces of Shame by Bethan Jones (2008), describe the author’s fascination with both childhood and adult conflict. Jones references Cat’s Eye (1990) and The Robber Bride (1993), as addressing childhood and adult bullying,
respectively. Young adult fiction (YAL) mirrors life issues and numerous bibliographical references indicate a predominant interest in bullying and negative acts among students as bullying has become an increasingly popular cultural concern. Meg Medina’s *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* (2013), numerous books by the popular YAL author Judy Blume (See: *Blubber*, 1974; *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, 1972) and *The Kite Runner* (Consalvo, 2012; Larson & Hoover, 2012) have provided both children and adults with the ability to more clearly understand the ubiquitous nature of bullying.

However, little or no scholarly research on bullying seems to be available until the 1960s when the work of Peter Paul Heinemann and Daniel Olweus were published to significant notice by other researchers. Dr. Heinemann was the father of an adopted bi-racial child and personally witnessed incidents of bullying against his child on the playground. It was this experience that led Heinemann to develop seminal research into what he referred to as “mobbing,” the cruel targeting of an individual or individuals by others (1969). It was Heinemann’s early work that intrigued Dan Olweus, who furthered the research into student to student violent behaviors, which he referenced as “bullying” (1978, 1979). The work of these two researchers sparked media interest, the interest of educators and politicians, and led to a new research field involving negative acts by students toward one another. Thus, the field of bullying research began.

Within a few years, other researchers were addressing the nature of bullying by students in schools, attempting to identify typical characteristics of bullies, victims/targets, and of by-standers; addressing the impact of school culture on the prevalence of student to student bullying; noting specific family and friendship
relationships; and isolating demographic characteristics which appeared to lead to an increase or reduction in the bullying behaviors of children in schools (Bjorkqvist, Ekman, & Lagerspetz, 1982; Olweus, 1978, 1993, 1994, 1997; Roland, 1993). During the 1990s, several researchers (e.g., Einarsen, 1996; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Laymann, 1990; Quine, 1999) became interested in adult to adult workplace bullying with academic interest continuing to today (Marquart, 2013; Olweus, 2010; Yamada, 2010). As was typical of the interest in student to student bullying in schools, research dealing with workplace bullying has identified characteristics of the adult bullies, as well as of the targets and victims; has focused on various aspects of workplace culture; and has attempted to offer suggestions regarding how to deal with bullying and harassment in the workplace (Beswick, Gore, & Palferman, 2006; Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith, & Pereird, 2002; Einarsen, 1996, 2000; Hauge, Skogstad, & Einaarsen, 2007, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2003; Randall, 2001; Snalin, 2003; Yamada, 2010).

The majority of the workplace bullying literature consistently has involved corporate or industrial sites (Crothers, 2014; Leather, Brady, Lawrence, Beale, & Cox, 1999; Lubetzsky, 2015; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Randall, 2001), but little research exists regarding workplace bullying by adults in schools. The stories of schools as supportive environments in which adults assist students with the tasks of academic, social, and emotional development may have contributed to the failure by researchers to investigate schools as workplaces in which workplace bullying occurs. Additionally, in an article by Green (2005) in which he discussed education myths, the author added more to this explanation when he stated: “Because it involves children, education is a highly-
emotional issue, which tends to cloud people’s thinking” (p. 16). Sometimes, myths prevent investigation, as is true related to workplace bullying by the professional adults in schools. This lack of research intrigued me and further piqued my interest in the topic of adult-to-adult workplace bullying in schools. Further data related to this topic may contribute to solving some of the issues related to adult to adult bullying in schools by certified professionals.

**Statement of the Problem**

Bullying is a troubling phenomenon in any setting, yet surprisingly little research has focused on *adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools*. The dynamics of adult bullying in corporate and industrial settings have been identified quite extensively (Beswick, Gore, & Palferman, 2006; Einarsen, 1996; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Laymann, 1990; Marquart, 2013; Namie & Namie, 2003; Quine, 1999; Salin, 2003; Yamada, 2004, 2008), some research has looked at workplace bullying in nursing (Berry, Gillespie, Gates, & Schafer, 2012; Cooper, Walker, Askew, Robinson, & McNair, 2011; Croft & Cash, 2012), in higher education (Lester, 2013), and a few studies have focused on bullying in schools by administrators against teachers (Fahie, 2014; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Parsons, 2005; Schnall, 2009). As stated earlier, little data exists that is related to various types of bullying behaviors by professional employees in varied roles in schools. Schools are unique settings in which trained staff members serve students with the goals of helping students to learn, preparing them for further education, and/or assuring that students will be productive members of society. *Staff members* in this sense, includes teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals who hold professional certificates, school
nurses, school media specialists, and members of the Child Study Team. In contrast to the organization and functioning of corporate and industrial sites, the parents, guardians, and community members typically have a voice in how schools function. Most educators work with little supervision and work behind closed classroom doors; in New Jersey, for example, three short, formal observations are required yearly for tenured certified professional faculty (NJ State Department of Education, 2013), leaving the possibility that some educational personnel rarely have contact with a supervisor. Such relative isolation may lead to autonomy, which could be beneficial or detrimental in relation to adult school bullying. It is important then to hear the voices of adults in school settings to understand the dynamics and consequences of adult bullying in schools as workplaces.

The present study was designed to examine and reflect on the implications of adult to adult bullying in schools for school staff, students, and the larger school community, which includes non-certified staff, parents/guardians, and those who may have even cursory contact with the school in which adult to adult bullying is present. Because so little academic literature exists related to this topic, this in-depth examination results in drawing more focused attention to the issue with an increased awareness of the potentially-damaging impacts of such behaviors. Ideally, the results of this study may prove to be consequential in improving school climate, school workplace staff relations, and the environments in which our students learn.

The research reported here focuses on the perceived experiences of adult workers who report being or having been bullied by other adults in a K-12 schoolwork environment. The participants for this study comprise eleven female adult certified
professional education staff who have been bullied by another adult certified professional educational staff member. This study sought to answer the question: What are the experiences of adult to adult bullying in K–12 schools as reported by certified professional school staff?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to report and examine the experiences of people who have been bullied by another certified professional school employee in a K-12 school setting as narrated by certified school professionals and to compare and contrast their experiences in order to identify patterns that might usefully inform responses to adult to adult bullying in schools. Due to the hyper-attenuated focus on student to student bullying in schools, the amount of research related to workplace bullying in corporate and industrial sites, and the apparent disregard for bullying in schools by certified professionals in a variety of roles, the present study is pertinent and of significant value within the field of bullying research. Schools have the reputation of being supportive environments in which students are encouraged by kind and caring school staff. This myth will be dispelled through the research reported here, which shows that, not only is student to student bullying a problem in schools, but that adult bullying is conducted by certified school professionals who bully one another. Specific bullying behaviors, school climate, supports, and methods of coping are some of the factors that are discussed, with a goal of recognizing alternatives to adult to adult bullying behaviors.
Background Research

Student to Student Bullying

A vast amount of literature exists related to bullying. Since the 1970s, student to student school bullying, in which schoolchildren bully or harass other schoolchildren, has been the focus of much educational research (Diamantes, 1999, 2005; Olweus, 1973; Tyler, 1998). Additionally, many of these researchers developed anti-bullying and bullying prevention programs (Heppner, 2001; Olweus, 1993, 2005; Porter, Garrity, Jens, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 2000), proposing solutions for the measurement, reduction, or eradication of student bullying in schools (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Because educational environments and learning were disrupted, children were involved, and potentially life-damaging consequences resulted from student bullying in schools, anti-bullying advisement has become big business with school districts investing large amounts of money for bully prevention training and materials (Coyne, 2013; Livingston, 2008; Olweus, 1993). In short, in the 2000s in particular, student bullying in schools became a major focus for school boards, school personnel, parents/guardians, communities, and the press (YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOBukCnr2OQ&feature=related).

While student to student bullying in schools has been recognized as a difficult problem for a while now, it is only since the 1990s that the topic of adult workplace bullying was formally identified as an equally important problem. Considered to have similarities with student school bullying (Einarsen, 1996; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Laymann, 1990; Quine, 1999; Vartia, 1996), research on adult to adult workplace
bullying has focused on specific workplace venues; most frequently, corporations, industries, and large and small businesses (Barber, 2011; Hong & Espelage, 2012; McCulloch, 2010; Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). The unique characteristics of bullies and of victims (Zapf, 1999), the culture of workplaces which promote or deter bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003), and other aspects of workplace bullying have continued to be a focus of researcher interest (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009; Glaso, Hong & Espelago, 2012; Matthiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2007; Salin, 2003). Televised U.S. Senate hearings on sexual harassment in 1992 also had an impact on layperson and researcher interest in workplace harassment and bullying; workplace complaints increased more than 200% in the two years following the Senate hearings (Hill v. Thomas) (Greenberger, 2010). Today, the proliferation of research on and proposed solutions to the problem of workplace bullying have matched the ferocity that earlier student school bullying research exhibited and with attendant programming to address the problems (Einarsen, 1996, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2009; Gaetano, 2010; Hong & Espelago, 2012; Leymann, 1990; Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2003; Olweus, 2005).

Although it is important to understand the dynamics and experiences of workplace bullying in market organizations such as industry and corporate settings, little has been published about adult-to-adult bullying in the workplace of schools. It is questionable whether the experiences of bullying in the institutional workplaces of schools mirror the bullying experiences of other sites (Hallett, 2010). Schools in the United States are described as some of the most normative and moral organizations in existence (Hong & Espelago, 2012), which is yet another factor that may contribute to the
lack of research. A reluctance to challenge the existing school structure and school culture may result in little researcher interest and resultant data. However, it is important to reveal the potential untruths of school myths and to investigate schools as workplaces in which adults may be bullying and harassing other adults. Thus, it is important to ask: What are certified professional school personnel not saying? Why is there so little research in this area? What are the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying in K–12 schools?

**Historical Development of the Term Bullying**

The origin of the term *bully* as a noun, according to the online Oxford English Dictionary (online OED, 2014), dates to the 1500s, and was a term of endearment. It was not until the 1700s that *bully* as a verb became a term that described behaviors which were intimidating and cruel (online OED, 2014). Early research into bullying behaviors defined bullying as *mobbing* and characterized these behaviors as a form of violence against an “abnormal” or “deviant” (sic) individual (Heinemann, 1969, 1973; Olweus, 1978; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefjooghke, 2002). Mobbing was a violent occurrence, which was sudden, frequent, and brief in duration (Heinemann, 1973; Leymann, 1990). Although Olweus (1978) also used the term mobbing, he further developed the definition and was the first researcher to use the word *bullying*, which in his definition also included a single attack against a less-powerful child by one child with greater power. In addition, Olweus included not just physical aspects, but also psychological and mental elements of aggression in his definition (Olweus, 1978, 1999). Smith (2004), however, has argued
that definitions of bullying “are fuzzy” (p. 98). Certainly, definitions and descriptions of bullying can cause confusion.

Clearly, bullying has long intrigued researchers, has many components, and may be defined by various behaviors and terms. For the purposes of this study, bullying can be direct (physical) or indirect (not physical), ostracism or verbal attacks may be involved, threats may be used, and the behaviors may be sexual or based on individual factors, such as physical appearance, intellectual functioning, athletic prowess, social status, weight, and/or cultural differences.

**Cyberbullying**

*Cyberbullying*, or the “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 164) has become a common form of bullying behavior. The victim frequently may not have knowledge of the perpetrator or of how many people may see the bullying as photos and statements *go viral*, a term which means that over one million persons would see digital video, images, or an article within the period of a day or a week ([www.techterms.com](http://www.techterms.com)) on their computers or cell phones.

**Workplace Bullying**

As is true of student bullying in schools, workplace bullying is an issue of concern both in the United States and internationally (Einarson et al., 2009; Olweus, 1973, 1999, 2000). A variety of terms are used to identify negative workplace acts by co-workers or supervisors/employers, among them: “mobbing” (Leymann & Guystafsson, 1996), “workplace violence” (Glomb, 2002), “workplace aggression” (Keashly &
Neuman, 2008), “workplace harassment” (Einarsen et al., 2009) and workplace bullying, psychological harassment and workplace abuse (Yamada, 2004). However, irrespective of the term used, such behavior can cause harm to the target, occurs between adults, involves at least one person as victim or target and one or more persons as the perpetrators (bullies), has the potential of long-lasting and severe consequences, and may be intentional and have specific goals, or simply be the result of ignorance or a misuse of power (Beasley & Rayner, 1997; Einarson et al., 2009; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2011).

Workplace bullying is a significant behavior with numerous negative effects related to productivity, financial concerns, work climate, and physical and psychological well-being. Although other countries have legislation in place which protects employees from workplace bullying, there currently is no anti-bullying workplace legislation in the United States (Namie, 2004, 2011, 2017; Yamada, 2004). Research into bullying as a workplace concern seems to have followed investigations of student-to-student school bullying. Bullying by students in schools dominated the literature from the 1960s until the 1990s (Heinemann, 1973; Olweus, 1973, 1978, 1992, 1998). Issues of workplace discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment received only secondary attention and were under-reported during this same period. Sexual harassment was considered as distinct from non-sexual harassment in the workplace (Kaplan, 2009; Wright, 2009), with harassment and bullying sometimes considered to be the same and, at other times, considered to be different. In the 1990s and early 2000s, several researchers began investigating the issues around workplace bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1996; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2004; and
Yamada, 2004) and highlighting the fact that bullying is not just an issue among children in the schoolyard. These researchers identified workplace bullying as a prevalent concern with significant negative consequences, such as lowered employee productivity (Namie & Namie, 2003), increased absenteeism (Namie & Namie, 2003), significant worker health issues (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Yamada, 2004), and diminished mental health functioning (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), discussed in more detail below. Workplace bullying contained many of the elements of Olweus’ original definition of bullying among schoolchildren: “Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending him or herself” (www.violencepreventionworks.org, Definition of Bullying).

Interestingly, recent changes in defining school bullying among children and workplace bullying among adults now include a single event, rather than the earlier definitional requirement of repeated acts over time. This change was in response to increasing reports of the harm caused by a single incident of bullying. In addition, bullying may be unintentional, but still may be considered as such and result in the same consequences as intentional bullying (see, for example, New Jersey Anti-Bullying Legislation, 2012; Accessed at www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/).

Legal Considerations and Concerns Related to Workplace Bullying

In the United States, federal and state legislators have attempted to address sexual harassment and discrimination (Kaplan, 2009; Title VII, Pub. L. 88-352. Accessed at https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titleVII.cfm). However, legislation-based approaches have proven woefully inadequate in dealing with workplace bullying (Kaplan, 2009;
Namie & Namie, 2005; Yamada, 2004). \textit{Status-based acts} related to gender, race, religion, sex, or disability offer victims some protection under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub. L. 88-352). However, if the target cannot prove that the harassing or bullying behavior was related to ethnicity, religion, gender, or any other socially-referenced protected status or class, then the bullying is not considered illegal or unlawful (Kaplan, 2009). Aligned with this aspect of the statute, if the bully and victim are from the same status, such as when there is an issue between a female supervisor and a female employee or between an African-American employer and an African-American employee, there is no legal recourse; persons from separately identified statuses must be involved in order for Title VII to apply (Kaplan, 2009).

Incidents of sexual harassment are open to legal recourse if a \textit{hostile work environment} can be proven, but sexual harassment is a particularly underreported and under-resolved workplace complaint (Kaplan, 2009; Wright, 2009) with frequent negative consequences for the person alleging the sexual harassment. According to Kaplan’s (2009) and Wright’s (2009) research, workplace bullying has been addressed in the courts in only a few cases and has been judged in favor of the plaintiff only if the behavior is clearly extreme. In a 1986 Supreme Court ruling, it was concluded that sexual harassment was an aspect of creating a hostile work environment only if the victim perceived the environment as hostile and only if a \textit{reasonable person} similarly would deem the work environment as hostile (Kaplan, 2009). It is important to note that workplace behaviors which are harassing and involve sexual behaviors are specifically
considered *sexual harassment*. Bullying or discrimination may occur along with sexual harassment in a workplace (Kaplan, 2009).

Despite their differences, harassment, discrimination, and workplace bullying have much in common and frequently are referenced interchangeably. Viollis (2005) considers the Violence Against Women Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration Act as providing some recourse for those experiencing workplace bullying and also for establishing a *duty of care*. The 2001 introduction of the Healthy Workplace Bill (Namie & Namie, 2003; Yamada, 2001) provided a framework for establishing a law specifically related to bullying in the workplace. To date, 17 states have presented the bill in their legislatures, although none has voted to pass the bill (Yamada, 2010).

### The Nature and Consequences of Workplace Bullying

Adult to adult workplace bullying has been shown to cause long-lasting and often permanent damage to the victim (Helmer, 2016; Namie, 2005; Namie & Namie, 2003; Vickers, 2011), to result in decreased productivity (Gaetano, 2010; Yamada, 2004, 2008), and to sometimes result in homicide or suicide (McCulloch, 2010; Misawa, 2009). Similar to student bullying in schools, workplace bullying is defined as:

- the repeated, health-harming mistreatment of an employee by one or more employees through acts of commission or omission manifested as: verbal abuse; behaviors-physical or nonverbal-that are threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; work sabotage, interference with production; exploitation of a vulnerability-
physical, social, or psychological; or some combination of one or more categories.

(Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI), in Namie & Namie, 2011. p. 13).

Being a target/victim or a by-stander in the workplace can have serious consequences, such as job loss, psychological and physical ill-health, and a sense of lack of safety (Fevre, Lewis, Robinson, & Jones, 2012; Leyman, 1990; Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010; Namie & or some combination of one or more categories. Namie, 2003). Researchers (e.g., Beswick, Gore, & Palferman, 2006; Skorek, 2009; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2011) have indicated that the rates of heart problems among the targets of bullies are significantly higher than those who do not experience workplace bullying, as is the prevalence of other physical and psychological problems, such as anxiety, sleep disturbances, increased smoking, alcohol use, and general poor health.

In contrast to the consequences experienced by the target or victim, the bully most often does not experience negative consequences and may even be rewarded in the workplace (Namie, 2009; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2011). Workplace bullying frequently is used as a management tool to control, force compliance, or remove employees (Namie, 2004, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2011; Yamada, 2004, 2008). While adult bullying in the workplace is a significant problem (Liu, 2011; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2011; Yamada, 2008), schools as organizations also require investigation for the experiences of adult to adult workplace bullying.

**Schools as Workplaces**

School districts employ large numbers of certified professional staff members in a variety of capacities. Most school staff has been called upon to address student to student
bullying in schools, to help students with problem-solving, to handle disciplinary procedures, and/or to implement anti-bullying policies and curricula. In the case of the State of New Jersey, from which the participants were drawn for this study, school staff members must understand and follow the rule of the law related to New Jersey’s anti-bullying legislation (NJ “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights” Act; 2012; www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib). The number of certified professional teachers employed in K-12 schools in the United States for the 2009 school year, according to the U.S. Census website, was 31,617,000 with 31,61,000 employed in public schools and 457,000 working in private schools. These data do not include additional certified professional K-12 school staff, such as administrators (superintendents, principals, vice-principals, supervisors), school media specialists/librarians, school counselors, and school Child Study Team members (Ohrn & Weiner, 2009). Schools are workplaces and employ large numbers of people who deal with school bullying among students, but who may also be impacted by the behaviors of other adults in their school. The omission of research related to workplace bullying in which certified professional school staff members are employed warrants investigation.

Because schools are institutions which traditionally involve a hierarchal structure, gender-based roles, and role-defined power, and because schools allegedly promote social justice, feminist theory is relevant and will provide the framework for this study (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Harnois, 2013; hooks, 1984, 2000a, 2000b; Wright, 2009). Education has long been a female dominated field and continues to demonstrate this pattern; supported by the New Jersey State Department of Education statistics that, for
the 2011-2012 school year, the number of female certified teachers was 72,126 and the number of male teaching staff members was 22,139 for the 2011-2012 school year (www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm).

**Theoretical Framework**

Feminist theory provides an appropriate framework for this study because it enables me to examine power relationships within the specific social structures of K-12 schools, as well as to attend to power dynamics within the research process itself. Prior to participant selection and the interview process, as a researcher I had seriously considered my role as interviewer and of my desire to have an equitable relationship with the study participants. I wanted to be certain of minimizing power differentials and of co-constructing the results with those I interviewed. I believed that mutual respect would be an important aspect of each interview and of my consideration of the data as I moved toward drawing conclusions. Although I initially chose feminist theory as the approach for my study and it seemed to be a useful choice, only as the study progressed did the value of this theoretical framing become even more obvious and glaringly appropriate.

All of the participants in this study are female. Only females volunteered. Many of the bullies were male and, regardless of the bully’s gender, real and perceived power differentials arose as factors related to adult to adult workplace bullying. I became even more satisfied with my choice of a feminist theoretical approach as I examined the data and drew conclusions. This was both heartening and rewarding since I believed that feminist theory contributed to the study and that the study might also contribute to feminist theory.
Feminist theory posits that masculine values and characteristics are more valued than characteristics that are considered to be feminine. Many women are socialized to emphasize home and family pursuits, take the predominant role in child rearing and defer their career goals to the needs of their husband and family (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Alternatively, men typically are encouraged to be achievement oriented, autonomous and self-sufficient (Coogan & Chen, 2007; Miller, 1976). Gender socialization often creates strict guidelines for behavior that is considered “feminine” and behavior that is considered to be “masculine.” Women often are considered passive, while men are viewed as aggressive. Females might speak more softly and men more loudly. Women are viewed as valuing relationships for what they offer in terms of feelings, while males can be viewed as non-emotive and only interested in bonding with other males over competitive activities, such as sports (Bazelon, 2013; Evans, Kincade, & Seem, 2011). Both men and women are negatively impacted when expected to adhere to stringent gender roles. By creating these strict gender expectations, according to a feminist approach, society demands that individuals repress those characteristics that are not consistent with their expected gender expression (Evans et al., 2011; hooks, 1984; Miller, 1976).

Feminist theorists (such as Evans et al., 2011; Fonow & Cook, 1991; hooks, 1984; Miller, 1976) have indicated that feminism assumes “inequities…are based on institutionalized power” (Evans et al., 2011, p. 2) and feminisms inherently focus on the general principles of attention to and the elimination of gender roles, an understanding of privilege and oppression, empowerment, class/racial/ethnic concerns, and social justice.
Because bullying focuses on power and the misuse of power (Einarsen, 1996; Olweus, 1973, 1978, 1995; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2011), feminism was the appropriate framework for this study. In conceptualizing adult to adult bullying in schools, a feminist theoretical framework requires the examination of power, privilege, oppression, and disenfranchisement within the context of school culture (Harnois, 2013). As explained by Fonow and Cook (1991), a feminist research approach is not just for women and about women, but, rather, the concepts of feminist research involve “reflexivity; an action orientation; attention to the affective components; and use of the situation at hand” (p.2). Feminist research is typified by the theoretical orientation used in the research and by the interpretation utilized in the reporting of the data (Harnois, 2013, p. 5). As explained earlier, a feminist theoretical approach revealed itself to be an ideal orientation for this study. Indeed, I consciously attended to a feminist approach throughout my study by means of constant reflection, the use of journaling, and a constant comparative data analysis method, strategies that are appropriate for and reflective of other theories that can be used in qualitative studies.

To reiterate, in this study I examined the experiences of bullying by other adults in K-12 schools as reported by professional certified staff members and utilized a feminist theoretical lens to examine the relevant components related to institutional structure, role, gender, class, race/ethnicity, age, and years of experience. Although all participants are female, gender was an issue to be examined specifically related to role and power issues, which is a requisite when utilizing a feminist theoretical approach.
What, then, is the significance of this study? Why study adult to adult school bullying at all?

**Significance of the Study**

Bullying is not unique to children, as many researchers originally had thought (Einarsen, 1996; Einarsen & Skogstad, 2000; Heppner, 2001; Olweus, 1995), nor is the experience of being bullied a *normal* rite of passage. In fact, children are most likely not the cause of the bullying problem, but rather, bullying behaviors are behaviors children learn through various societal messages (Bandura, 1999). Due to the significant focus on student bullying in schools, a great deal of information exists (Basch, 2011; Bauman, 2008; Bazelon, 2013; Bjorkqvist, Ekman & Lagerspetz, 1982; Diamantes, 2010; Glomb & Liao, 2003; Hayes & Herbert, 2011; Holt & Keyes, 2004; Hong & Espelago, 2012; Mills & Carwile, 2009; Olweus, 1995, 2001; Simmons, 2002; Williams, 2005; Wiseman, 2002). As researchers increased awareness of student bullying in schools, an attendant interest in adult harassment and bullying in the workplace developed later. Interestingly, however, there has been a lack of research focus related to adult bullying when *schools* are the recognized institutional workplaces.

Adult to adult workplace bullying has been researched in earnest since the 1990s with significant information related to the causes and consequences. Researchers (e.g., Fevre et al., 2012; Namie & Namie, 2005, 2011; Yamada, 2004, 2008) have dealt with various workplace environments, but with the significant omission of much research related to workplace bullying in schools. Studies have demonstrated that workplace bullying can negatively impact issues of organizational functioning, such as productivity.
and workplace climate, as well as individual employee consequences to workplace climate, productivity, and the ability to function (Barber, 2011; Beswick, Gore, & Palferman, 2006; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2014; Yamada, 2010).

There are gaps in our understandings of bullying, notably with regard to schools as workplaces. Schools are organizations which employ thousands of workers to help young people, the students, to become as successful as possible. Yet people may not always think of schools as workplaces, contributing to the condemnation of student to student bullying in schools while failing to address the needs of school employees who also may be bullied in schools (Hallett, 2007). Similarly, there is research available on variations of workplace bullying (e.g., sexual harassment, discrimination), but only recently has bullying been addressed as a factor in the workplace (Einarsen, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2011). Again, while workplace bullying has been identified as a research focus, little research exists on adult-to-adult bullying in the workplaces called schools. This study examined the reported experiences of certified professional school personnel who experienced adult-to-adult bullying in a New Jersey school and will, thus, add to the literature by examining the experiences and impact of adult to adult school bullying. By attending to their narratives, dispelling another educational myth regarding schools as pleasant environments in which all adults get along will lead to more realistic views about what occurs in schools, the consequences of bullying for adults will be better understood, the impact on school learning environments will become more clear, and I will suggest alternatives to this destructive behavior in favor of more positive school climates and more proactive collegial relationships. Additionally,
considerations of adult bullying as a leadership style will be discussed with suggestions for alternative options which do not cause harm to another school professional. Thus, this study is significant for providing narratives from 11 female participants who greatly contribute data and understanding about a little researched topic.

**Research Question**

The research question for this study is: What are the experiences of adult to adult bullying in New Jersey K–12 schools as reported by certified professional school staff and as perpetrated by other certified professional school staff toward them?

**Definitions of Terms**

*Bully or Perpetrator*: The individual(s) who enacts aggressive and harmful behaviors toward another individual or individuals. (See “bullying” below). (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003).

*Bullying*: A subset of aggression characterized by intent to harm another person through verbal, non-verbal, physical, or digital behaviors (Einarsen et al., 2003).

*Certified Professional School Staff*: Trained, licensed and certified staff members who work or have worked in a NJ school and who perform specific roles, such as administrators, teachers, counselors, speech and language specialists, and school counselors (Amended from [http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm)).

*Climate*: “the quality and character of school life” (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182).

*Culture*: “recurring patterns of social action and negotiation that are common to a particular group . . . . ‘what members of a social group come to know, expect, understand,
produce and do is learned from participating in and observing how members participate in the everyday events that make up the life of the social group’ ” (Green & Meyer, 1991, p. 143, cited in Knobel, 1999, pp. 51-52).

**Cyberbullying:** The “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 164).

**Myth n.²:** A widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief; a widely held misconception; a misrepresentation of the truth.” (Online Oxford English Dictionary, 2014).

**Schools:** Educational institutions which “are responsible for helping students to become self-reflective, self-actualized, compassionate, and civic-minded people.” (Klein, 2012, p. 2). Originally, places of learning with “the ideal and utilitarian visions of the role of education in shaping and defining what democracy in a constitutional republic should be.” (Ferrin, 2011, pp. 206-207).

**School Culture/School Climate:** Used interchangeably in this document. See “culture” above, where the organization is a school. Klein commented that “In schools, bullying behavior often becomes normal and students get used to it.” (Klein, 2011, p. 35).

**Trauma:** A deeply distressing or disturbing experience (Retrieved from https://en/oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trauma)

**Victim or Target:** An individual who is the recipient of the bullying behavior. *Victim* implies the negative consequences of bullying. *Target* identifies the recipient of the bullying behavior. (sic.) (Klein, 2012; Monks & Coyne, 2011)
Workplace Bullying/Workplace Harassment: Negative behaviors at work which have an element of personal abuse (attacking the person directly or indirectly), work-related abuse (overwork and work pressure), and social isolation (ostracism). Physical bullying can also occur in the workplace . . . (Monks & Coyne, 2011, p. 160). The terms workplace bullying and workplace harassment will be used interchangeably in this document.

Organization of the Dissertation

There are six chapters in this dissertation study. Chapter one includes an introduction, a statement of the problem, a statement of the study purpose, definitions of key terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review of the study topics and of key concepts. Chapter three describes the study methodology. Chapter four introduces the participants with brief biographical information, although specific ages, roles, and work locations have been omitted in order to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Chapter five presents information about the experiences of the study participants, their responses, and study results; and Chapter six identifies commonalities and trends, study limitations, and describes areas for future research. Appendices provide the specific documents used during the study and charts which provide easy to understand information.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The research literature holds little information regarding the topic of adult to adult school bullying. A great deal has been written about student to student school bullying and adult to adult bullying in corporate and industrial settings. Both foci emphasize the negative consequences of bullying, but bullying among professional adults in a school setting has not been a focus. A few studies have focused on the bullying of teachers by administrators (Fahie, 2014; Parsons, 2005; Schnall, 2009), but little has been written regarding what is addressed here in the present study. There are many possible reasons for this absence or oversight, but the current study endeavors to begin the exploration of adult to adult bullying behaviors in schools; specifically, by certified professionals in K-12 schools in the state of New Jersey in order to add clarity to this little-researched, but important, topic.

For me, numerous questions have arisen in the process of researching the topic of bullying. These include: Why has there been such a focus on student to student bullying in schools? Why has the subject of adult to adult bullying been studied so extensively in corporate and industrial settings, but not in schools? If adults are entrenched in unsupportive school environments in which they are not safe and in which they encounter conflicts they don’t know how to resolve, do their abilities to function effectively decline? If we continue to ignore the issue of adult to adult bullying in schools, how can we promote a civil atmosphere? What sorts of role models are we? What messages do we, directly or indirectly, communicate to those with whom we work? Are there hierarchies in schools which promote such behaviors? Do gender, role, ethnicity, age, and
experience have anything to do with being bullied by another adult in a school? What are
the reported experiences by certified professional staff of adult to adult bullying by other
certified professional staff in New Jersey K-12 schools and how do different persons
define bullying? These are but some of the questions which guided my prompts to the
study participants in order to learn more and to possibly draw attention to an under-
researched phenomenon. The goal of this dissertation is to increase knowledge related to
adult to adult school bullying and to provide a better understanding of the problem of
adult bullying in K-12 schools, arriving at solutions to this issue.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the available literature in detail in order to
construct an academic context for this study. Providing an in-depth review of what data
and related commentary exist is a necessary and valuable component of emergent
research such as this.

Currently, children as young as four years of age may demonstrate bullying
behaviors (Ananiadou, 2003) with incidents of bullying escalating and bullying
characteristics becoming more numerous and more clearly defined as children age
(Bazelon, 2013; Klein, 2011; Smith in Monks & Coyne, 2011). No longer is bullying
considered a social rite of passage for many people as it often was in the past (Young &
Ward, 2011), but bullying in schools is seen now as a very real problem that needs to be
addressed in policy and action (Harris & Herbert, 2011; Paulle, 2013). This issue has
attracted an increased focus in the United States, and, specifically, in New Jersey, during
the past several years. Anti-bullying legislation for schools only was signed into law in
New Jersey in January 2011, and went into effect in September of that year (NJ “Anti-
Bullying Bill of Rights” Act (NJSA 18A-37-15) (Accessed at www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/). As discussed in chapter one, Heinemann’s and Olweus’ seminal work in Scandinavia in the late 1960s and the 1970s stimulated a focus on the bullying experiences of schoolchildren (Heinemann, 1969; Olweus, 1978, 1979) and led to further research in other countries. Smith, Ananiadou, and Cowie (2003) documented the problem of school bullying and the implementation of anti-bullying interventions in Norway, England, Canada, Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Switzerland, indicating the breadth of the school bullying problem. In what follows, rather than begin with a specific definition of bullying, I draw upon the work of other researchers to generate a set of accepted components of the term as a launching point for this project; that is, bullying will be described as having several of the following characteristics: an act of violence and/or aggression, at least one occurrence, at least one target and one perpetrator, harm done to the victim, psychological or physical damage, possible social consequences, possible intentionality, short-term and/or long-term effects, and an imbalance of power (Gerdes, 2012; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Klein, 2011; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Namie, 2009; Olweus, 1978).

**Student to Student Bullying in Schools**

**The History of Bullying Research**

The topic of student to student bullying in schools is seemingly ubiquitous in many countries (Diamantes, 2010; Heppner, 2001; Leff, Power, & Goldstein, 2004; Klein, 2011; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Ohrn & Weiner, 2009; Olweus, 2005; Sahin, 2011; Slonje & Smith, 2009; Troop-Gordin & Quenette,
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2010; Tyler, 1998) and it is difficult to identify a single day when bullying among children is not discussed in the media. A 2/2/14 Google search of school bullying articles by the author resulted in three videos posted by the Huffington Post for one day: After Gay Bullying: Parents Carry On Message; WATCH: Disturbing Video About Bullying, and a French anti-bullying video which was promoted as having been designed to combat the estimated 1 in 10 French students who experienced bullying daily (www.huffingtonpost.com/news/school-bullying). A partial chronology of bullying articles in the New York Times (www.topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/b/bullies) indicated that thirteen articles about bullying were published in this paper between 2/2/13 and 10/27/13, eight of which dealt with the suicides of students who had been bullied by other students. A later (9/21/17) examination of New York Times articles for the past 365 days revealed more than 60 related to bullying, sexual harassment, and incivility (https://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch/#/bullying/364days). Researchers, academics, politicians, educators, and others are trying to identify, understand, and find ways to resolve the problem of student bullying in schools, by law, education, or intervention (Albayrak, Yildiz, & Erol, 2016; American School Counselor Association, 2003, 2005, 2010; Diamantes, 2010; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Heppner, 2001; Klein, 2011; Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2008; Olweus, 1999, 2005; Parsons, 2005).

As already mentioned, early research regarding student to student bullying in schools was conducted by Heinemann and Olweus. Heinemann was Jewish and had left Germany in 1938 as a child. His family wanted to escape the Nazi regime and first
landed in Holland and later emigrated to Sweden (Bazelon, 2013), where, as an adult, Heinemann was responsible for formally initiating the study of violent acts by schoolchildren against one another. Heinemann had described “feeling so stupid” as an immigrant child and experiencing bullying by his classmates, but what was most motivating was his experience as the adoptive father of a Black child. He wrote about the schoolyard bullies he witnessed targeting his son and he rallied for attention to the issue of “mobbing” (Bazelon, 2013; Heinemann, 1969). *Mobbing* was a term that had been coined in the 1960s by an Austrian scientist to describe the aggressive behaviors of a flock of birds against weaker ones (Bazelon, 2013). Heinemann appropriated this term to describe the behaviors of collective school bullies against the weaker, less defended students. As reported by Bazelon (2013), Heinemann’s work led to a focus on aggressive behaviors by schoolchildren at the 1970 Swedish annual meeting of mental health professionals. Publication of the article, *Aparteid* (Heinemann, 1969), and subsequent awareness of the alarming prevalence of bullying behaviors became a call to arms in Sweden. At approximately the same time, another Swede, Dan Olweus, was completing a doctoral dissertation about aggressive behaviors among boys and he paid particular attention to Heinemann’s work. Olweus later moved to Norway, where the Norwegian government provided him with funding for additional research related to bullying by students in schools. The Norwegian government was concerned by Olweus’ statistics and by the new data which indicated that student to student bullying was rife in the schools and that serious, often life-threatening consequences could be the result.
They further charged Olweus with addressing what to do about the problem (Bazelon, 2013; Olweus, 1978, 1979, 1997).

Olweus (1978, 1979, 1993, 2000, 2005) and his colleagues in Scandinavian countries developed further research studies with the resulting information increasing interest in the study of bullying behaviors and those who are targeted. Olweus’ research raised awareness of the problem of school bullying for a great many parents, students, and school personnel who willingly shared their stories and their concerns as they now understood that bullying was an issue not limited to their children or their school. Olweus and his colleagues identified common traits for bullies and victims, addressed the negative consequences of bullying behaviors, and later developed interventions to address the problem (see The Olweus Anti-Bullying Program, 2005; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Additionally, Olweus has developed several instruments for measuring student bullying in schools, many of which are used in the United States and other parts of the world (Olweus, 2005). Other researchers soon began to conduct studies around the topic of bullying in schools and even children’s and young adult literature (see Judy Blume’s Blubber, 1974, for example) incorporated an increased focus on the cruelty of children toward other children. The topic of bullying became pervasive; a significant body of scholarly and fictional literature now exists.

Numerous anti-bullying programs and recommendations were proposed, but with inconsistent success in eliminating school bullying among students (Albayrak, Yildiz, & Erol, 2016; Bazelon, 2013; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2007; Hayes & Herbert, 2011; Leff, Power, & Goldstein, 2004; Limber,
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2011; Lund, Blake, Ewing, & Banks, 2012; Olweus, 1997, 2005; Roland & Galloway, 2004). O’Neill, Challenger, Renzulli, Crapster, and Webster (2013) discussed the success of an intervention for male middle school students, but only evaluated the program’s success for three weeks beyond program completion, demonstrating the lack of rigor accorded to much of the research. More longitudinal and more specific data certainly are needed if anti-bullying programs are to be referenced as beneficial and as having long-term effects (Albayrak et al., 2016; Bazelon, 2013; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). As explained by Albayrak et al. and based on their meta-analysis of anti-bullying programs, “studies have mentioned the difficulty of solving [the] variability when programs involving many variables are studied because they should be considered as complex systems” (p. 173). Thus, study results may be difficult to explain due to the number of variables involved and the resulting confusion regarding which variable impacted which result. Most telling are the facts that student to student bullying still exists in schools, that school anti-bullying programs continue to be implemented, and that the concepts of the student school bully and the student school victim remain well-known to the general public (ABC News, 2007; Hirsch, 2013; Klein, 2013; Limber, 2011; Lund et al. 2012). Olweus and others have demonstrated success with their programs, although strict adherence to the structure; teacher and parent training; on-going parent involvement; a structured, positive school climate; and consistent program implementation seem necessary to success in reducing bullying among students (Bazelon, 2013; Olweus, 2007, 2008).
New Jersey is one of the few states with anti-bullying legislation for schools related to student to student bullying. As of September 1, 2011, New Jersey schools are required to have an anti-bullying specialist who heads a school safety team and who also heads investigations related to harassment, intimidation, or bullying (known widely as HIB). This individual can be any staff member, but generally is a school administrator, school psychologist, or school counselor. A school safety team must be created in each school whose purpose is to foster and maintain a positive school climate and to ensure that the legislation is followed. Additional requirements are that a “week of respect” be observed, training is provided to all staff on HIB, a clear policy is developed for the district regarding HIB legislation and consequences, and that all HIB incidences are reported to the state in order for this information to be reported in the State School Report Card (Drew, 2011; NJ “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights” Act, 2011). Some issues have arisen around New Jersey’s legislation, such as the lack of funding to implement the law; the additional, and often difficult, added job requirements for the individual assigned to be a school anti-bullying specialist; and confusion over bullying and other behaviors. However, having legal requirements and legal recourse defined by state legislation clearly identifies the seriousness of the issue as it relates to student school bullying and is a positive move with respect to attempting to reduce or eliminate student to student bullying in schools.

Types of Bullying

From the inception of Olweus’ research (1978, 1979) and into the next couple of decades, various forms of bullying were identified in the literature and were described
generally as physical and verbal bullying. Physical bullying was described as involving a physical act, such as pushing, hitting, kicking, or punching, and this definition continues today (Klein, 2011; Smith, in Monks & Coyne, 2011). This physically violent form of bullying was believed to have increased in severity since first being observed with incidents of group beatings, shootings, and knifings (Olweus, 1974, 2009). Males were identified as engaging in physical bullying more often than females (Heinemann, 1969; Olweus, 1973, 1979), although this may no longer hold true since more girls now are reportedly involved in physical bullying (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Klein, 2011; Simmons, 2002; Wiseman, 2002). Another, originally-identified form of bullying behavior was known as relational aggression or indirect bullying. This form of bullying involved actions such as spreading rumors, changing friendships, and exclusionary behaviors based on social undesirability (Klein, 2011; Simmons, 2002; Wiseman, 2002). Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen (1992) furthered our understanding of bullying by distinguishing between direct (physical) bullying and indirect bullying (subtle, less easily identified, using others to be involved). Arora (1996) and Smith et al. (2002) conceptualized similar direct bullying as primarily gender-specific to young males and as involving both physically and verbally aggressive behaviors. Whitney and Smith (1993) identified gender-specific characteristics and addressed not only physical and verbal bullying, but what became known as relational bullying. Also known as indirect bullying, relational bullying involved a third party who would be targeted by two or more bullies who were friends or who had some type of relationship. Those who engaged in this form of bullying, usually girls, would leave the targeted person out of their relationship.
Smith (2004) argued that this relational aggression was designed to impact peer relationships negatively. Another similar reference to third party bullying is social aggression (see Underwood, 2002), which causes injury to one’s social standing or self-esteem. A common practice in social aggression is social exclusion, in which an individual is shunned or excluded by peers (Smith, 2004). As is evident from the previously-discussed information, definitions of bullying vary, with some including a single, severe incident and others requiring a condition of repeated negative acts over prolonged periods of time. However, the common elements of all definitions are that bullying is a form of violence and that harm is done to a victim (Klein, 2007; Olweus, 1978, 1979; Hong & Espelago, 2011; Smith, Smith, Osborn, & Samara, 2008).

Within the U.S., books and articles by several feminist authors brought attention to the prevalence and negative impact of relational bullying, also known as relational aggression, and a focus on the more subtle bullying tactics typical of girls. From Judy Blume’s seminal 1974 novel, *Blubber*, about the cruelty of students toward other students (bullying) to Mary Pipher’s *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994), Rachel Simmons’ *Odd Girl Out* (2002), Rosalind Wiseman’s *Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence* (2002), and Peggy Orenstein’s *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* (2011), authors increasingly began to draw attention to the reality that girls, as well as boys, bully. Several writers, such as Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson (1999), who authored *Raising Cain: Saving the Emotional Lives of Boys*, and W.S. Pollach (2000),
author of *Real Boys’ Voices*, brought attention to the fact that peer pressure, stereotyped expectations, and negative behaviors also took an enormous toll on our male students.

Although the research on bullying originated with a focus on male behaviors, bullying has morphed into a topic which includes females. Relational bullying has been shown to be among the most destructive to the targets, is more typical of females than males, and is often more difficult to identify than other forms of bullying due to its covert, hidden nature (Einarsen, 2009; Klein, 2011). Increasing numbers of authors and researchers now have addressed the damaging aspects of bullying for not only girls, but for boys, as well (Klein, 2011; Thomas, 2013; Wiseman, 2013).

The third category of bullying is verbal bullying and involves making derogatory comments, using sarcasm, threatening, name-calling, and cruel teasing. This form of bullying also can be extremely detrimental and damaging to the target. New forms of bullying behaviors and relational violence have developed or have been identified during the past decade. Jessie Klein, author of *Bully Society: School Shootings and the Crisis of Bullying in America’s Schools* (2011) argued that: “Over the last thirty years, school shootings have gone from a rare occurrence to a frequent tragedy... By my count, there have been 166 shootings in schools in the last three decades (p. 3)”. Klein described the acceleration of school violence and school shootings and her statistics are upsetting: 29 shootings from 1979-1988, 52 school shootings from 1989-1998, 63 shootings in schools from 1999-2008, and 22 reported school shootings in 2009 alone (2011, p. 3). Klein (2011) implicated bullying in school shootings: “...the conditions that have helped spark school shootings are not aberrant; they are the norm. The hurtful and violent bullying
with which teens contend has become commonplace and has reached disturbing levels” (p. 3). Young and Ward (2011) supported the assertion that violence and bullying have become commonplace in their review of books for children and young adults and noted that bullying is frequently a topic in the literature. Thus, bullying and other violent behaviors seem to have increased in prevalence and in acceptance as something that occurs with frequency, leading to often blasé attitudes related to the commonplace problem.

The scholarly literature suggests that bullying behaviors of any kind may cause any of the following in those who are targeted: avoidant behaviors, depression, academic issues, attendance problems, physical illness, fear, lack of confidence, and suicide or homicide (Bazelon, 2013; Mills & Carwile, 2009). Thus, although some bullying has changed, as in the case of cyberbullying and the use of increased technology to bully, it remains a serious and potentially life-threatening issue (Klein, 2011; Maier, 2010; Mills & Carwile, 2009; Olweus, 1993, 2000; Poteat & DiGiovanni, 2010). Information about and understanding of the nature of bullying and its consequences continue to evolve.

With the increasing and ubiquitous nature of technology, cyberbullying has become another form of bullying and has demonstrated dangers related to the ability to have messages “go viral,” which means that cruel and hurtful messages can be sent to a great many people with ease and anonymity. Many of the negative psychological and emotional consequences caused by other forms of bullying also result from cyberbullying. Depression, poor attendance, lack of focus, poor grades, self-doubt, fear, and suicide/homicide may be caused by cyberbullying. Cyberbullying, however, is
simple and common. Persons may use cell phones, the Internet, and various other technologies to “harass, intimidate, threaten, embarrass, or torture” others (StopCyberbullyingnow). It is possible for a student to be in a class and to text a negative message to hundreds of people about another student in that class. New terms accompany this new form of bullying; “flaming” means to send abusive or provocative posts and “outing” is the process of sharing another person’s private information (Klein, 2011, p. 115). Hakim and Solomon (2016), in discussing cyberbullying, state that “the sting remains long after the attack” (p. 17) when a bully addresses a target through electronic means, such as email, tweets, texts, or other forms of social media. The pain can last a very long time. Various suggestions for dealing with cyberbullying have been promoted, such as education, technological controls, laws, and reporting mechanisms (Jager, Amado, Matos, & Pessoa, 2010; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tanjen & Campbell, 2010), but cyberbullying continues to be a viable and increasingly utilized medium for bullying behaviors.

**The Children Involved**

Children involved in bullying incidents generally are identified as being bullies or perpetrators, victims or targets, bully-victims, and by-standers or on-lookers (Olweus, 1993, 2000; Poteat & DiGiovanni, 2010; Powell & Ladd, 2010; Real, 2011). Bullies are those who are involved in aggressive acts against others. Traditionally, they were described as dominant, aggressive, and impulsive (Klie, 2008; Olweus, 1973, 1978, 1993, 2000). However, contrary to earlier beliefs about bullies, researchers have found that bullies have friends, are known for positive relationships, and are frequently described as
leaders (Bazelon, 2013; Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, & Garvus, 2009; Klein, 2012). Victims or targets are those who the bullies subject to their bullying behaviors (Olweus, 1993, 2000; Powell & Ladd, 2010; Real, 2011). Considered “victims” in earlier research, these individuals have now been described as “targets” and “survivors.” Many have been found to be able to fight back and to relinquish a victim status. Targets, however, tend to be children who are less socially-accepted by their peers and more generally isolated relative to a lack of peer relationships. Bully-victims are persons who bully, but who also have been the targets of bullies themselves. These bully-victim children tend to be aggressive and impulsive, but have a history of having been bullied (Conners-Burrow, 2009). The by-standers, also referenced as “on-lookers,” are those students who witness acts of bullying, but do nothing to intervene (Olweus, 1993, 2000; Powell & Ladd, 2010; Real, 2011). Academic understandings of bullying as a social practice have become more nuanced with the result involving detailed descriptions of types of bullies, specific characteristics related to targets, and elaborate explanations of bullying behaviors. Recent researchers have posited that a constructivist view of the bully should be used in understanding this perpetrator of violence; most bullies have experienced violence themselves (Cowie et al., 2002). However, the May 2002 Threat Assessment Guide, developed collaboratively by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service, indicated that bullying in schools is a chronic, insidious problem which leads to adults who are involved with violent behaviors.

The prevalence of bullying found by the Safe School Initiative’s examination of targeted school violence and in other recent studies should strongly support ongoing
efforts to reduce bullying in American schools. Educators can play an important role in ensuring that students are not bullied in schools and that schools not only do not permit bullying, but also create processes by which other students can let adults in the school know if students are being bullied (www2.edu.gov/adminis/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.doc, 2002, p 27).

Researchers learned, however, that bullying was not limited to students bullying other students in schools; bullying also occurred among adults in a variety of workplaces.

**Workplace Bullying**

**History and Facts**

With the emphasis on reducing or eliminating bullying among students in schools, little research was conducted until relatively recently on workplace bullying, or “negative workplace acts.” Yamada (2008) indicated “the term ‘workplace bullying’ did not reach the United States until the late 1990s” (p. 50). Attention had begun to be drawn to this topic by mental health specialists nearly a decade earlier. A hierarchal workplace structure, varying “leadership” models, and a lack of laws related to workplace bullying may have contributed to silence on the part of those who experienced workplace aggression (Barber, 2012; Namie, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2003; Workplace Bullying Institute Survey, 2011, 2017). Increased understanding of the negative consequences of bullying behaviors, the knowledge that children who bully often become adult bullies, and an awareness of the financial costs to employers have generated interest in acknowledging workplace bullying as a problem and developing solutions to the problem (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2013; Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010; Yamada, 2008).
Adults also experience and participate in bullying, much of which occurs in the workplace (McCulloch, 2010; Namie, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2011; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2017; Yamada, 2008). The international prevalence of workplace bullying has been well-documented and includes Tada’s (2010) review of a 2007 survey of the Japan Industrial Counselors Association which reported that “81% of industrial counselors were approached about workplace bullying concerns” (p. 57). Gaetano’s work on bullying in the Australian corporate world (2010) indicated that “as many as 70 per cent of employees are currently being bullied or have been bullied in the past” (2010, p. 52). Other researchers have investigated workplace bullying in Croatia, Turkey, South Africa, Canada, Switzerland, and Sweden, indicating that adult workplace bullying is an issue faced by many workers in many countries (Cemaloglu, 2007; Gaetano, 2010; Tada, 2010). Among those researching bullying in other nations are Cemaloglu (2007), who has provided research about the bullying of teachers in Turkey, Gaetano (2010), who researched workplace bullying Australia, and Tada (2010), a Japanese researcher who has provided significant data related to workplace bullying in Japan.

In the report of a U.S. Labor Day Survey from September, 2009, entitled “(Still) Bullying with Impunity” (Workplace Bullying Institute), it was clearly demonstrated that from September, 2008, to September, 2009, little had improved related to workplace bullying in the United States. In over 53% of the instances of reported workplace harassment, according to this survey, the “. . . employer did nothing. The bully experienced no consequences – positive or negative,” and, in fact, in 28.2% of the situations, the “. . . bully was rewarded or promoted, only positive consequences.”
Maravelas (2005), in her book, *How to Reduce Workplace Conflict and Stress*, cited some terrifying societal statistics regarding incivility and bullying:

The American Automobile Association reports that intentional driver-to-driver violence has increased 51 percent in the last decade… SurfControl, which provides Website content filtering, found that Websites based on intolerance, hate, and graphic violence increased 300 percent over the last 10 years… Stress has become so epidemic that the UN declared it “the disease of the 20th century.” (p. 21).

The evidence suggests that workplace bullying has only grown worse since Maravelas reported her statistics more than a decade ago (see, for example, Workplace Bullying Institute Survey, 2017). Other reports of workplace bullying indicate that bullied workers may suffer short-term and/or long-term consequences as a result of having been bullied. These are disturbing statistics for a nation that has made eliminating bullying in schools such a focus.

Although significant literature now exists related to workplace bullying (Duffy & Sperry, 2014; Einarsen et al., 2009; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2013; Namie, 2010, Namie & Namie, 2011; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2011, 2014, 2017; Yamada, 2008), there is little information regarding the workplace bullying experiences of certified professional adults in schools. School staff includes those most often charged with addressing the problems of *student* bullying in schools, but the topic of bullying behaviors among the staff members in K-12 schools has not been well-researched.
Workplace bullying is similar to student to student bullying in schools in that both lack simple definitions or descriptions (Sebok & Rudolph, 2010, p. 28). There are as many types of workplace bullying as student school bullying and, as with addressing bullying in schools, eliminating negative workplace acts in favor of a positive climate may require a great many approaches and interventions. Most of the literature on workplace acts of aggression deal with industrial or corporate sites (Gaetano, 2010; Namie, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2011; Yamada, 2008). To date, schools and school personnel have been underrepresented in the literature related to workplace aggression. The majority of descriptions of the effects of adult to adult bullying are specific to the above-described locations, but may have applicability to the experiences of school personnel. Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002, as cited in Cemaloglu, 2007) hypothesized that “exposure to bullying behaviors within organizations changes the psychological condition of the victim and his/her view of others” (Cemaloglu, 2007, p. 790). Tada of Japan described, “power harassment” in a 2010 article and warned, “It should not be overlooked that bullying and power harassment [affect] people’s mental health and in the worst cases, it is possible to lead to suicide” (p.59). Australian Gaetano (2010) described that “victims of workplace bullying are likely to be suffering some form of psychological impact” (p. 55). When the workplace is a school and the bully is a co-worker or a supervisor, what are the reactions of certified professional school personnel? Cemaloglu’s report (2007) of a study of primary school teachers’ exposure to bullying may have some generalizability to the experiences of certified professional staff in other schools. However, the study was conducted in Turkey and the educational structure
differs from that in the United States, which may be a significant limitation of the study’s correlation with New Jersey schools. The results indicated that 50% of primary school teachers had experienced at least one bullying incident in the past six months. No relationship was found between marital status, gender, or age, and exposure to bullying. In another study by Cooper et al. (2011), which surveyed final year nursing students in relation to their exposure to bullying, the data indicated that nursing school *faculty* were most often indicated as the source of bullying. The authors were unable to assess whether nursing faculty actually participated in bullying behaviors, but the nursing students who participated in the survey *perceived* faculty members as evidencing bullying behaviors. The sources of bullying behaviors experienced in schools is an issue to be examined in order to understand the reactions of those adults who were bullied and the impact on functioning, school climate, and myriad other factors. Certainly, workplace bullying in schools is an area which warrants research in order to determine the effects of adult to adult bullying.

**Bullying as Leadership Behavior**

Bullying can be used as a form of leadership behavior and may be sanctioned as an appropriate supervisory approach (Barber, 2012; Klaussner, 2014; Parsons, 2005; Schnall, 2009). Barber (2012) cited specific forms of workplace bullying, which include: intimidation, unfair criticism, exclusion, withholding information, theft, constant criticism, increased workload or decreased responsibilities, being subjected to negative comments, being made the subject of rumors, and being encouraged to quit. The effects of such behaviors can be costly to the individual, to other staff, and to the organization.
In Barber’s (2012) study of the use of bullying as a management technique in healthcare environments, she found that bullied healthcare workers provided less effective care to their patients, indicating that the consumers of the healthcare workers’ services also were negatively impacted. Because the current study focused on the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools, it is reasonable to question whether, as is true of healthcare workers, school staff functioning deteriorates as a result of having been bullied. “Power asymmetry,” according to Klaussner (2014) can lead to unresolved hostilities, which, in turn, leads to increased supervisor hostility. Without appropriate intervention to correct misperceptions and to resolve conflicts, workplace hostility increases and supervisory hostility becomes very real.

Bullying exists in many workplace environments. What is difficult to discern is whether the bullying is in response to a negative workplace climate or whether bullying behaviors create a negative workplace environment. Hague, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) conducted a study which indicated that stressful, unstructured work climates tended to lead to bullying behaviors. The authors concluded that:

Bullying is likely to prevail in stressful working environments characterized by high levels of interpersonal friction and destructive leadership styles. In addition, bullying is particularly prevalent in situations where the supervisor avoids intervening in and managing such stressful situations. (Hague, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007, p. 220).
Given the enormity of the problem of workplace bullying, several researchers have suggested methods of dealing with workplace bullying and potential solutions to reducing or eliminating this issue. Listed in the next section are some thoughts and suggestions from various researchers for rectifying this prevalent problem.

**Solutions and Suggestions**

For years, Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie have advocated for legislation against workplace bullying through the Workplace Bullying Institute, founded in 1997. Data related to issues of racial discrimination has proven that having and appropriately enacting legislation against such behaviors are effective methods of reducing this type of discrimination (See Title VII, Title IX). The Namies have fervently fought for such legislation against workplace bullying with the belief that this would provide targets with legal recourse, which would assist the targets with being more visible and more verbal about what has happened to them.

It is a given that many who experience bullying seek psychotherapy, which, although while not necessarily stopping the bullying behaviors, may assist with helping the victim/target to cope with what is occurring. Noreen Tehrani, author of *Beyond the Drama of Conflict* (2012), strongly supports the use of psychotherapy in helping targets of bullying, but believes that both the bully and the target are co-constructors of what she terms the *bullying drama*. Tehrani contended that personal insight is critical to the target in determining how to remove herself from the drama of bullying and to find resolution. In Tehrani’s estimation, the role of the counselor is critical, as described below:
Identifying the true nature of the bullying drama is a skilled process requiring a detailed understanding of the life history of the client, an identification of the signs of emotional displacement observed during interactions which take part within the therapeutic relationship, and an awareness of the signals which provide an insight into what may be influencing the current perceptions and behaviors of the client, as abusive relationships involve interactions in which all the players their part. (p. 254).

This is an interesting proposition and one which is in contrast to the positions of many other researchers (Bazelon, 2013; Duffy & Sperry, 2014; Hague et al., 2007; Namie & Namie, 2009), but is worth considering related to bullying drama. Unlike Tehrani, most researchers consider those who are targeted generally to be innocents, persons who are unfairly bullied, or individuals who only the bully believes has a reason for targeting, such as when a highly-salaried employee is removed in order to save money in a company or when the perpetrator is threatened by the work of the target. Tehrani’s approach may help to enlighten the experiences of even the innocent and lead to more rapid understanding and healing for targets.

**Adult-to-Adult Bullying in Schools**

**An Overview**

Teachers, school nurses, administrators, school counselors, and almost all staff who work within a school setting work with a variety of problems and student concerns. In today’s school culture, bullying is an issue to which most students will be exposed and
many students will seek the services of adults in the schools in order to deal with having witnessed an act of bullying, having been bullied, or having been the bully (Edstrom, Frey, Hirschstein, & Snell, 2009; Hernandez & Seem, 2004; Holt & Keyes, 2009; Olweus, 1993, 2005). Disturbingly, many more students, however, will choose not to report having been bullied or having witnessed bullying in a school. A large percentage of school staff members also choose to not admit to witnessing student to student bullying events or choose not to report them (Drew, 2011; Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie, 2003). As established earlier in this chapter, each person involved in some aspect of bullying, whether as the target/victim, by-stander, or bully, may suffer one or more negative effects ranging from losing a sense of safety in school, diminished functioning and achievement, tardiness and absenteeism, psychological distress, and/or physical complaints (Esbensen & Carson, 2009). Thus, an examination of the impact of adult to adult bullying in schools may provide a link between student to student school bullying and more generalized workplace bullying, yielding data for schools to consider in relation to employee health, student functioning, and a path to success for all schools. Negative workplace acts, or bullying in the workplace, as argued earlier, is a problem with significant negative consequences. Adults experiencing workplace bullying may suffer similar or identical negative effects to those experienced by schoolchildren, but the impact on families, employment, financial status, and general well-being may be even farther-reaching for adults (Namie & Namie, 2005, 2011).

What are the impacts of bullying in the workplace for certified professional school personnel related to their work with children? How does the experience of
workplace bullying affect a teacher’s, school nurse’s, school counselor’s, or administrator’s ability to address bullying issues with students? These are questions for which there are few answers, but which the literature is beginning to address. A 2009 report of a study conducted by Rosalyn S. Schnall and published in her book, *When Teachers Talk: Principal Abuse of Teachers*, provided verbatim reports from over 500 interviews with teachers regarding principal mistreatment and principal abuse of power. This is a limited study with the purpose of trying to explain teachers’ perceptions of the impact of being under the supervision of a bad principal, but the study brings to light the emotions, thoughts, and impacts of poor school administrative leadership in the Chicago City Public School system. Among the agreed-upon effects were psychological and physical consequences to a teacher’s health, teacher ineffectiveness, and significant negative impacts to the students. Although the focus of the study was on principal-teacher relationships, valuable information was provided related to adult to adult bullying and harassment in schools. In a study by Olson (2008), conducted as a requirement for her doctoral degree, she shared a focus similar to that of the current study, but examined staff relationships in K-6 schools as reported solely by teachers, where in my study, I interviewed and examined the reports given by various certified professional staff members in K-12 schools and includes principals as the targets of bullying. Olson (2008) found that “workplace bullying is alive and well in K-6 schools operating in California’s Central Valley” (p. 133). Of the thirty-three teachers who had participated in Olson’s study, 67% reported having observed or experienced that a co-worker’s professional status was threatened, 73% had observed or experienced a co-worker’s personal standing
being damaged, 64% had seen a co-worker being isolated, 61% witnessed a co-worker being asked to do excessive work, and 61% said they had seen a co-worker become “destabilized”, which would involve setting someone up to fail through a variety of methods (p. 87). These are all bullying behaviors which Olson (2008) showed to be prevalent and visible in one K-6 California schools district. This research is valuable and adds significant data to the field.

It is important to understand the impact of workplace bullying on adults in schools and how such experiences impact effectiveness in general. Identifying the targets, assessing workplace climate, and addressing adult-to-adult bullying in schools may have a significant effect on reducing bullying behaviors among the students, for example. Roland and Galloway (2004) found that the schools with the highest rates of bullying had the lowest scores on “professional culture variables,” such as teacher satisfaction with school leadership, professional consensus, and cooperation. Conversely, the schools with low rates of student bullying had the highest rates of teacher satisfaction, cooperation, and positive professional climates. In another study, Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O’Brien (2009) found evidence for a social disorganization perspective related to school bullying. Some of the predictors of school disorganization included high student mobility, high student poverty, high student-teacher ratios, and poor attendance rates. The authors found that the most “disorganized” schools had the greatest number of bullying/school violence incidents and the schools which were characterized as “organized” had reduced rates of bullying. It seems reasonable that further research related to school climate factors and adult-to-adult bullying in schools is warranted.
Bullying, Diversity, and Differences

Authors of many multicultural works have addressed bullying and harassment as issues which impact marginalized populations to a greater degree than those of the dominant culture (Liu, 2011; Pedersen, 2000; Schwarzbaum & Thomas, 2008). In work environments, supervisor-employee relationships which evidence a power differential and a demeaning attitude on the part of the person who is supervising often lead to discrimination and harassment. This has been well-documented in the literature, indicating that a lesser status may make one vulnerable. Liu (2011) cited data by Attree (2006), who found that impoverished children “...were not fashionable or trendy, and bullying and teasing were often described as experiences by children in poverty” (p. 145). This type of experience is referenced by Liu (2011) as “classism traumas,” and is not limited to the experiences of children. In adults who experienced childhood or adolescent bullying, Liu (2011) found that the trauma continued, resulting in heightened sensitivity to experiences which were reminders of the original bullying and generated acute and vivid memories. Such experiences support Baker Miller’s work, cited in Tatum (2003), regarding the power of dominant groups and of individuals belonging to dominant groups. As cited in Tatem (2003) Baker Miller believed the identification of subordinate groups and individuals are “labeled as defective or substandard in significant ways” (p. 23). Such experiences have negatively impacted African Americans, Latinas/Latinos and Hispanics, LGBTQ persons, individuals with disabilities, women, Native Americans, documented and undocumented immigrant groups, the elderly, and others (Paulle, 2013).
In 1959, John Howard Griffin decided to engage in a sociological experiment and to write about it. He darkened his skin and led the life of a Black man (“Negro” in Griffin’s words) in the South. The resulting book, *Black Like Me*, was published in 1960. Griffin described his book as “[tracing] the changes that occur to heart and body and intelligence when a so-called first-class citizen is cast on the junkheap of second-class citizenship” (Preface). *Black Like Me* is an example of the relationship between issues of multiculturalism and bullying. In another instance, noted author James Baldwin, a Black man (in Simonson & Walker, eds., 1988), also connects the world of the Black child with bullying and harassment when he says:

But a black child, looking at the world around him, though he cannot know quite what to make of it, is aware that there is a reason why his mother works so hard, why his father is always on edge. . . . . . He is aware that there is some terrible weight on his parents’ shoulders, which menaces him. And it isn’t long – in fact it begins when he is in school (author emphasis) before he discovers the shape of his oppression” (p. 5).

And this child’s oppression also will most likely take the form of taunts and angry, bullying words from the White students. A female Jamaican author, also published in Simonson’s and Walker’s book, speaks of the shades of blackness and how the darker students in her Jamaican school were treated differently from those with lighter skin tones (p. 69). The homosexual or lesbian student in a school similarly may face bullying from peers who are unsure of their emerging sexuality and the special needs student who speaks differently or who learns differently certainly may also become a target (Estell, et
al., 2009). Cultural differences often lead to student-to-student victimization, but also may account for adult-to-adult bullying in schools.

Cemaloglu (2007), in a study of primary school teachers’ exposure to bullying in Turkey utilized an adapted form of the Negative Acts Questionnaire Scale (NAQ), designed by Olweus. Study results indicated that 50% of primary school teachers experienced bullying, with bullying described as “systematic aggression by people making one or more persons their target” (Hoel et al., 1999, in Cemaloglu, p. 791). These findings indicated that classroom teachers (those working for one to five years in elementary schools) were bullied more often than branch teachers, who were teachers working with grades six to eight. Gender, age, and marital status did not impact the study results (Cemaloglu, 2007). Cemaloglu’s research into adult school-related bullying was among the first to investigate the topic explored in my study, yielding new and provocative data about what occurs in schools.

**Myths, Scholastic Fallacies, and a Rationale**

In chapter one, I mentioned myths about schools and about education as possible contributors to the lack of research about adult to adult bullying in schools. A myth is defined as a widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief; a widely held misconception; a misrepresentation of the truth (OED online, 2014). Research into the historical assumptions and expectations which have led to the continuation of school mythology makes it clear why school personnel may have been off limits in the study of school bullying.
The United States’ system of compulsory education, enacted in the 1800s and exclusively provided to White and wealthy American males at the time, was tied to both religion and politics. There was “a general agreement that common public schooling was a powerful American good, or at least an ideal protecting American democracy” (Ferrin, 2011, pp. 205-206). Horace Mann’s early 19th century citation of then-Massachusetts Governor Everett’s proclamation that “men who will be able to perform their civic duties as jurors would be assured through the education provided in public schools” (in Ferrin, 2011, pp. 206-207) further supports that citizenship and politics were educational aims, although women and persons of color were excluded from educational opportunity. John Dewey’s 1899 publication of *The School and Society* aligned the expectations for schooling to the “hopes and dreams of what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child and what each community would want for all children” (in Ferrin, 2011, p. 208), but, again, Dewey was referring to education for wealthy males. Morals, ethics, and religious tenets also became important elements of educational curricula (Ferrin, 2011), a legacy that in many respects has continued into contemporary education in the United States. In 1922, Dewey argued that “the school system represents not thinking but the domination of thought by the inertia of immemorial customs” (p. 89), a statement against the continuation of educational fallacies. Dewey described formal education as engineering, countered the “docility” of students and of educators, and argued for “courageous imagination,” and morality in the art and science of education (Dewey, 1922, pp. 89-91). Early in the American system of education, Dewey already was arguing for not accepting the status quo and for recognizing educational lacks.
Unfortunately, public education has too often simply accepted what has always been done and rejected an unbiased and honest examination of “what is.” This is yet another argument for the value of the current research contained herein and against the maintenance of some school myths in favor of a more honest understanding of what actually occurs in schools.

Education has changed in many ways from the days of early educational philosophers and practitioners, such Horace Mann and John Dewey, men known today as among the “fathers of American education” for their revolutionary work related to their beliefs about educational practice. Educational movements have come and gone and, with increasing diversity related to religion, race, socio-economic status (SES), gender, IQ, culture, ability and age, expectations for education have both broadened and narrowed (Essex, 2011; Ferrin, 2011; Palumbo & Levitt, 2011). Those seeking a specific type of education may choose to send children to private institutions which espouse specific beliefs (e.g., Christian, Muslim, Orthodox Jewish schools; technical schools; selective preparatory schools); other parents may choose or have no option other than sending their children to public schools. Many public institutions mirror the values and expectations of the communities in which they are located, leading to significant variation and inequality. Interestingly, accountability has been described as yet another, current myth in Ullucci’s and Spencer’s 2009 article, *Unraveling the myths of accountability: a case study of the California High School Exit Exam*. The authors explain that high stakes testing has been accepted as providing valid assessments which can motivate students and raise poor student achievement, but that this is yet another
myth (p. 165). This particular expectation has placed teachers and administrators in the position of assuring specific measurable yearly achievement increases (see No Child Left Behind and The Race to the Top legislation), something that might be impossible based on a variety of factors (SES, IQ, learning issues). In another article about high poverty and education, Paulle (2013) uses the term *scholastic fallacies* to describe the untruths, or myths, that are perpetuated about education. Regardless of the term, the continuation of myths, or of scholastic fallacies, about the role of education and the roles of those professionals in education have perhaps led to a closed-door approach to the topic of adult to adult bullying in schools because myths provide comfortable and acceptable explanations for maintaining the status quo within school structures. It is important to know whether bullying in schools exists among certified professional staff and not just among the students in schools due to the fact that the negative consequences of bullying can be costly, that students witness and may model school staff behaviors, and simply because there may be a more positive and more effective means of running a school. The relationship between school climate and student or adult school bullying has been shown to be an important factor related to bullying and is described in detail below.

**School Climate and the Importance of Climate Change**

Although there are different definitions for culture and climate, most literature uses the terms interchangeably. *School culture*, as defined by Green and Meyer (1991) and cited in Knobel (1999, pp. 51-52), typically refers to the recurring patterns of social action and negotiation that are common to a particular group . . . what members of a social group come to know, expect,
understand, produce and do is learned from participating in and observing how members participate in the everyday events that make up the life of the social group.

*School climate* can be defined as “the quality and character of school life” (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182). Because “the quality and character of school life” involves “recurring patterns of social action” and are “what members of a social group come to know, expect, understand, produce and do,” it can be assumed that school culture and school climate are synonymous; both are used interchangeably in this paper. There is significant evidence to support the impact of school climate on student behavior and achievement (Borkar, 2016; Demir, 2015; Godfrey, 2016; McCarley, Peters, Decman, 2016), as well as the effects of school climate on student to student bullying (Bosworth & Jenkins, 2014; Konald, 2014; Olweus, 1994, 1997), and with regard to parent and teacher behaviors and attitudes (Bower & Parsons, 2016; Constantino, 2003; Malinen, & Savolainen, 2016; Rhodes, Camic, Milburn, & Lowe, 2009). A logical conclusion might be that bullying among adults in schools would be impacted by school climate or that bullying among staff members would impact the school climate. The current research-based belief is that a positive school climate reduces bullying in schools. Bosworth and Judkins (2014), for example, claimed:

Preventing bullying requires a comprehensive approach that includes a focus on school climate. . . Viewing bullying as a systemic school climate issue expands the options for prevention and intervention (pp. 300-301).
According to the above-referenced authors, several school climate factors have been cited by researchers as impacting the types and degrees of bullying seen in schools (see McNeely, Nonemaker, & Blum, 2002; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013). Structure and support is one crucially important factor. Multiple researchers (Bazelon, 2013; McNeely et al., 2002; Thompson, 2017) commented on the need for a positive, structured school climate to assure students and school staff of an understandable, consistent environment and policies. It has been demonstrated that such a climate helps to reduce bullying behaviors. As described here, the school and/or school district environment has a great deal to do with whether bullying exists, the degree to which it is evident, whether bullying behaviors are encouraged or discouraged, and who the bullies and targets are. In the next section, I describe my use of a feminist perspective, one I believe would not condone bullying, for this study and how feminism is relevant to the data collected.

A Feminist Perspective

A Brief History of Feminism

In order to fully understand feminist theory in research, it is important to understand the history of what are now referred to as the feminisms, a term which acknowledges the many different feminist stages and perspectives (Freedman, 2002; Phillips & Cree, 2014). Many people think of early feminism, or First Wave Feminism (1840s to 1920s), as a time when women and some men vehemently stood against low marriage ages for women; the lack of a woman’s rights to higher education; bans against women being educated in accountancy, law, and medicine; a failure to allow women
property rights and equal contract rights, and allowing incest. During the First Wave of feminism, women were deemed different, but sought equal, albeit different rights. Those involved in First Wave Feminism still represented some of the social mores of their time despite their criticism of the lack of the right to vote and tended to enact classism, racism, and homophobia in their everyday lives (Brisolara, Seigart, & SenGupta, 2014; Freedman, 2002; Phillips & Cree, 2014).

Second Wave Feminism, also known as the Women’s Liberation Movement, occurred from the early 1960s to the late 1980s in most English-speaking countries. This movement reflected some of the freedoms many women had experienced during the Second World War (employment, single parenting), as well as the reproductive freedom accorded them by the development of The Pill, an easy and relatively fail-proof form of contraception. The additional impact of the Vietnam War led many women and men to not only stand for women’s rights, but also against the war. Second Wave Feminism reflected the concerns of primarily White, well-educated, and financially-secure women as they fought for greater equity in employment and education, increased awareness and laws related to domestic violence and rape, and enhanced reproductive choices, including abortion (Brisolara et al., 2014; Freedman, 2002; Phillips & Cree, 2014).

With their concerns and voices largely silenced during the first two waves of feminism, Third Wave Feminism became more individual as persons of color, LGBTQ persons, individuals with disabilities, people from various social classes, and non-conforming people related to a variety of issues became involved and visible. This was a feminism in which many feminisms were accepted and in which there was an increasing
emphasis on including men in the movement (Brisolara et al., 2014; Freedman, 2002; Phillips & Cree, 2014).

Fourth Wave feminism dates from 2008 to the present day. This feminism is defined by technology and the media as they relate to business, education, politics, and entertainment in an attempt to eradicate misogyny. Fourth Wave Feminism is less rigid, more non-judgmental than previous feminisms, and has an enhanced focus on equality, believing inequality to be the root of all problems related to human behaviors. With the ability to use blogs, to communicate in a nano-second, and to share information with millions, Fourth Wave Feminists exist and benefit from an “online universe” which empowers them (Brisolara et al., 2014; Freedman, 2002, Phillips & Cree, 2014). It is with great regard for these various feminisms and a desire to be a voice for equality that I chose feminist theory for this study.

**Feminist Theories**

There is not one feminist theory, according to the work of Brisolara, Seigart, and SenGupta (2014), but there are numerous feminist theories which can be explored and utilized in feminist research. Brisolara (2014) explained: “‘Feminist theory’ is a broad term that describes the application of feminist thought and ideas to a range of disciplines and discourses (p. 3).” As such, feminist theories are complex and provide different lenses through which to examine androcentric beliefs and practices, power and gender inequalities, and women’s interests and concerns. In short, “Most feminist theories are applied [to research] with the intent of contributing to the promotion of greater equity, the establishment of equal rights and opportunities, and the ending of oppression,” according
to Brisolara (2014, p. 4). A brief review of several feminist theories in relation to conducting research follows here.

Feminist empiricism is described as *not a theory* (Brisolara, 2014, p. 5), but as a reference point which expands a positivist view, with a focus on cause and effect and prediction and control. Feminist empiricism examines communities as a way of knowing and historically has focused on previously unexamined women’s experiences, such as relationships, outside of the home interests, childrearing, and sex (ibid., pp. 5-6).

Another feminist theory is Standpoint Theory, which holds that *where we stand*, or where we are located politically, socially, emotionally, relationally, racially, ethnically, culturally, and in terms of gender identity, impacts power dynamics and our knowledge (Brisolara, 2014, pp. 6-8). This theory posits that our beliefs and approaches, or the *stand* we take, impacts who we are and how we are situated in the world. Critical Feminist Theory is an anti-positivist approach which examines social structures, the presence of domination and exploitation, and works to consider alternative social paradigms (Brisolara, 2014, pp. 8-9). Other theories, such as Postmodern and Poststructural Theories acknowledge the role of the researcher in the research, critique modern social institutions as beds of power and privilege, and encourage critical thinking about dominant perspectives. Postcolonial Theory posits that Western culture and a Western perspective are biased. With a focus on oppression and power, Postcolonial Theory attempts to uncover and resist the biases typical of Western scholarship. Yet another feminist theoretical approach, Global Theory looks at issues such as international adoption, low-income all-female jobs, sex trafficking, and other global issues which may disadvantage
women from non-Western and third-world countries. This theory has a focus on institutional power, economies, and policy. Several other theories are race- and culture-specific. Black, Chicana, Indigenous, and other Race-Based Theories have attempted to correct the failure of academics to include these populations in feminist research. By attending to the intersection of difference, power, and identity, these theories increased their presence in feminist research and forced White, largely privileged, Western feminists to consider factors such as race, class, poverty, invisibility, and privilege more vividly and more honestly. Theories which are defined as Sex, Sexuality, Queer, and Lesbian Theories also have provided greater participant inclusion for feminist research. Queer Theory fought to disrupt accepted normative rules regarding gender and institutionalized views of women, sex, sexuality, and gender. Indeed, scholars like Brisolara (2014), Freedman (2002), and Phillips and Cree (2014) go so far as to argue that many feminist researchers reconsidered their views and their work related to the fluidity and political focus of Queer Theory (Brisolara, 2014, pp. 5-14). I believe that each feminism needed to be considered in relation to what the participants in my study shared; that politics, socio-cultural mores, and gender issues had influences on each individual’s story. Feminism, however, is not the only factor to be considered in this study; learning about the existence of peaceful societies and understanding how they function provides an alternate view of social behavior and another option to violence and bullying.
Peaceful Societies

As a final section of this chapter, it seems important to address violence versus peaceful societies. Most Western cultures believe that violent conflict is a part of human nature, that war is inevitable, and that having an armed force is preventative (Bonta, 1996). However, peaceful societies have existed and several tenets of their social structure are worth identifying since these may be related to bullying reduction.

Bonta (1996), author of *Conflict Resolution Among Peaceful Societies: The Culture of Peacefulness*, examined 24 of the approximately 40 identified peaceful societies in order to assess how they managed conflict and maintained peace. He learned that, above all, such societies “have a highly negative view of conflict” (p. 403). Additionally, peaceful societies handled their own internal disputes, rather than looking to outside sources; they rarely punish, although ostracism might be used; and conflicts with other societies were handled as they handled internal issues. Sponsel (1996), author of *The Natural History of Peace: A Positive View of Human Nature and Its Potential*, also argued that “peace is alive, well, and frequently enough observed to justify a view of human nature that is optimistic and positive” (p. 95). Sponsel (1996) went on to provide a detailed historical record of researcher biases related to peaceful and warring societies, as well as to the generalized fascination with violence that has dominated much of the literature. He disputed the hypothesis that violence is human nature and discussed the necessary steps to becoming peaceful and non-violent. It is Sponsel’s (1996) assertion that humans, as well as other beings, can live together in a peaceful, cooperative, and collaborative manner that has particular appeal to this study’s author.
A later reference, the 2013 edition of the online Peaceful Societies archive, identified 25 peaceful societies across the globe. This resource described peaceful societies as groups of people “who effectively foster interpersonal harmony and who rarely permit violence or warfare to interfere with their lives” (p. 1 of 3). The only peaceful societies identified for the United States were the Amish, the Inuit, and the Hutterites. However, given the existence of non-violent societies, it seems plausible that human behaviors in all societies and situations could be changed and that people could learn to manage conflicts peacefully. Thus, it also is plausible that bullying behaviors can be eradicated.

**Conclusion**

As discussed in this chapter, the literature suggests that student to student bullying in schools and adult workplace bullying are significant concerns, but that little research has been conducted related to adult to adult bullying in schools. This study seeks to provide greater understanding of the bullying behaviors of adults toward one another in schools, of who is targeted, of how the bullying is dealt with personally and institutionally, and of what can be done to solve this problem. The next chapter specifically reviews the methodology used to conduct the current research.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This study is best described as an emerging issues study because the study has provided one of the few opportunities for adult certified professional school personnel to share their experiences of having been bullied by another adult in a school setting, an area in which surprisingly little research has been published to date. “Emerging issues” research is aligned with the interview work of Bourdieu (1993; cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 63), where the previously unheard voices of participants emerge to tell their stories, leading to new awarenesses, concepts, and theories about human behavior.

Pierre Bourdieu was a 20th century researcher, anthropologist, sociologist, and politician who developed the concept of social capital. This was a new concept, an emerging issues concept, which Bourdieu uncovered through his research of the differentials of power in societies. Until Bourdieu published his research (see, for example, The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture, 1979; Outline of a Theory of Practice, 1977; Forms of Capital, The Weight of the World, 1986; Social Suffering in Contemporary Society, 1999), capital, or what an individual owns that is of benefit had primarily been thought of related to financial capital. Bourdieu learned that various types of social capital exist for people, based on place and situation of birth, educational opportunities, race or ethnicity, cultural background, and/or financial status. The concept of social capital was a newly-discovered concept from which Bourdieu posited a new theory and, thus, was an emerging issue. Because so little has been researched regarding adult to adult school bullying, this, too, is an emerging issue (Somekh & Lewin, 2011,
ADULT TO ADULT BULLYING

That being said, Wertz et al. (2011), authors of *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, considered *every* qualitative research study to be emergent and state:

> The most exciting and mysterious moment of qualitative analysis is that in which insight is evident. It is exciting because knowledge is generated; progress is made in answering the research question or solving the research problem. Whether dramatic or ordinary, this involves something of an “aha!” moment on the part of the researcher. This moment of research is mysterious for many reasons, partly because the knowledge is emergent; it arises from the unknown… (p. 371).

With attention to Wertz et al.’s (2011) views, I listened to and examined the experiences of adult to adult (workplace) bullying in schools, as reported by eleven female volunteer study participants. Due to using interviews alone to collect data, this is an emergent narrative study in which the participants’ accounts reveal and describe their experiences of having been bullied. The lack of published research in the area of adult to adult bullying in school contexts (as established in the previous chapter) indicates that there is a need for better understanding the nature and prevalence of adult to adult school bullying in K-12 schools. The present study adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing overt recognition of adult to adult bullying in schools; that is, acknowledging formally that this behavior and relationship does happen and thereby creating space within which people can be heard. This was done with the purpose of adding to the research and knowledge about bullying in school contexts and developing an understanding that such behaviors can create cultures of disrespect, closed-functioning, and maladaptive
behaviors. People’s stories need to be heard and reported in order to locate similarities and differences across experiences, to examine the consequences of such behaviors, and, as stated by noted qualitative research author Johnny Saldaña (2013) “to understand the diverse patterns and complex meanings of social life” (pp.177-178). Thus, the present study aimed at collecting the accounts of professional certified school staff who reported experiencing bullying from other adults in school contexts by means of two rounds of in-person interviews. Data were analyzed by means of coding. This analytic work generated three themes, which are reported in the following chapter. In this chapter, I outline the study design and methodology used in this research.

**Design of Study**

The current study is a “basic” qualitative investigation which utilizes multiple semi-structured interviews to enable participants to recount their experiences in as much detail as possible. Merriam (2009) describes a “basic” qualitative study such as this as comprising “not a phenomenological, grounded theory, narrative analysis, or critical or ethnographic study” (p. 22), but, rather, that “the overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p.23). Meaning-making is central to qualitative research. Through interviews, and the participants’ and my uses of language, meaning was made from the reported experiences of the interviewees as they relate to having been bullied by an adult in a school in New Jersey (Somekh & Lewin, 2011). As the researcher, my role and responsibility were to consistently examine and interpret meanings based on what had been shared in the participant interviews and to do so honestly, respectfully, and with fidelity (Fahie, 2014; Saldaña, 2013).
An interview-based design was ideal for the present study because I was not able to observe the actual events of bullying in participants’ lives due to these events having occurred in the past. Interviews thus were used to “recall” the experiences, feelings, and consequences of having been bullied by another adult in a school setting as reported by the eleven certified school personnel who willingly offered to participate in this study. Using interviews to elicit rich descriptions of experiences is common within counseling and, historically, the authors of numerous studies in the social sciences fields have relied on this qualitative approach (see, for example, Bellah & Tipton, 1985; deTocqueville, 1835; Diaz & Greene, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Hays & Wood, 2013; Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Pederson, 2002). Denzin wrote in 2001 that interviewing had been used for approximately 100 years (p. 23) and referenced Holstein’s and Gubrium’s 1995 estimate that 90 percent of all social science research has relied on the use of interviews (cited in Denzin, 2001, p. 23). Thus, it is easy to argue that the practice of interviewing is as common within social science research and that designing an interview-based study is defensible in the case of my own study.

There are rich examples of interview-based studies on which to build a rationale. For example, Bateson’s 1989 text, Composing a Life, utilized interviews with women to provide the thick descriptions that formed the substance of her investigation of the successful lives of five women. In 1993, Pierre Bourdieu published La Misere du Monde, conveying a chilling reality of injustices experienced by the poor in France, a then infrequently-discussed topic which relied on the direct narratives gleaned through interviews for insight. Bourdieu’s treatise on societal inequalities was later translated
into English as *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (1999), a text that has been used by social workers, psychologists, counselors, students and scholars since its original publication. Carol Gilligan is yet another researcher and feminist who had a significant impact on the social sciences and feminist theory development. By interviewing women in varying developmental stages of their lives, Gilligan helped to inform a new, non-male-focused theory of moral reasoning development which contradicted the moral reasoning theory of her mentor Kohlberg and provided important insights into differences between female and male development. The results were reported in her controversial and welcomed text, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (1982). Interestingly, the fact that only women came forward to be interviewed for my study adds to the significance of the feminist focus in the current study, but leaves questions for future research regarding the lack of male participation.

Bateson, Bourdieu, Gilligan, and many others were able to successfully construct what Denzin later referenced as *creating an understood culture* (2001, p. 24) through the use of interviews. According to Denzin (2001), interviews and interview transcripts provide useful accounts of individuals’ lives and, accordingly, of their cultures. It is through the words of the interviewees that we can understand them with respect to our research questions.

Authors of many more-recently published research methodology texts (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011; Saldana, 2015; Somekh & Lewin, 2011) have advocated for the value of
qualitative interviewing as an acceptable and trustworthy data collection method which contributes to social research by attending to the voices of those impacted by a topic. The social justice focus possible in interview-based research supports the design of the present study, too, and means that social science research can be used to not only inform, but to offer suggestions for improvement and change; this mirrors my view of the value of research and a key role for the present study. This is yet another aspect of the potential contributions of those interviewed in this study and is closely aligned with the feminist paradigm I have used to frame this study.

**Why Feminist Theory and Methods?**

The feminist theoretical framing established for this study has a long history of using multiple participant interviews to collect robust data about people’s experiences (see, for example, hooks, 1984, 1994, 2000; Kunin, 2012; Baker Miller, 1993; Deavere Smith, 1992, 1993, 2009). Stated simply in Kunin’s text, *The New Feminist Agenda* (2012), feminism means “equality” (p. 8). Issues of power, ability, rights, responsibility, gender, morality, and ethics are involved in utilizing a feminist framework in research (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Harnois, 2013). A feminist paradigm critiques and avoids hierarchal structures, is open about perceived power differentials, and involves the co-construction of information about participants’ lives and awareness of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions through collaboration, mutual respect, and an acknowledgement of mutual values (hooks, 2013; Julia, 2000; Worell & Remer, 2003). In her essay examining the lives of Appalachian women, Harper (in Julia, 2000) offered the following for consideration in qualitative feminist research:
1. Eliminate false dichotomies.

2. Re-conceptualize power.

3. Value process equally with product.

4. Validate renaming by allowing each individual to indicate personal value.

5. Consider the personal is political (In Julia, 2000, pp. 81-83).

The feminist researcher Louise Fortman (2014) believes reciprocity, or giving back, to be an important element of field work and I have utilized this approach in my work with my participants. According to Fortman, giving back:

- sits at the intersection of three literatures addressing research methods and methodologies: feminist theories, participatory research, and the democratization of science. Each of these recognizes the non-academics who make research possible and rejects the idea of academic researchers being the sole producers of knowledge (p. 1).

Those interviewed for this study and I co-created the interview formats and results. Examples of this were the back and forth between each participant and me that led to the sharing of rich and authentic information. My questions and prompts helped to shape what each interviewee divulged and what is reported in this dissertation, but the interviewees’ responses and further questioning led to heightened awarenesses and evaluations for each person involved. Several participants commented on the realizations for them that resulted from participating in the interview process. Just as I needed to examine my own mind sets, biases and prejudices throughout this research process, I needed to remember that those I interviewed were providing me with the opportunity to
create something and that I would need to give back, not only during the interviews by listening closely and by offering empathy and understanding, but by considering future research and program opportunities, as described in chapter six.

As a researcher, I believe there is no better method for examining adult bullying in schools than to ask a person to share her or his experience of having been bullied; to listen carefully to what is said; to consider their tone of voice, the rapidity of speech, the pauses, and the times when there may be no words; and to attend to all non-verbal communication taking place concurrently, such as a raised eyebrow, a shrug, or a smile, in order to learn that person’s story; I did all of this in the process of interviewing each participant. To be allowed into the participants’ worlds and to read and re-read their stories in order to ascribe meaning is a privilege; each interview needed to be handled with reverence and care. This was not an objective task, but, rather, a subjective examination of a subjective experience. Each of the stories of those who were bullied by other adults in schools has been carefully and meticulously examined. I looked at how the target, my participant, and the bully behaved toward one another, as reported by each interviewed individual. I examined, among other issues and concerns, whether age, role issues, relationship dynamics, power relations, and the like impacted the experiences of those who volunteered to participate in this study. With this in mind, examining the combined reported experiences of study participants will, hopefully, enhance researcher knowledge of bullying behaviors and target responses to same.
Participant Selection

Potential participants were accessed through my contacts with professors, assistant professors, and others within the university community, as well as through contacts with people I personally know. In-person conversations were the most reliable form of accessing participants, although emails and the handout describing my study (Appendix B) were of some value. For example, all professors in the Montclair State University Counseling Department received an email description of my study with a request for potential participants and email responses resulted in two interviewees. The participant pool was specifically designed to include persons who are or who have been certified professional staff members in New Jersey K-12 schools. Thus, my approach relied heavily on snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is when a research sample, or participant pool, is arrived at through an individual’s recommendation which may lead to other potential participant recommendations from other individuals (Merriam, 2009; Saldana, 2013). It is a well-recognized method for obtaining participants who have very specific characteristics or lived experiences. Therefore, it suited my own study purposes well because participants were aware of my research guidelines and were able to suggest other participants with these characteristics.

In all, 11 women agreed to participate. Eleven interviewees were a sufficient number based on the pre-determined 8-12 which had been recommended by my committee and which met qualitative research parameters, such as saturation. I felt I had a sufficient number of persons to interview, all of whom met the selection criteria of needing to be or to have been certified professional K-12 school staff members who at
some time experienced adult to adult bullying in a school in which they were working in New Jersey. Interestingly, one potential participant who had been identified by another individual who had witnessed this person being bullied declined to participate and stated that she, the potential participant, had never experienced bullying by another adult in a school setting. Also of interest is the fact that I could have had many more interviewees. The mere mention of my study topic frequently led to individuals telling me that they would be happy to participate or, if they had not been bullied personally, that they could give me the name of a person, of five people, or of more who they knew had been bullied; many of these individuals had witnessed others being bullied. I was intrigued by the potential for a much larger study. However, time constraints and initial study considerations provided the rationale for only using 11 in this research study.

Participant roles varied and represented currently working and retired teachers, a teacher and a school counselor who left the field, administrators, a school nurse, Child Study Team members, and current school counselors. Some of the participants had held several roles and had been bullied as they worked in various positions. My choice to use only participants with a history of working in New Jersey was deliberate and based on several factors. The first concerns the fact that New Jersey has been at the forefront of anti-bullying efforts in the U.S. related to student to student school bullying and anti-bullying legislation focused on student bullying in schools was signed into law in 2010 by New Jersey Governor Christopher Christie. The next factor taken into consideration was that I am a New Jersey resident. As such, I wanted to be able to conduct face-to-face interviews without incurring significant expenses on my part or the part of the
interviewees. I also believe that my history of having worked for 33 years in New Jersey public schools could provide an enhanced understanding of the nature of schools, the hierarchal structure, and the bureaucracies and legalities faced by those I interviewed. At the same time, this is one more instance in which I needed to be reflective and consider my personal experiences, biases, and assumptions in order to not impact the reporting of each interviewee’s experience (Ivey, 1994; Merriam, 2009). Additionally, my status as a doctoral candidate at a New Jersey state university provided access to a potential participant pool with connections to individuals who may have worked or who currently work in New Jersey schools.

As mentioned above, participant solicitation successfully occurred through word of mouth snowball sampling. Snowball sampling, in which potential participants are able to identify other potential participants, is the nonprobabilistic, purposeful sampling procedure which was first used for this study (Ivey, 1994; Merriam, 2009; Remler & Ryzin, 2011). Nonprobabilistic sampling, as defined by Merriam (2009) does not allow for generalization, in contrast to quantitative random sampling, and “is the method of choice for most qualitative research” (p. 77). The purposeful aspect of the sampling procedure is that all participants experienced bullying by another adult in a New Jersey K-12 school setting and they also must be or must have been certified professional staff members (e.g., retirees, persons who left a position).

Initially, although the goal was to have 8-12 study participants, I had hoped to access a much larger number of potential participants to allow me to select participants representative of gender, age, school position, and ethnic diversity, potentially enriching
the results. In order to accomplish this sampling goal, I intentionally reached out to schools within urban, rural, and suburban communities with known elements of diversity within the school faculty population. As a white, middle class woman, I needed to ensure that my contacts were as diverse as possible to assure that a variety of voices were being heard and that my voice would not dominate. One method of attempting to accomplish this goal was be to consult the New Jersey Department of Education’s statistics (www.state.nj.us/education/data/fact.htm, which was unsuccessful due to confidentiality issues and the largesse of the data: I chose not to pursue the resource since I was being given a sufficient number of names through snowball sampling. I also contacted specific university faculty, such as those who teach in the department of education and the department of counseling or those who teach multicultural courses. This was successful in accessing one Asian-heritage participant, as well as an interviewee with an African-American/Haitian background. Colleagues in my Ph.D. program also were helpful and provided the names of persons who agreed to be interviewed after fully informing them of the nature of the study. All of the participants were female and I decided to stop looking for additional diversity once I had 11 individuals who agreed to be interviewed. I was pleased with the diversity represented. There were three White Jewish women, one Latina, one Asian, one African American/Haitian, and five White women of various European backgrounds; ages spanned 30 to 60+ years in a variety of school roles with a variety of years of experience ranging from 5 to over 40. As I became increasingly aware of the amount of work involved in conducting two interviews per person, I determined that I would not seek further diversity and that I would leave this for another study. I also
felt that an all-female participant population might be of particular interest, given my feminist theoretical approach.

Individuals who expressed an interest in participating in this study were contacted via email or a telephone call during a six-month timeframe and were asked to complete a demographic profile survey consisting of 20 items (see Appendix D for template). The survey was sent via email or hand-delivered by a third party with the request that the survey be returned within 48 hours. This turn-around timeframe was designed to facilitate participant selection and invitation. The initial survey goal was that it would be used to select participants as to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and school role/position in order to potentially maximize the range of diversity of those interviewed. However, as stated earlier, the first 11 interested participants were selected. The diversity represented by those 11 persons was considered sufficient to continue with the study.

A Demographics Chart is shown below which summarizes participant characteristics. Further participant descriptions can be found in chapter four. There is no correlation between the manner in which the participants are listed here and the ordering of Participant Profiles in the next chapter.
## Table 1

**Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Certifications</th>
<th>Yrs. of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>BA, MEd</td>
<td>Teacher; Spec. Ed. Teacher</td>
<td>16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>BA, MA, MEd; Credits beyond Master’s</td>
<td>School counselor, Principal, Director of School Counseling</td>
<td>30+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>White, Jewish</td>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>BA, MA, Credits beyond Master’s</td>
<td>SAC; School counselor</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>African-American, White, Caribbean</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>BA; Some credits beyond BA</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>BA, MEd, PhD.</td>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>BA, MEd.</td>
<td>SAC; School principal; Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td>30+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>BA, MEd; Credits beyond Master’s for certifications</td>
<td>Teacher, Special Ed. Teacher; SAC; School Social Worker</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>BS, MS, PhD.</td>
<td>School nurse</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>White, Jewish</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>BA, MEd.</td>
<td>SAC; School counselor</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>BA, MA, EdD</td>
<td>School counselor</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>BA, MEd.; Credits beyond Master’s for certifications</td>
<td>Teacher, Principal, Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td>30+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Design

The study designed here was designed to examine the personal, prior experiences of adult to adult bullying in schools. Each story of such bullying is idiosyncratic and highly personal. Thus, interviews provide the ideal method of accessing data and allowed for face-to-face, individual reports of each participant’s experience. I was able to witness the pain, anger, frustration, or resolve expressed by many interviewees. This method is aligned with Blumer’s strategy of developing an “exploration and flexible pursuit of intimate contact with what is going on” (Blumer, 1969; as cited in Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, 1992, p. 25).

Interviewing

Interviewing, in general, requires many considerations and involves being aware of many factors (Garner, Hancock, & Budrys, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Wertz et al., 2011). The interviewer should be skilled at interviewing and the interview, even if semi-structured, should be carefully planned (Flick, 2009; Symon & Cassell, 1998).

For my interviews, it was necessary to have all materials at hand (pencil, paper, copies of a demographic form I had created for the purposes of collecting participant information); a consent form for discussion and signing; the semi-structured interview form; and a list of mental health resources, should they be needed (e.g., county mental health resources, hospitals). All electronic devices were checked ahead of time to ensure they were in working order, that the back-up devices were available, and that I had the necessary components, such as fresh batteries, should the electricity or charged batteries
fail. The interview setting needed to be comfortable for the interviewee, as well as for me, the interviewer. Without exception, I asked and allowed the participant to select the site where the interview took place. Thus, for this study, the interviews were conducted in offices at a local university, at the participant’s home, and at my home.

At the start of the interview itself, a recommended procedure is for the interviewer to ask the interviewee if she or he is comfortable, whether water is wanted, and whether there need to be additional provisions to make the interview as comfortable as possible; this was done for each interview (Merriam, 2009). Privacy and anonymity were assured as far as possible at the start of the interview, with frequent reassurances of both throughout the interview period. Assigning a pseudonym to each participant and a number to each transcript were the methods of protecting the participant’s anonymity.

Time was provided for each interviewee to ask questions they had by offering and providing time for such questions and periodically asking the participant if she had any questions, something that occurred with frequency. Consent forms were approved by my institution’s Institutional Review Board, in advance, and were reviewed with each participant at the time of each interview in order to ensure that the interviewee clearly understood the parameters of the study and the specifics related to being interviewed (i.e., confidentiality, protection of anonymity, possible publication). It was important that study participants knew that they could interrupt the interview at any time, if the participant needed a break, or that the interview also could be terminated at any time, if the interviewee wished to do so. Although occasional breaks and pauses were needed at various points, no participant chose to terminate an interview and no interviewee asked to
have her interview(s) removed from the study. One participant was unavailable for a second interview due to family illness, but the first interview was included in the data nonetheless because the initial interview had provided time for clarification of specific points and I determined that her information was sufficient to add to the data. This was done in consultation with two critical friends and my doctoral committee methodologist, who agreed that the data was appropriate and sufficient for inclusion in the study.

Due to the personal nature of the topic, I concerned myself with being vigilant regarding participant levels of comfort or discomfort and I periodically asked about the interviewee’s level of comfort with the manner in which the interview was progressing. Interviewee feedback allowed me to adjust my approach based on interview preferences. One example of such an adjustment was providing additional time for a couple of participants to respond before moving ahead to another question. This occurred more frequently during the first two interviews and may have been due to my initial anxiety about the interview process. Another participant who was particularly anxious about the interview process also asked for frequent repetitions of my questions and required more time than had other participants for her to fully respond. In summary, the interview process proved to be an ideal data collection for the present study. The interviews seemed to be a space in which participants felt able to ask for questions to be repeated and to ask questions of their own, where they knew they could and did take breaks as needed, where the location of each interview was comfortable for both of us, and where I did not feel rushed or overly self-conscious.
Two Semi-Structured Interviews

Two interviews were conducted with all but one participant (as explained earlier) in order to allow for member-checking and to work toward achieving saturation. These are two critical components of the triangulation necessary for robust qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Each first interview began with me asking the interviewee for her definition of bullying. This approach was deliberate and designed to identify whether there were differences in the manner in which each woman defined bullying and to ascertain what kinds of behaviors each participant took to be part of the practice of being bullied. This was followed in the first interview by asking the participant to respond to the statement: “Please tell me about your experience of having been bullied by another adult within the school where you worked.” I had a list of questions for the first semi-structured interview (see Appendix E), but, most often, further questioning developed from what participants shared. For example, when a respondent told me that the bullying behaviors were work-related, I would specifically ask about when and where this had occurred.

Pre-prepared questions were asked, as needed, and included items such as: the role or position of the interviewee and of the bully, the nature of the bullying, the length of time this individual was subjected to the bullying behaviors, the reactions of the interviewee, and the like. Increasingly specific questions were asked to elicit increasingly detailed information regarding the nature of the relationship, if any, prior to the bullying incident, whether this was kept quiet or reported, responses and support from others, and what the organization’s response was. A second interview provided the opportunity for member-
checking, also termed respondent validation (Merriam, 2009, pp. 217-218), or checking the accuracy and understanding of what had been stated in the initial interview. This is significant related to data collection to assure the accuracy of what the participants said during the initial interview and also to check what the researcher believes she heard. In addition, the participant was given the opportunity to clarify or add to accounts shared in the first interview. Through the use of a second interview, I also had the opportunity to ask additional questions, such as: “In retrospect, do you think the situation was handled appropriately?,” “Is there anything you might have done differently?,” and, “Do you have any thoughts about how the bullying incident might have been avoided?” The utilization of two interviews for this study thereby enhanced the trustworthiness of the research process because it made space available for checking on account details with participants, ensuring that each participant felt she had been heard accurately, and providing sufficient time for an interviewee to report her experience in its entirety.

Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003) addressed several challenges to interviewing. These include unexpected interviewee behaviors; awareness of interviewer assumptions, biases, and behaviors; the level of skill related to questioning; and interviewer ability to handle sensitive topics. In order to be ready to respond to such challenges and to ensure interviews which demonstrate robustness and integrity, I followed the guidelines of several noted researchers. Merriam (2009), and Lankshear and Knobel (2010) have identified the following characteristics of good quality semi-structured interviews (a) interviews are planned; (b) all technological resources have been tested in advance and are working; (c) more and less structured questioned are included
in the interview guide; (d) the interviewee is comfortable and rapport is established; (e) there is an awareness that the interviewer and the interviewee are co-constructing data; and (f) the goal of obtaining detailed and needed information which cannot be gather through other means is an ever-present thought for the interviewer (Merriam, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2010).

In order to ensure that each interview met the standards described above, the semi-structured interviews in my study were well-planned and I had a list of potential questions available. I practiced interviewing persons not related to this research prior to the first participant interviews in order to become comfortable and to listen to any feedback on my “performance” as an interviewer (“Speak slowly.” “Be relaxed.”).

As described earlier, the second interview was designed to gather more detailed information based on what participants shared in the first interview and excerpts or elements from this first interview were used as a kind of eliciting device. Eliciting devices can be objects, questions, or tasks which are designed to lead to further insight about a particular topic, activity, or feeling on the part of the interviewee (Flick, 1998; Cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2010). This approach deviates somewhat from conventional semi-structured interview protocols, but is an appropriate approach to use in the current study. For this study, questions seeking more precise or more specific information were the eliciting devices. An example of this approach would be to ask about the room in which the bullying occurred and to see whether more or less detail was given in the second interview. Asking whether the individual has had any dreams or nightmares about the experience also might elicit further information.
As such, the second interview questions were based on specific information from the first interview. More detailed and more specific questions were asked, such as, “In what ways have your feelings about this experience changed since our first interview?” and “Have you had any new memories of the bullying experience since our last interview and, if so, what are they?” Such questioning addresses numbers one and three in the above recommendations for quality interviewing. The taping devices always were checked prior to the interview to assure they were in working condition (element #2 above).

I believe that the feminist framework of the study, something I consider integral to my being, ensured comfort, equity, and my constant awareness of the value of the work and of the need to be respectful, sensitive, and willing to listen to feedback at any time during the interviews. From the initial interview statement related to the person’s experience, “Please tell me about your experience of having been bullied,” to questions regarding emotions, possible changes in work and/or work relationships, physical effects, and how the incident may have impacted the individual’s life, questioning was conducted with sensitivity to the individual’s wishes for how much to say and when the person chose to stop. There were frequent reminders that the interviewee needn’t respond to what was uncomfortable, could take a break at any time, and that there were no judgments about what was right for that individual and that the individual’s well-being needed to be paramount throughout the course of the interview and beyond. Although much of this is simply good researcher behavior, a focus on the collaborative aspect of the interview and on the equality espoused by feminist theory was reinforced by assuring
the interviewee that we are working together to create a story and of how telling the story
has value. Prior to the start of any interview, the interviewee was asked about her level
of comfort, was offered a bottle of water, and was cautioned that the interview can stop at
any time, should the person feel uncomfortable, and that the interviewee has a right to
make comments or to ask questions of the researcher at any time (#4, #5). Thus, all
aspects of quality interviewing were included in my planning and in the actual interviews.

In order to acquire the greatest amount of information in the most possible detail,
Patton (2002) suggested using six types of interview questions. Asking
background/demographic questions is one type of questioning. For this study, however,
much of this information was acquired prior to the interview through completion of the
demographic information survey form (Appendix D). Questions about the interviewee’s
level of experience or behaviors were addressed by the prompt: “Tell me about. . .”
Asking the interviewee for an opinion about a particular topic or example is a good
method for accessing values and beliefs. Feeling questions and sensory questions are
related, with sensory questions becoming more specific regarding smells, sounds, tastes,
and other sensory details. An example of this would be that a person might feel fear,
which would be the feeling, but might also break out in a sweat, which would describe
the sensory reactions. Noting this visible sensory reaction is important, since further
questioning about the sensory reaction could lead to important information in the
interview, such as that the interviewee is feeling distress when relating the story.
Knowledge questions refer to what the participant can relate factually about her or his
story (Patton, 2002). In the case of the present study, the interview items were carefully
scrutinized to ensure that the interviewer was not leading or loading conversation, that open-ended questions were a part of the process, and that various types of questions were designed to access detailed information (Knobel & Lankshear, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The first statement of the interview, designed to elicit personal information in a non-leading fashion, was “Tell me about your experience of having been bullied...” This question is open-ended and other prompts, such as “Can you tell me more...?” were utilized to encourage the telling of a story.

In summary, I attended closely to the criteria for judging good quality interviews and interviewing techniques and argue that all aspects of developing good quality questions and items and of good quality interviewing processes were addressed in my planning and in the actual interviews. I am confident that the resulting data is robust in quality and detail.

**Data Preparation for Analysis**

Following completion of the first interview, I made transcriptions, which also were made by an approved transcription service which guarantees anonymity. I listened to each tape at least once in order to ensure accurate transcriptions and to develop familiarity with the content of each transcript. Listening to the first interview tapes and reading the transcriptions also assisted me with preparing for the second interview and determining which aspects of the interviewee’s story might have been underdeveloped in the first interview and could be expanded upon in the second interview.

Each participant was provided with a copy of the interview #1 transcript prior to interview #2 in order to encourage discussion within the context of the second interview.
and a sense of collaboration in accord with the feminist framework of this research design (Harnois, 2013; Hooks, 2013). The interviewee also was encouraged to change, correct, and elaborate on what was said in the first interview, based on reading the transcription. During the second interviews, each participant elaborated on what had been said in the first interview, adding to the data and to my understanding of the interviewee’s experience.

As the primary researcher and interviewer for interview # two, I asked questions which arose from the interview # one transcription and my notes, as both the participant and I co-constructed the data in an increasingly detailed and specific manner as the process unfolded. Again, the interviewee was reminded of the value of telling a story about a bullying experience and that this would add to the research outcomes.

Participant anonymity was carefully preserved through the assignment of a pseudonym, designation of a participant number, and the removal of any identifying information in the transcriptions. Once a first interview was transcribed, I moved onto the data analysis process, as described below.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Coding

Coding, very simply, is the identification of words or phrases that are specific to what the interviewee has said. As codes become categorized according to similarities, differences, or related to frequency, themes, which help to describe sets of categories under which codes fall, emerge. I used basic coding (Merriam, 2009, p. 178), also known as open coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 66), for this study. This coding process has been
identified as preferable by many qualitative researchers who utilize interviewing for their research designs (see, for example, Denzin, 2001; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Hepner, Wampold, & Kivlingham, 2008; Ivey, 1998; Merriam, 2009).

I utilized basic coding to identify the themes which became evident in my data. I coded in broad rounds or iterations. First, I began with identifying significant comments from the transcripts of Interview #1 for each study participant in relation to my research question. As such, I and those in my critical friends group decided to “assign a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based . . . data” (Harnois, 2013, p. 3). What was important related to my research question was noted in my analytic memo journal (discussed below) and in the transcript margins. The same process was completed for the transcriptions of second interviews with attention to my research focus (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013). Second cycle, or analytic coding, was then conducted, ascribing descriptive and emotional coding processes at this point. This involved combining some codes, removing other codes, and generating categories out of “like” codes and themes from “like” categories. All coding work was done by hand, and I heeded Saldaña’s (2013) and Merriam’s (2009) cautions to the novice researcher about the potential difficulties and challenges of using computer coding systems. Although there are many advantages to using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) program, my lack of experience with such programs and the need to learn the program for my research would most likely have frustrated not only me, but the progress of this research study.
Analysis of the data involved a review of the study’s research question and purpose. It also entailed asking a number of analytic questions of the data. These included asking: How did each participant respond to the topic and answer the questions? What other information was shared and became a theme of the study? Were age, gender, years of experience, and position important elements in having been bullied? What are the implications that may be drawn from this study and what else needs further study? Codes were identified, deleted, combined, or new codes generated as the texts were read and re-read (see Table 2 for example codes).

**Table 2**

*Sample Explanation of Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Code</th>
<th>Definition of Code</th>
<th>Application of Code to Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painful experience</td>
<td>Participants felt the bullying experience caused psychological, physical, and social pain</td>
<td>Manifestation of being bullied (emotional response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise at being bullied</td>
<td>Individuals were shocked by experiencing bullying. Felt they had been doing a good job at work.</td>
<td>Manifestation of being bullied (emotional response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry about being bullied</td>
<td>Individuals felt anger over being bullied by another school professional</td>
<td>Manifestation of being bullied (emotional response)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coding process began with reading the transcripts for information which seemed important, interesting, or relevant to the study and making notes in the transcript margins. This is an expansive process at the beginning of data analysis and the
researcher should be open to noting anything that is found to be potentially significant to the study. Coding was the method of analysis and is a method in which I and those in my critical friends group decided to “assign a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based ... data” (Harnois, 2013, p. 3). To reiterate, codes are labels (King in Symon & Cassell, 1998) which assisted me with identifying important text or data. The information is important related to the researcher’s interest (King, in Symon & Cassell, 1998). The coding process is not simple or linear; it is, according to Saldaña (2013), idiosyncratic, cyclical, and it varied (2013). What each researcher pulls from interview text can vary significantly, depending on the researcher’s interests, skills, views, biases, and goals (Harnois, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). Indeed, coding often is described as a redundant process in which the codes are changed, revised, removed, added to, subtracted from, and enhanced as the researcher moves toward increasing knowledge and understanding, and the development of categorizations and themes (Bernard, 2011; Remler & VanRyzin, 2011; Saldaña, 2013). Re-reading and reviewing each transcript then allows for information to be clustered or grouped, thus, reducing the number of codes. This process is known as axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007), or second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). Themes, or concepts under which many individual codes fall and which are particularly relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013), become evident as this process continues, although not without a significant amount of work on the part of the researcher. As indicated by Saldaña: “A theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded. . .” (p. 14). Thus, themes emerge from the coding process, but are
arrived at as the researcher thinks about, ponders, and considers and re-considers the significance of what was coded in relation to the research study and in order to make meaning. This is a reiterative process in which the researcher analyzes and re-analyzes prior assumptions, always remaining open to what might have been missed or not recognized earlier. This is the process implemented for this study. Coding involves a tiresome search for patterns, but can be exciting as the researcher makes sense of what has been said and of what is located in the transcriptions. Hatch (2002) as cited in Saldaña, (2013) provided assistance for locating patterns; by: frequency, similarity, difference, causation, correspondence, and sequence. Recognizing a pattern because words or phrases are in a specific order utilizes sequence patterning and infrequently or frequently used words and phrases can allow for the use of frequency patterning. The variety of forms of coding require the researcher to make selections based on researcher interest and need. According to Saldana (2013), in vivo coding develops codes directly from what the participant said; values coding develops codes based on an individual’s beliefs, values, and perspectives, yielding codes which are subjective; and emotion coding attends to what emotions are described or are visible during the telling of the interviewee’s story. Another form of coding is descriptive coding. This form of coding is based on the opinions of several participants who discussed the same topic (Saldaña, 2013). Several coding approaches, among them in vivo, values, emotion, and descriptive coding were appropriate for this study and were used at various points in order to assure credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Such conditions of qualitative design were adhered to in the study and are described in detail below.
Intercoder reliability, or assuring that different individuals reading the transcripts agree on the importance of various codes, were checked through sessions during which the three of us (researcher and two critical friends) reviewed our codes and attempted to agree on primary themes (Remler & vanRyzin, 2011) until we came to agreement. My critical friends were persons who had knowledge of research, had been or currently were in my Ph.D. program, and who had volunteered to work with me. The use of critical friends was recommended by Merriam (2009), Saldana (2013) and other qualitative methodologists. The overall process involved reading and reviewing transcriptions of interviews, reading notes, creating codes and noting the frequency of particular codes in relation to the framing research question for this study. We continuously refocused our attention on these codes, thus reducing the number of codes into themes through the process of constant comparison.

Analytic memos are an important part of the coding process, too. These comprise notes I maintained during the dissertation process. My notes formed the analytic memos and provided detailed documents of my process of data analysis. An example from my memo follows here: “Pay attention to what was mentioned related to the theme of ‘How did I survive this and what meaning did I make of this experience? Note specific techniques.’” Analytic memo writing is a concurrent process to coding, identifying themes, and completing the report of the study and, through this process, a researcher is involved in a dialogue with self (Saldaña, 2013). Not only positive reflections, but also comments about the researcher’s limitations and the study’s attendant limitations and problems were noted. What is said, what is attended to, and what is ignored are
important aspects of the research process and were coded and incorporated into the final document (Saldaña, 2013). It was critically important to maintain organized files regarding each code, the combined codes, and the themes that were generated using this process due to the significance of each part of the process; being organized allowed me to move ahead with the data, rather than needing to repeat processes already completed. This process was repeated until the study’s completion.

Analytic memo taking and my notes made during and after each interview often provided valuable information and were used in the coding process to clarify codes, identify potential patterns, and develop themes. Clear notes provided me with reminders of what had been said and of what I had considered significant, and began during the first interview to identify tentative codes. Another method of pre-coding that I utilized was to highlight words in different colors or circle words that frequently appeared (Saldaña, 2013). Later examination of the highlighted or circled terms helped me to determine whether those words and phrases should become codes. The analytic memo, in Saldaña’s (2013) view, is the place to reflect and expound, an approach I found extremely valuable and enlightening in providing a reminder of what had occurred during the interview process. Throughout this process, I also maintained a researcher journal in which I wrote personal notes to self, described dreams I had had related to either my personal experience of having been bullied or related to what participants had reported, and made notes about possibly relevant academic references to use in interpreting patterns in my data. The journal became my “dissertation buddy” and the place where I could put my thoughts from each day. Additionally, the journal provided a venue in
which I could write questions for further reflection and “talk to myself.” For example, my personal experience of being targeted resurfaced with frequency early into the dissertation writing and interviewing process. Many times, I commented on reminding myself to “be cautious about not being overly involved in participant stories.” I found it helpful to speak truthfully in my journal with respect to the conflicts I was encountering during this process. This was a small part of establishing the trustworthiness of my study, described in detail in the next section.

Establishing the Trustworthiness of My Study

Strong and robust qualitative design, according to numerous qualitative researchers (Flick, 2009; Harnois, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013), requires that several conditions be met. The study must demonstrate trustworthiness by establishing credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility, or being assured of the truth of the findings, may be achieved through member-checking, in which information is checked by the person who was interviewed or through critical friends’ triangulation, in which colleagues agree to assist the primary researcher by reading and critiquing all aspects of the primary researcher’s work. Other methods may be used to assure credibility, but member-checking and triangulation are the two methods which were used in this study. These are discussed in more detail below. Transferability, which is demonstrating that the findings are applicable and relevant in other settings, may be shown through thick descriptions. Such descriptions may include information about study participants, the setting, and specific quotes from interviews which are included in the final report. An
inquiry audit establishes dependability by structuring the preparation for and the actual interview process. Determining the characteristics of the participants, the interview methods, the structure of the interview, how data are collected, and how data are analyzed are all aspects of an inquiry audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A researcher should always demonstrate a reflexive approach, thinking about his or her role and ability as a researcher. The researcher needs to consider personal biases and assumptions, termed positionality, that are brought into the research (Limberg et al., 2014). For me, the experience of having been bullied in a school setting by other adults brought me to this research topic, but also is something of which I needed to be aware throughout my interactions with the study participants, the data collection and analysis, and the reporting of my results. As described earlier, maintenance of an analytic memo notebook, using critical friends, and continuous reflexivity helped to assure the confirmability of my results (Cresswell, 2006; Ivey, 1998; Knobel & Lankshear, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Remler & vanRyzin, 2011). Two important elements of establishing trustworthiness are member checking and the use of critical friends, both of which are further described below.

**Member Checking**

Member checking, or the review of transcripts by each interviewee for clarification, changes, corrections, additions, and deletions, was used during each phase of the study. A copy of the interview #1 transcription was provided to each participant prior to interview #2 for them to read and correct where deemed necessary. Interestingly, Eve was the only participant to request a significant change in writing to the first interview transcript by adding to some statements in order to further clarify specific
information. Other respondents clarified information during the second interview.

Similarly, after the second interview, the interviewee was provided with a copy of the transcription of the interview with time to review and to make changes or corrections. At this point, no one asked for changes to be made to her transcript. Member checking in such a manner is in keeping with a feminist orientation by including the participant as co-creator of the data, as well as honoring the interviewee presence in the process and establishing a collaborative relationship. Because my theoretical focus for this study is feminism, allowing the participants to co-construct the data at each point was critically important.

**Critical Friends**

*Critical friends* within qualitative research methodology are colleagues who I asked to accompany me through this experience by providing support, reflection, and critique. They are individuals I consider friends and who I respect as peers from my university’s counselor education doctoral program. Both bring individual strengths to our collaborative work and are knowledgeable about the field of counseling. Each brings a unique perspective to the assessment of my work and will encourage me to do my best. Each critical friend has declared her belief in the value of this study and that it may assist with further informing researcher knowledge of bullying behaviors. As stated earlier, having critical friends helps with trustworthiness and communicative validity (Merriam, 2009).
My Positionality

The topic of this study was one I was drawn to, but about which I also had serious concerns due to my personal experience of having been bullied. Although it had been several years since I had experienced being a target of bullying by another adult in a school setting, I had been involved in therapy in order to work through the trauma, and I felt I had put the experience behind me, I discovered that the process of researching the topic, of interviewing others who had similar experiences, and of writing this dissertation caused me to relive many of my prior experiences. Some of the nightmares returned, I found myself thinking about my bullying experience more frequently than I had done for a couple of years, and I once again entered therapy to deal with some of the demons I was re-experiencing. Re-living the experience negatively impacted some of my confidence in being able to complete this project and was another issue I needed to address. Happily, I was able to place the bullying behind me, regain my confidence, and engage in the dissertation experience with an awareness that what had happened to me was separate from what I was hearing from my interviewees. I maintained an awareness that I needed to closely attend to my positionality throughout this study. Because I was utilizing a feminist lens, I shared my experience with each participant, demonstrated empathy, but also informed each individual that my experience would be separate from the reporting of their experience. Although this was initially somewhat challenging, it became easier as I assumed the position of researcher.
Conclusion

As with all research, methodological and personal ethics was paramount in the value of this study. Various methods to ensure that this study demonstrates trustworthiness have been described in this section. Reflexivity has been a constant on my part and was guaranteed through the use of an analytic memo journal, conversations with my critical friends, and meetings/conversations with my dissertation committee. Awareness of and sensitivity to participant needs was provided through attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, questioning, and collaboration throughout the research process. I was particularly aware of my neophyte status as a researcher and my on-going development as a professional counselor educator throughout this process and made every attempt to assure that my work was aligned with the highest quality possible (Limberg et al., 2013).

In summary, the goal of this study was to contribute to what is known about adult to adult bullying through an examination of the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools in New Jersey. Although the study utilized a small sample, rich descriptions of participants’ experiences were collected and analyzed. The following chapter presents an overview of each participant in order to assist the reader with knowledge of each individual.
CHAPTER IV: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The women who participated in this study were courageous for sharing intimate details of their bullying experiences with me. My responsibility in handling their stories felt as though I was cradling a delicate robin’s egg in my hand: I wanted to protect each person’s anonymity, gently and respectfully describe each experience, and honor what I had been told. It is with great appreciation that I provide a profile of each participant with the goals of appropriately valuing their contributions and of assisting the reader with developing a knowledge of each individual. The names listed below and throughout this document are pseudonyms. Additionally, specific information has been changed or omitted to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

The details provided for each participant is drawn from the information added from the second, clarifying interview. The eleven participants who willingly came forward to help me with this research project forever will remain in my mind and in my heart. Each person’s story is unique and, yet, their stories are the stories of many others. The telling of these stories will, hopefully, lead to greater openness and greater freedoms around the topic of adult to adult bullying in schools. Given the feminist theoretical framework of this study, it is hoped that greater strength will be garnered for each participant through her story-telling and her realization of the power she does have. I could not have completed this study without the significant contributions of these generous participants. I am enormously grateful.
Emma

Emma is an Asian-American female, aged between 51-55 years at the time of our initial interview. She is married with three adult children. Emma holds a bachelor’s degree from her home country, and master’s and Ph.D. degrees from universities in the United States. She had been working as a school employee for 7-10 years at the time when the bullying occurred and described the location as a suburban high school. She was still working in the same school district at the time of this study, but not the same school. During the first interview, Emma said she had no intention of retiring, but this changed in the second interview when she commented that she had only a few more years until she could retire. The timeframe between interview 1 and interview 2 involved summer vacation and two months of not working. Of note is Emma’s heavily accented English, which can make understanding her difficult at times. Although she has lived in the United States since the age of 30, Emma indicated that she has continued to find accommodating English pronunciations to be difficult. She shared that her native language has been spoken at home since her arrival in the United States more than 20 years ago. Emma is reserved, polite, soft-spoken, and accommodating, although never deferential. Emma explained to me that the Asian manner of dealing with problems or conflicts is never to be aggressive, but, rather, to view the problem in small segments and to deal with each segment calmly, but resolutely.

For Emma, the bullying came as a surprise since she had already worked in other settings, (hospitals, another school district) for several years with only praise for her work. She was hired for the position in which she experienced the bullying during the
summer by another school administrator other than the school principal; when the principal learned of her hiring, he seemed upset and began treating her negatively. This initial experience lasted until the principal was “let go,” allegedly due to his inappropriate behavior. Another experience of being bullied had to do with a co-worker, who had been asked by the principal to “keep an eye on her.” The co-worker did not work as hard as Emma and left Emma with, as she described it, “all of the dirty work,” this largely involving laborious record-keeping. During her experiences of being bullied, Emma stated that she was resolute, calm, and able to stand up to her aggressors through an approach of rationality, an awareness of errors made by the bullies, and through the presentation of data.

**Marilyn**

Marilyn is a White female, aged 46-50 at the time of the interviews. Although expressing her eagerness to share her experiences of having been bullied, she also expressed concerns about the issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Marilyn holds a master’s degree and several additional certifications, but has had limited public school experience (three years) due to having worked extensively in another profession. She shared that she was hoping her career change would result in a more permanent position than the maternity leave replacement and interim positions in which she had been employed during the past three years. Marilyn expressed great emotion when describing the “unfairness” of having been bullied in a public school environment and that she was “naïve” about what was occurring. She narrated her stories of several experiences of
bullying and what she perceived as subtle sexual harassment during each of the two interviews.

Marilyn’s initial bullying experience occurred while working in a suburban high school where she was bullied by a colleague whose alliances with school administrators seemed to contribute to his ability to bully. The bully, as Marilyn described him, seemed to be “protected” due to his Latino heritage and his coaching duties and alliances. The school had a large Latino/Latina population, making this bully valuable to the school community, and he was an excellent soccer coach. As her supervisor, this man contributed to Marilyn feeling “less than” through his frequent negative comments, failed to invite her to school social events, avoided informing her of department meetings, and expected her to complete wholly unrealistic tasks. Other experiences of being bullied have occurred as she has worked in two other schools in the same public school district and one other public school in another district. As an attractive divorced female, Marilyn felt that some of the bullying has involved sexual harassment; many of the males involved in bullying behaviors also made sexual references and overtures toward her. Marilyn reported her bullying experiences as “traumatic” and she indicated that she continues to feel the effects of the traumas today through her self-doubt and reluctance to apply for other public school positions.

Ava

Ava is a White, Jewish female, aged 41-45. She is married and the mother of two school-aged children. Although at one point Ava stated that, “being Jewish was a factor” which contributed to her experience of being bullied in a public school, she later
identified her years of experience and being a highly paid faculty member as more dominant reasons. She was adamant that working in a suburban, predominantly White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) school district in which there was little diversity led to the ability of those in charge to target some staff members who, like herself, were different. This participant was eager to be involved in the interviews and stated that, by doing so, she felt she was making a valuable contribution to much-needed research.

Ava was bullied by her school principal over a period of several years. The principal focused on hiring young males right out of college and didn’t seem to want women with more experience and of older ages in her school. Ava feels she was impacted physically and psychologically by the bullying. She experienced severe stomach aches, lost several pounds, and “hated going to work.” Originally certain of her value and her worth as an educator, Ava found the bullying to cause her to doubt herself and believes that “resisting” the bullying behaviors in order to do her job “sapped [her] energy.” She still works in the school district where she was bullied, but the bullying school administrator had her moved to her current position, one for which she had no prior experience. Although she had repeatedly requested position changes for jobs for which she would have been appropriate, Ava was denied these positions multiple times. This led Ava to report she believed that, not only had her school principal been involved in the bullying behaviors, but that the bullying behaviors had been assumed by the district superintendent, also. Ava was clear and resolute about being able to “speak up” and to “speak [her] mind,” when necessary, but also about wanting to do the best job possible, despite her current position “most likely being an attempt to get rid of me.”
Rosie

As the youngest participant (aged 31-35 years), Rosie is a White female who was happy to be interviewed for this study and to share her experience of having been bullied. She stated that she found the interview experience “cathartic,” as well as valuable in believing that there could be much to be learned from the study and that she is “contributing to the field.” Rosie stated that she felt that her outspokenness and willingness to offer suggestions for improvement might have been threatening to the administrator in her suburban school, leading to her becoming a bullying target.

Rosie’s bully was her male school principal, someone she considered sexist, controlling, and “reluctant to listen to the women around him.” From her first day on the job, Rosie saw and commented on improvements that she was excited to have the opportunity of making in the school. This was met with significant resistance on the part of her principal with increasingly obvious attempts to limit her role, to exclude her, to undermine her confidence through prescient criticisms, and other forms of bullying. Rosie said she has always been reluctant to tolerate mediocrity and that she works hard to improve a situation for which she sees a need for improvement. After earning an advanced degree, Rosie left the public school environment in which she had been bullied and now works in higher education. She said she feels “fortunate” to have been able to leave a bullying environment and to have alternative options related to career choices.

Justine

Aged 51-55 years, Justine is a White female and was a veteran staff member in a suburban high school at the time of being interviewed for this study. She has over 20
years of experience and is close to retirement age, frequently mentioning her eagerness to “get out of public education” and retire. Justine was one of the participants who experienced more than one incident of having been bullied, but stated that “clearly” she won’t take abuse at work. Her approaches to managing the bullying experiences have involved speaking with friends and colleagues, submitting formal complaints to the local teachers association, and continuing therapy, something she shared that she has been involved with for most of her life and that she considers “necessary and personally enriching.”

Justine described the initial bullying experience as coming from a principal who “needed to be in control of everything and everyone at all times.” Demonstrating no compunction regarding speaking her mind, Justine encountered frequent conflicts with the principal and “the bullying just began.” This study participant described enduring two years of bullying which had significant psychological (depression, difficulty sleeping, increased vigilance) and physical effects (headaches, Irritable Bowel Syndrome) before she “decided not to take it anymore” and she was hired for the same position in another school district. That experience was fine until one principal retired and yet another school administrator decided to target her. The bullying has continued since working in the new school district, but she is “tired of fighting” and has decided to remain in her job in the district until she retires. She suspects that “speaking [her] mind” makes her a target, as well as being near retirement age.
Beverly

Beverly has held a variety of positions in public education, including administrative positions. She is retired, had more than 30 years of experience in public education in suburban environments, and has worked in another professional capacity for the past ten years. She is a White female whose age at the time of interview fell within the 60+ age range. Interestingly, Beverly is one of the participants who refused to be submissive: She stated that she survived and even flourished by learning to “be one of the boys.” She recounted incidents of clearly misogynistic and inappropriately sexual behaviors, but stated that she learned to “give it right back.” Beverly is extremely well-educated and holds several licenses and certifications in education.

The first incidence of bullying for Beverly occurred when she was a new educator. Having stayed home for several years to raise her children, Beverly entered the workforce at a slightly older age than many of her colleagues. She found the sexually-suggestive, bullying behavior of her male principal “ridiculous,” but “felt [she] needed a job and tolerated more than [she] would now.” As time progressed and Beverly moved up to positions of increasing responsibility in her school district, the bullying and gender-demeaning behaviors didn’t stop, but Beverly “felt more able to handle them.” She believes that her continued progression in the field largely was due to her ability “to give it right back.” She learned to make mocking, somewhat sexual comments; to not become flustered by the untoward jokes aimed at her; and to adapt to a “male way of doing things.” Much of the bullying dissipated with Beverly’s increasingly strong demeanor and proven success.
Eve

At the time of the interviews, Eve was a White Jewish female, aged 56-60 years. She had been retired for a year at the time of the interviews. She felt that being Jewish had nothing to do with the bullying experiences, but, rather, believed that her advocacy for students and lack of tolerance for bureaucratic dysfunction were two of the reasons she was targeted. Additionally, highly positive ratings from parents and colleagues contrasted with her principal’s estimation of her performance. Of all the participants, Eve initially appeared the most anxious about the accuracy of her responses to the interview questions and of the guarantees to her anonymity. During the second interview, Eve was relaxed and confident about confidentiality, willingly sharing information and provided significant clarity to earlier responses.

When Eve was bullied, she worked in a suburban school district with a largely White population, approximately 50% of whom were Jewish. Eve shared that she had struggled with her weight and had been open about this at her work site, which became a source of bullying when the principal and another staff member put chocolates into her office mailbox, publicly humiliating her. Eve was “shocked” by the bullying she experienced. She had been highly valued in another school district and had “excellent” relationships with her colleagues and the school administrators there. Thus, it was difficult for her to recognize what was occurring early on. At first, she believed some of the bullying behaviors were “just good-natured joking,” but she soon came to realize that she was being bullied as other staff members commented on what was happening to her. Eve sought support from not just co-workers, but also her teachers’ association as
behaviors became more blatant and obviously inequitable and illegal. This action helped in some respects, but also generated ire on the part of her school principal, leading to more hidden forms of bullying. The bullying finally ended, according to this interviewee, when she retired and left the school and the district.

**Suzanne**

Suzanne is a White female, aged 60-plus years, and has more than 30 years of experience in suburban public schools. She stated several times during her single interview that she is looking forward to retiring “sometime soon.” Suzanne became a participant through snowball sampling; one of my students knew her story of being bullied and spoke to her about my study. She is a White female who strongly believes that there are gender issues related to adult to adult bullying in school administration. She believed that her participation in this study could be of value and also found the experience to be “freeing.”

Although Suzanne has had significant support from some staff members, others in the school and the district have continued to bully her. She described the presence of a powerful “good old boys’ club,” her exclusion from that group, and her having been rejected for several advanced administrative positions, now enjoyed by males. As she spoke, Suzanne’s words and demeanor were tinged with bitterness, anger, and sadness. She stated that she has worked just as hard as the “boys,” has contributed significantly to the school, and that she feels left out and defeated. With retirement only months away, Suzanne said she has lost much of her faith in public education and in her school district; she longs to leave soon.
Maria

Maria’s background is the most diverse of all participants in this study. She is the only participant with African-American ancestry. She is of African-American, Caribbean, and Caucasian descent, speaks fluent Spanish, and works in a suburban school district with significant Latino and Black populations. Maria’s age falls within the 46-50 years age range. She is another of the participants who fought back against bullying, but who also expressed that the costs were great and included significant physical and psychological distress. Maria continues to enjoy her job and believes she can positively contribute to the lives of the students with whom she works. She has remained in the same district, but has moved to various professional roles in order to avoid those with whom she “has problems.” Maria now believes that her positive relationships with these students and their parents/guardians may have been a factor related to her bullying experiences.

Maria’s initial bullying experience was by a co-worker who seemed to have a privileged position in the school as a result of being “best friends” with the teacher who was having an affair with the school principal. According to this interviewee, the bully was threatened by the positive and proactive relationships she built with students and their parents/guardians. Maria believed this was the reason this bully, a co-teacher with whom she worked in a classroom, targeted her. There was little Maria could do in that room that “was right” and there were frequent comments made about Maria’s abilities, accent, and attitude. Maria attempted to inform the principal of what was occurring, but received no support and was told “to handle it.” Later conversations with the teachers’
association led to a slight reprieve when Maria worked with another teacher. The original bully, however, appeared to have turned others against her and she found herself ostracized and isolated. Maria again asked for a placement change, which happened, making her happier. She admitted to believing that “bullying is human nature” due to the bullying behaviors she has witnessed and personally experienced and continues to see bullying around her, much of it focused on unkindness toward students.

Allie

When interviewed, Allie was no longer working in public education, but was eager to share her experiences in order to foster increased academic study related to adult to adult bullying. She had worked in suburban school districts for approximately eight years, had been terminated three times due to staffing cuts, and left in order to return to graduate school. Allie was confident and comfortable with the interviewing process and openly shared details about each of the two bullying experiences. She is a divorced White female, falls in the 50-55 years age range, is the mother of three adult children, and also describes herself as being someone with great religious faith.

Allie discussed her first bullying experience as being “shocking and surprising.” She had been hired to assist with implementing changes in a “comfortable, settled, and stagnant” high school department and had been successful in encouraging the staid staff to accommodate to change. She was well-liked by staff and administrators and was proud of the work she had done. She believed her job to be secure, but later learned that budgetary issues and staffing changes would lead to her being targeted as the employee lacking ability, as well as needing to leave. Allie described “working doubly-hard” to
counter the criticisms being targeted at her, but didn’t at first understand the underlying cause; the department needed to reduce their employee numbers. With increased time, this participant developed knowledge of what was occurring and that she had nothing to do with the bullying behaviors. For Allie, this experience was in significant contrast with experiencing another situation in another school district in which the principal explained that, due to budget issues, she was being let go, praised her for her work, and offered to assist in any way possible with her getting another position. She described the psychological, emotional, and physical consequences of being bullied out of a job versus being allowed to lose her job with grace and with a high degree of professionalism. One method of “fighting back” from the original experience of being bullied was “to speak truth to power.” Allie mentioned this phrase several times in describing meeting with the Board of Education in the earlier experience to document the work she had accomplished and to describe how she had been treated. She said this gave her great strength, which she has taken with her into future endeavors.

**Liz**

Although not retired during the interviews for this study, Liz has since retired. She held a variety of positions, both teaching and administrative during her 30-plus career, but was bullied as a school administrator by another administrator. She is a divorced White female in the 60-65 years age range who believed that sharing her story might benefit the educational community. Liz has multiple degrees in education and multiple certifications. She worked in a suburban, semi-rural school district with a low socio-economic status. The district was one designated as “in need of improvement,” but
Liz had not been daunted by the school’s and the district’s needs and was enervated by the challenges presented there. The bullying, however, came to be too much and Liz decided to change jobs in order to get away from the bully. She also shared that there She worried that her reputation would be marred by the prior experiences and that the administration in a new school would be similar to what she had recently experienced; fortunately, neither scenario was a reality.

Liz was bullied by an individual who held the highest position possible in her school district. She described him as misogynistic, controlling, and arrogant. His behavior toward her was negative, critical, often public, and sexually suggestive. Liz described her reluctance to have contact with this bully, even though she was required to do so in her position. She experienced headaches, physical illness, conflicts at home, and a lack of confidence as a result of the bullying behaviors. The superintendent was unrelenting in his desire to negatively impact her work and her positive co-worker relationships. Although similar behaviors happened to other women in the district, there was little Liz could do until the others came forward with their legal complaints. For Liz, this occurred too late and after she already had been hired by another school district. She did indicate that the bullying impacted her confidence for about a year into her new position, leading her to often doubt her work and to question whether the prior superintendent might speak with her current superintendent. She now states that, since she has retired, she can laugh at the ridiculousness of what she experienced, but that this was difficult to do for quite a long time.
Conclusion

It is my hope that the reader now has a strong sense of those who were interviewed for this study. The next two chapters provide information about the findings with a detailed discussion of the identified themes and an explanation of the conclusions, study limitations, recommendations, and the relation of this study to future research.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

Three key themes emerged from data analysis as follows: (1) How does the bully bully?; (2) What am I experiencing?; and (3) Did I really experience this and survive? These themes grew directly out of patterns in the data; they repeated themselves across all or most of the interviews. These themes address the central research question of this study: What are the reported experiences of professional adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools in New Jersey? Initial coding, secondary coding, and reviews by my critical friends provided thorough examinations of each interview. These reviews resulted in initial codes, secondary codes, which collapsed the initial codes, and, ultimately the three themes referenced above. This was a lengthy and laborious process, often aided by referring to my notes and by journaling, processes recommended by Saldaña (2013) and others (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patten, 2009). My journal helped to maintain my awareness of what thoughts and ideas I had, what I needed to remember, and what I wanted to be cognizant of as I moved forward. Throughout this process, a feminist lens was utilized to examine whether equity, fairness, and attention to diversity were being adhered to in the interviews and in the analysis of the data. Diversity tenets, namely those of Simonson and Walker (1988) and Thompson (2017), were interwoven with feminist theories throughout my examination of interview data. Feminist theories, such as those espoused by Brisolara et al. (2014) and Taylor, Whittier, and Rupp (2002), were used to inform coding and the development of the themes used to inform my interpretations of analytic results. This approach was respectful of Brisolara et al.’s (2014) premise of making meaning of what is said and that
the interviewer or counselor co-constructs each story. The claim that all bullying behavior is generated by something done by or a characteristic of the target (Tehrani, 2012) informed my work as I conducted second interviews in order to try to determine whether the target of the bully could identify anything that might have led to the bullying behaviors or encouraged the bully. Most could see little other than their subordinate position as deeming them particularly vulnerable. The three themes identified all relate to this subordinate position and to the misuse of power by the bullies, which will be discussed below.

Introduction to the Themes

As the interviews for this study progressed, the stories told by the interviewees shared rich and detailed experiences, leading to an accumulation of a great deal of significant data. A range of differing experiences were evident among the eleven women interviewed related to the level of trauma experienced, the role(s) of the target and the role or roles of the bully or bullies, the behavioral manifestations of bullying experienced by those targeted, and the skills utilized for survival. Similarities also existed, which are addressed in detail in this section. Three distinct themes became apparent through a laborious process of data review and are listed below:

1. How does the bully bully? This discussion involves the specific tactics/behaviors used by the bully against the target and involves work-related approaches, psychological and emotional tactics, and physical bullying.
2. What am I experiencing? The manifestations of the bullying experience for the person targeted are discussed here with physical, emotional/psychological, social, personal, and career-related symptoms identified and reviewed.

3. Did I really experience this and survive? In this section, individual target responses, the available supports, and how the target made meaning of the experience are discussed.

This list does not represent the order in which these patterns were evident in the data. Each participant wove these three themes throughout her story, frequently beginning with what was most relevant for that individual. The act of interweaving information about bully behaviors; bully roles; school and district culture; resulting emotions, thoughts, and behaviors for the target; and survival techniques aided in identifying clear themes across the eleven initial and ten secondary interviews. Generally, telling their stories was an emotional experience and led to re-living highly personal reactions, some of which had been suppressed, as explained by the participant, and some of which was identified explicitly and newly discovered for many participants during this process.

A great deal of the information provided by the participants surprised me, as did the participants’ willingness to share. Many of the initial interviews lasted more than two hours. Several interviewees commented on the cathartic nature of telling the stories of their experiences (i.e., Liz, Allie, Maria, Beverly, Eve, Justine, Suzanne, Ava, Marilyn) and some shared that the experience was “as beneficial to me as it is to you” (i.e., Marilyn, Rosie). Still others stated that they hoped this study would contribute to the research on bullying and that “research is important” (Emma, Marilyn, Rosie, Beverly,
All participants stated that they were happy to have participated in this study and that they did so willingly.

**An Examination of the Themes**

I found that themes and sub-themes often overlapped for different participants. Thus, some of the same information is provided under multiple themes and sub-themes since it fits well into more than one category. Charts listing each theme are provided in Appendix A and may be viewed as a quick reference for information about each participant related to each theme.

**Theme One: How Does the Bully Bully?**

This section is divided into the subheadings of: Work-Related Approaches, Psychological and Emotional Bullying, and Physical Bullying and Sexual Harassment.

**Work-Related Approaches**

Most often working in a formal position of authority or power over the target (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2017; Yamada, 2008), bullies in this study frequently were able to use work-related approaches in their bullying practices. The supervisor or administrator was able to bully under the guise of her or his normal role and responsibilities. Research conducted by Gaetano (2010) indicates that as many as 70% of employees have been or currently experience workplace bullying. Another study, cited in chapter two, by Cemaloglu (2007) and more specific to the present study, estimated that 50% of primary school teachers had experienced at least one incident of bullying in the past six months.
According to the 2017 Workplace Bullying Institute Survey, a 7:1 ratio of negative consequences exists for the targeted individuals as compared to consequences for the bullies. The participants in this study witnessed this power imbalance:

He is still in this position [principal], which is horrible because he is so wonderful and lovely to certain people and so awful, mean, hurtful, and scary to others. – Rosie

She [the bully] is still there, even after all that she’s done. – Eve

The quotes listed above identify the problems with a misuse of power when coupled with a lack of workplace bullying legislation, inappropriate gender-specific behaviors, and entrenchment.

Unfortunately, with such a focus on student to student bullying, staff member to staff member bullying is often overlooked or ignored. “Stories surrounding bullying are dramatic, involving high emotions, with references to acts of deceit, favouritism, humiliation, intrigue, and undeserved punishments” (Tehrani, 2012, p. 254).

I think there was definitely bullying involved, absolutely, but, look, she had the power. She was the one in charge. – Ava

As stated by Tehrani (2012), bullies often use deceit and humiliation in their approach, as Rosie discovered when describing an incident with her mentor, someone who was supposed to be supporting her during her first year in her position:

She accused me of lying. I didn’t know whether what I was doing was right or wrong and she said I had lied. I apologized and said I hadn’t known that this was wrong, but she kept telling me that I had lied to her. I hadn’t! – Rosie

The deception was that the supervisor accused Rosie of lying, when this had nothing to do with Rosie’s actual honest and ethical approach to her work. Furthermore, Rosie was
humiliated by being accused of behavior so antithetical to her beliefs. Another new educator, Marilyn, experienced being forbidden to work with certain students who needed her help:

He said, “I forbid you to work with her. She is not a good kid.”

In this instance, a student with whom Marilyn had successfully worked was identified as being “not good” and Marilyn was told not to do her job, providing a sense of intrigue with regard to the situation. Being dictatorial frequently is a characteristic of supervisors with those they bully. Again,

I soon learned that my building principal was a . . . the word that comes to mind is . . . a tyrant. He ran the school the way he ran the school and no other administrator was going to tell him otherwise. – Rosie

Rosie, like others in the study, couldn’t make sense of what was happening, other than to recognize the power differential and constraints that were constants in the work environment. The bullying, however, was ever-present and caused Rosie to dislike not only the bullying administrator, but her job.

Suddenly changing the targets’ positive observations and evaluations into documents indicating substandard performance was one frequently-used approach. The participants were surprised that their work so quickly had deteriorated in the estimation of their superiors, when they knew nothing had changed related to their work performance as compared with earlier observations and evaluations. Marilyn, Eve, Emma, and Allie each experienced this form of bullying behavior; as one part of the more substantive bullying directed at them as targets. Eve caught her school administrator in a
lie after having been told that someone had complained about her (i.e., Eve) and finding this reported in an evaluation:

So, during an evaluation meeting, my principal was quoting something she said one of the educational specialists had said . . . and I said, “Really?” So, I went to the specialist and she started to cry and she said that she never said that. So, my educational administrator lied . . . by saying that someone had reported something about me.

Eve’s response to this evaluation was to involve her teachers’ association in an attempt to contradict the educational administrator’s statement and to have the negative comment in the evaluation form expunged. Marilyn also was clear about the bullying behavior she had experienced after having told her supervisor that she was unable to meet him for lunch one day. She explained to me that she was only 26 years old at the time, new to the job, and her supervisor had been spending a great deal of time “helping her.” Marilyn reports:

So, it was either that afternoon or the very next day, he came in to observe my class. And it was the first negative evaluation that I had gotten. And I want to tell you, it was boom, boom, boom, right after that. He was after me.

In hindsight, Marilyn believes her supervisor was involved in what today would be considered sexual harassment, but she didn’t recognize this behavior at the time. Beverly shared a story which clearly was sexual harassment, but said she was young at the time, needed her job, and responded by trying to avoid this supervisor whenever possible. She even defined the experience as “almost funny” in retrospect as she told me:

I’ll give you the line that one of the men I worked with before told me. It’s almost funny, but I have never forgotten it. He said, “Think of it [referencing having an affair] like this, if we met on the street and we were each holding a bag of groceries, . . . groceries for our families, and I took an apple out of yours and I gave you a pear back, our families would be no
worse off for it and we would have the same groceries and we would go back to our families and nothing would change.” That was his f-----g line to me.

Sexual harassment is but another form of bullying behavior and is largely instituted by males, as reported by Namie and Namie (2007, 2011). Another participant, Eve, had moved from one position to another in the same district and now found herself in a different school with a new administrator. Eve suddenly found herself to changing from an outstanding employee with excellent observations and evaluations to a school staff member who was lacking in a great many areas:

It was odd. Here I was, with 12 years in a position . . . . doing all kinds interventions . . . of starting programs and things that were so highly regarded . . . to be disregarded in this way to service a school administrator’s anxiety about change was really uncomfortable. . . . It was a humiliating experience for me.

Eve managed to wait out the bullying behaviors until her retirement, but this came with significant costs to her personally. She gained a great deal of weight and found that the work stressors impacted her home life, causing strife between her and her husband. Eve retired and they settled into the happy relationship they had had previously, before the bullying. Emma was another participant who was surprised by a sudden negative evaluation after having received only positive evaluations. For Emma, it was not simply an observation or evaluation report, but a letter of termination at the end of her third year in public education that was a surprise. There had been no prior notification regarding concerns, no improvement plan, and not the slightest indication that the work she was doing was not appreciated by the school district:

They asked me to stay late one day. So, I stayed until 5 o’clock and then they [principal and Human Resources Director] brought a letter to me.
They said, “Your performance is not satisfactory.” And I thought, you made me stay until 5 o’clock and then you gave me this letter. I almost laughed. I am Asian-born and they wrote that my grammar and syntax weren’t very good. They weren’t very smart.

Emma kept her job by fighting back, something which is discussed fully in this chapter under the third theme of “Did I really experience this and survive?” Emma proved herself to be a survivor.

Allie also experienced sudden negative observation and evaluative reports, in contrast to the positive comments she had received from her past principal and the vice principal. She had not been given the proper number of formal observations from her new direct supervisor and had been asking for months about observations and evaluations, aware of the timelines involved and that they were not being met. The new supervisor observed her, but didn’t produce a written observation within the legal timeframe:

So, then I started asking again about getting my observation. That was, I think, the beginning of February when that finally happened. And it took more than a month before she actually gave me feedback. And she basically set up the whole thing. And I got a horrible, horrible observation. Nothing [like?] I’d ever received in my life on anything that I’d ever done. . . . She gave it to me there [when they were meeting]. I didn’t even have a chance to read it ahead of time. I was totally blind-sided. . . . I went back to my office and I hadn’t even had time to turn on my computer when the principal and the two vice principals came in to observe me. . . And so, I got written up for another bad review [by the principal and vice principals].

Allie had thought that there might be a change occurring in the school district due to severe budget problems and she wondered whether teachers would be let go in order to save money for the school district. Frequently, the contracts of non-tenured staff are not renewed since no rationale needs to be given for this population and older, veteran
teachers are encouraged to retire, thus, saving the district a significant amount of money in their budget. For this participant, it was her third year in the district and she had noticed a change in the way many of the previously friendly and positive administrators were treating her. She was correct that she was being terminated, which occurred at the end of the school year. She saw that the negative observation and evaluation reports were a ruse to be able to justify not re-hiring her, although, as a non-tenured staff member, no reason is required for termination.

It is evident from the literature that bullying often is an accepted supervisory approach (Barber, 2012; Klaussner, 2014; Parsons, 2005; Schnall, 2009). Districts may want to save money by getting rid of highly-paid employees or they may want to reduce the number of employees in a department or a school. All of the examples shown above support that various forms of bullying utilize work-related approaches, those in which an individual in a supervisory or believed to be superior position are able to adapt job expectations, positions, and behaviors in order to bully.

Yet another work-related bullying tactic is to change work expectations to the nearly impossible (Barber, 2012), which often leads employees to leave their jobs, although some, like Ava, are too young to retire and need to remain employed. Ava, Justine, and Allie all experienced unreasonable changing job expectations. For Ava, her direct supervisor:

. . . gave me a job that was the hardest job that was ever created in the history of the school for the department. Three grades of the subject; no one in the history of the school had ever done three grades. They had done two, but never three and the entire department was that each person only doing one grade and I was doing three. . . It was just a ridiculous job that you couldn’t possibly do.
Justine was asked by her supervisor to do what she didn’t believe in; to coddle the students and speak with parents every week. She strongly believed her students would learn by her expectation that they become more independent, but her supervisor refused to consider this. She was told she must follow the supervisor’s directive, something she found unsettling since it clashed so strongly with her philosophy of teaching:

I hated doing this. To me, it seemed like silly “extra work” that wouldn’t benefit my students. I wanted them to develop skills and to become more, not less, independent, but I had to do what I was told to do and the parents’ expectations for what we do as teachers is so high and the district cowers to their needs.

As a non-tenured teacher, Allie tried to comply with whatever was asked of her, even if her colleagues were not working as hard. Asking more of persons without tenure related to job expectations is a frequently-used approach in education, in general, but, for Allie, it had appeared to be a method of ensuring her protection from being bullied and of having a job for the future:

. . . because I had been doing, oh, I guess, . . . also the scheduling person left, so, I wound up becoming the interim scheduler. And, I also wound up helping the new [department head] a lot. So, I knew a lot of stuff and I had been asked by the previous supervisor to look into things and I had been asked to do special projects along the way by the principal and the [department head] . . . and I think they also saw that I was the non-tenured and so, I needed to do whatever needed to be done kind of a thing.

Unfortunately, Allie’s hard work didn’t pay off; her teaching position was terminated.

These instances of being expected to do the unreasonable across many participants suggest that this might well be a widespread bullying tactic in this region. The data also suggest that these unreasonable expectations are often accompanied by unfair or unequal treatment that makes the employee more visible to both the bully and to others around
them, underscoring the power of supervisory staff (Bazelon, 2015; Namie & Namie, 2013; Tehrani, 2012).

Bullying, as referenced by Tehrani (2012), often involves public humiliation. Beverly experienced public humiliation when she was chastised by a school administrator in a crowded school hallway and Rosie was criticized by her school administrator in the school office where other staff members were congregating. Similarly, Marilyn experienced a principal’s mocking behavior in a parent-teacher meeting. It isn’t easy to address a person in a superior position who chooses to be critical of subordinate staff member and this was a common form of bullying behavior as related by participants in this study. Saying nothing and doing nothing in response frequently was reported by my interviewees:

...I was in this dilemma I would almost play in my head. I didn’t respond the first time, which was out of the ordinary for me because I’m usually quick on my feet to respond to something that’s inappropriate, but I think what made me kind of back away was the way in which I got the job [through a personal contact – sic] and I needed it. – Beverly

Only one of the eleven interviewees, Allie, considered not having a job for a while to be an acceptable position to be in. Thus, 10 out of the 11 interviewee participants felt they needed to put up with what they were experiencing. Allie was able to collect unemployment benefits for a short time and had made a plan to pursue additional education. She reported that this removed some of the pressure of needing to work and helped to provide time for herself to heal. Others, like Beverly, “needed it” (a job) and frequently suffered bullying for a much longer period than had felt tolerable, often resulting in terrible tolls to them personally and professionally.
The data in this study suggests that changing not just expectations, but the job, is another tactic used by adult school bullies in superior positions against their subordinates. It hadn’t been enough for Ava’s administrator to give her an unusually difficult assignment, but Ava experienced being moved to another position in another school:

...then, I was very suddenly asked to leave. She [the school administrator] said she ran her numbers and, she eliminated a person in the department, and then they eliminated my position and moved me to [a different school and a different developmental level].

As one of the younger interviewees, Ava still needs to work, is too young to retire and has dealt with yet another move in her school district, one which has been extremely challenging. Emma also experienced being moved to different schools within her school district. She was moved from one position in one school to the same position in another school. Then this happened a second time and this appeared to be bullying in Emma’s estimation as she was being moved to different schools and other staff members in her position weren’t experiencing the same thing. An interesting event resulted in a third move which Emma explained was at the school superintendent’s request, wasn’t bullying, and occurred with her tacit permission, in order to protect the district from a lawsuit. Another employee in Emma’s position had made a serious mistake with a student and the parents had threatened to sue. The family had knowledge of Emma’s work from earlier contacts, approved of her work, and requested that she be in the school their child would attend. This move happened in order to please the parents and Emma was assured that she would be somewhat protected from any bullying or harassment from that point on until this school administrator left the district, something which has proven
to be true. Emma was relieved to know that her assistance would eliminate her being a future target, at least for a while.

For Rosie, Liz, and Eve, being ignored and demeaned were intolerable aspects of being bullied. Rosie stated that she had a variety of ideas for new programs for the students in her school, but these generally were received negatively by her school administrator. She always needed to speak with the school administrator prior to implementing any of her ideas and generally was met with an argument about why they weren’t feasible. She felt as though she had to constantly fight to do her job well. She reported that she consulted with a mental health professional who agreed that she needed to do what her direct supervisor deemed appropriate. Rosie did learn that accessing parent/guardian and teacher support prior to making a formal request of her school administrator could result in his acceptance of her program: The support of parents and teachers appeared to add credence to her programming and resulted in increased acceptance for some activities, although not all. Unfortunately, the principal never ceased his demeaning, bullying behaviors aimed toward her. Liz, similarly, experienced being ostracized and had her work frequently negated:

It made it very difficult to do my job. . . I started to see very soon that, when I wanted to start an initiative, he would say yes, and then he would either back pedal and say no or he would take the credit for it . . It was fine with me if he took the credit, but not the sabotaging. You know, I didn’t care if I didn’t get credit for it. I was a tenured administrator, but it started to impact my administrative team because we would say we were going to do something and then we wouldn’t and they would say, “Why not?” and I would have to say, “Well, [the administrator] didn’t want us to.”

So, it was not just Liz who was being impacted by the bullying tactics of her school district’s superintendent, but her entire administrative team, which consisted of four other
school administrators. Another study participant, Eve, also found the demeaning treatment directed toward her by her direct supervisor and the supervisor’s crones difficult to tolerate, as she was relegated to a position of little respect or authority. After having been a valued and highly thought of employee in the district for many years, she was reduced to a position of not being heard, of having any new and innovative ideas negated, and of no longer being valued as someone with significant knowledge of her field. She was rarely consulted by her school administrator or by other administrators in contrast to her earlier role as a frequently consulted professional. Other specifically work-related bullying tactics reported by the interviewees included ostracism, being left out of meetings, and left off committees.

**Psychological and Emotional Bullying**

Psychological and emotional bullying may involve demeaning or intimidating an individual, causing someone to doubt her- or himself, social isolation, depression, and, at the worst, suicide or homicide (Bazelon, 2013; Klein, 2011; Mills & Carwile, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2011). After finding another job in another school district, Liz met with the bully to inform him that she would be leaving. As described below in her own words, the bully continued to bully:

He actually tried to intimidate me then. He said, “You’ll be sorry. Why would you want to go there? You don’t want to go there. You’ll be back. They never called me. They never called me for a reference. You’ll be sorry.”

Liz left and, although she said she had some long-term memories and nightmares about the bullying she had experienced, she was not bullied in her new district and, eventually,
was able to feel confident once again. Allie also reported a complete undermining of her self-confidence, which she described in the following terms:

I was really shaken up by the whole thing. . . You know, if you have to cut salaries, do whatever. You don’t have to destroy people in the process of trying to make it happen.

Allie fought back and still lost her position. Although shaken by the experience, she indicated that she wasn’t destroyed by the bullying. She did witness the difficult reactions of others who had fewer options than she had. Thus, for Allie, having options somewhat minimized the trauma of being bullied. Trauma, however, was a given for all study participants and is further described below.

Maintaining distinct memories of what were traumatic bullying events are characteristic of individuals experiencing bullying and reference trauma responses, as indicated by several researchers. Beverly reported one incident with great clarity:

...and I remember it like it was yesterday . . . He looked me in the face and he said, “Well, then, maybe you can’t do this job.” He tried to intimidate me and I knew I needed the job and I knew what I needed to do.

Marilyn also spoke of feeling the pain from a years-ago experience and shared that the process of being interviewed had brought back some of the painful memories:

I feel like, if I had been better at some things, this might not have happened. . . You have opened up a wound a little bit and it bleeds a little bit, and it (feeling vulnerable and “less than”) is one of my issues that I feel extremely vulnerable whenever I talk about myself.

Despite these strong and uncomfortable emotions, Marilyn shared a great deal about her experiences of being bullied with the end result being that she commented that she was glad to have participated in this study because the process was somewhat cathartic for her and also because she believes inquiry into this topic is valuable. This was Marilyn’s
unsolicited comment about the interviews. However, she also said she continues to feel some of the pain she experienced when she was bullied. In one of the essays in The Leap Years: Women Reflect on Change, Loss, and Love (1999), author Elayne Clift described what so many of this study’s participants describe:

I didn’t worry about these uncomfortable little intrusions until I noticed that my wee lie-ins were extending to midmorning and that I was feeling ever so slightly reclusive and depressed. (In Moodswings and Midlife: Nearly Getting to Nirvana, p. 202).

Some participants described their ever-increasing awareness of the costs of being bullied related to everyday functioning, emotional lability, and a sense of hopelessness.

**Physical Bullying and Sexual Harassment**

Physical bullying often involves hitting, punching, pushing, spitting, or another form of physical behavior Klein, 2011; Smith, in Monks & Coyne, 2011). Marilyn shared that she had seen her supervisor be physical with some of his female students, hitting them in the arm or putting his arm around one of them, but that this behavior was never reported as being inappropriate. None of the individuals who participated in this study were physically bullied, although several were victims of sexual harassment. The sexual harassment described by the interviewees involved inappropriate sexual innuendo, explicitly sexual comments, and suggestions regarding sexual involvement. However, the sexual harassment described by several interviewees was reported to never have fully developed into sexual relationships or sexual contact.

Bullying tactics are varied and powerful in how they impact the victims. The data described in this section indicates that bullying may not be immediately recognized, that the targets frequently are surprised by what is occurring, and that behaviors may change
and can increase over time. There frequently is not one tactic that is used, but many in order to significantly undermine a target. That power or perceived power is involved is a given. Many of the bullies are in supervisory positions or in positions in which they perceive superiority. The tactics described in this section were effective in their impacts. Related to the research question of what are the reported experiences of professional adult to adult bullying in K-12 New Jersey schools, the tactics utilized were clearly described here. Of particular interest to the research literature and described in this section is the often incremental nature of the bullying tactics. Many of the participants didn’t initially realize that they were the targets of bullying behaviors. As several interviewees reported, it took time and an increased severity of the bullying behavior for them to recognize that they actually were the targets of bullying behaviors.

**Theme Two: What Am I Experiencing?**

The second theme identified in this study is that of the behavioral manifestations caused by the bullying behaviors of administrators and others and experienced by the target. Several categories of symptoms experienced by the women participating in this study were identified through data analysis and were ascribed as being related to having been bullied: physical symptoms, emotional/psychological, social, personal, and career, each of which is described below in the interviewees’ voices based on what they narrated regarding their personal stories. Additionally, the culture of a school also has been shown to promote or discourage bullying behaviors (Hague, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007) and that certainly seems to hold in many of these women’s experiences, too. As such, a discussion of school culture is included herein, as well.
For the study participants, somatic, or physiological, complaints were found to frequently accompany being victimized by a bully. Everyone but Emma and Beverly reported experiencing physical symptoms which ranged from headaches to migraines to irritable bowel syndrome. For most, the act of getting ready to go to work each day became laborious and many felt physically drained by the psychological impact of being a bully’s target. Marilyn reported experiencing significant lethargy, headaches, and stomachaches. Justine believes the bullying she experienced was the start of her now-chronic Irritable Bowel Syndrome issues. Suzanne, Maria, and Liz had difficulties with sleeping and with eating, while Eve found herself overeating in order to deal with the pain caused by the bullying. Allie experienced problems with her jaw, which later were diagnosed as back pain radiating into her jaw. She said it “took months of physical therapy to kind of relax the muscles and deal with the physical side of it [being bullied].”

I consider Allie’s statement below to be indicative of how difficult experiencing bullying can be:

I’m strong . . . but I could definitely see how somebody who is not as healthy, not as strong, you know, how it could have a strong effect on someone. . . . here was a week where I was sick as a dog . . . that I literally got sick and I don’t get sick . . . So, I wouldn’t allow it to affect me mentally, but, physically, it had taken a toll.

Psychological or emotional symptoms can be as difficult and debilitating as somatic complaints; this most certainly was the case for many of the women in this study. For Ava, her anxiety and depression worsened:

...but I think I was just unhappy. I mean, it just made me depressed. . . I think, you know, it did hugely increase my anxiety and depression, somehow I didn’t stop eating (laughs).
Although Ava joked about the bullying not influencing her eating habits, she was strongly impacted by her depression, which led her to seek the help of a therapist. Allie described her process as one of grieving: “…so when all of this happened, I started the process of, kind of, grieving . . . the situation.” As with any loss, grief is an omnipresent emotion which is individualized for the person and has an individualized timeline. Allie said she felt that sense of grief for months after she left the job. Rosie described feeling “terrified” and said she “would cry on [her] way to work every day.” The psychological impact felt by Rosie was described as:

I was so scared, legitimately scared. I was scared because I was like – it made me doubt every bit of myself, my own confidence, and, of course, then [when a person is bullied], you are not confident and other people are not confident in you, which I think is what he started to see, too, so, he just preyed on that.

Rosie felt that the bullying behaviors by her direct supervisor worsened with time and with her increasingly apparent victimization. This certainly was her reality in that situation, which also was described similarly by other study participants. The duration of symptoms varied for these 11 women, with most experiencing significant symptoms while the bullying was occurring and others admitting to long-term effects even after leaving the bullying situation. Liz stated that she had nightmares for approximately one year after leaving her job and that her confidence also was severely impacted during that time. She shared that she kept ruminating on the incidents for two years after they had occurred. Although she had found another position in which she was experiencing success, the earlier experience of having been bullied continued to haunt her during her first year or two at her new job. Similarly, Marilyn has found that her experience of
having been bullied has had long-lasting consequences related to her confidence and belief in her ability to successfully work in a public school setting. A lack of confidence in their abilities to successfully do their jobs was indicated by Eve, Maria, Allie, and Liz. Rosie admitted to continued anger at what she had experienced and that, despite successes since the bullying experience, she still feels angry that this ever occurred. Suzanne similarly finds anger to be a highly-present emotion: “It isn’t fair. I’ve just been so frustrated and angry, so angry.”

Several interviewees described the social impact of being bullied. For Marilyn, a scheduled good-bye party to acknowledge her leaving was cancelled by her direct supervisor and never re-scheduled. She also felt there were distinct cliques into which she wasn’t invited. Eve clearly knew who the school administrators’ supporters were and that she wasn’t a part of that group. Maria was the only department member not invited to some after-hours get-togethers and Liz wasn’t invited to certain department meetings. Being left out, ostracized, or shunned are fairly typical bullying behaviors, as reported by Emily Bazelon (2013) and others (Hakim & Solomon, 2016; Mikkeson & Einarson, 2002; Young & Ward, 2011). Wanting to belong is a human need; consequently, not belonging can cause great strife for bullies’ victims. Allie noticed a significant change in the way she was being treated by administrators who previously had been friendly and welcoming to her:

Something was different in the relationship between me and my supervisor and I didn’t really know what. We had been fairly friendly. . . and I had no idea. All of a sudden, people weren’t talking to me.
What Allie didn’t know at the time, but later learned, was that she was not going to be re-hired and wouldn’t be granted tenure due to staffing changes in the district. The ostracism was most likely generated by what her supervisor and other administrators would need to do in changing her observation and evaluative reports to be substandard reviews. Being ignored or ostracized often is a symptom of a future bad event. In this case, some of her former friendly supervisors needed to withdraw from their earlier relationships with Allie as they moved toward increasingly harsher treatment in order to terminate her job.

According to several researchers (Gaetano, 2010; Namie, 2010; Yamada, 2008), the personal impact of bullying as it relates to family and friends can be significant, too. Liz’s children noticed a change in her demeanor and behavior and commented that she had become more isolated and also more curt in her dealings with them; to them she was stressed and unhappy. Beverly similarly noted that her husband commented on her level of stress while she was being bullied; she didn’t tell him about the sexual harassment incidents because “he would want to beat them [the harassers] up.” Eve admitted that her relationship with her husband became “more strained” when she was experiencing bullying, that she certainly was “stressed and unsure,” but that all of this ended when she left the job and the bully. Several participants (Ava, Eve, Justine, Liz, Marilyn, Suzanne) admitted to withdrawing from social situations and that, in Liz’s words, they “just didn’t want to be around people” while they were being targeted by a bully. Some of this was ascribed to general lethargy, some to a loss of confidence, and, more generally, to not wanting to talk about what was going on in their lives. Many participants discussed a
general malaise associated with being bullied. This included social withdrawal, problems with family members, anger, frustration, and a sense of a loss of control which all are prevalent symptoms experienced by individuals who are bullied (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Namie, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2011).

Concerns about the impacts bullying might have on one’s career was yet another behavioral manifestation of the bullying experience for those interviewed for this study. Although she was “recommended for re-hire,” Marilyn’s final evaluation was filled with unsatisfactory comments:

It made it very difficult to look for another job because I felt like, without decent recommendation from that one, I was not going to be able to get one.

Liz made a conscious decision not to try to fight the bullying, to find another job, and to leave. The fear of career repercussions haunted her, however:

I didn’t want to file a complaint against him because I was afraid of not just the consequences from him, but, but, to my career. . . I was just afraid it would get out into the public and, you know, you’re a school administrator, and that’s all you need to have it get into the newspaper and I would try to get another job and they would Google it and see that I have this suit, and, that’s it. I feel badly about it now because I could have helped them [others who did file suit].

Other respondents similarly expressed concerns, although the specifics of their concerns varied significantly. For Allie, speaking up and fighting back resulted in increased confidence regarding her abilities and she reported having no concerns about a future career path:

So, from that point [speaking to the Board of Education], it strengthened who I am in believing what I have the ability to accomplish and what my goal is to accomplish. I definitely took that into my next job.
Emma also did not feel fear regarding her career and found another position while the Board of Education was deciding what to do about a potential Office of Civil Rights complaint she had discussed filing. She did not take the new position offered her by another school district and remained in her school district once they recognized the illegality of attempting to terminate her employment. Ava and Maria have too many years in their current school districts to look for alternative employment and feel settled with their current positions. A reality of public education is that it often becomes difficult to move to another district once an individual has many years of experience. Such individuals generally are too expensive for another district to want to hire them: It is far more budget-friendly to hire employees with little experience. Suzanne, Beverly, Eve, and Justine were able to retire or were planning to retire in a period of a few months and were not concerned about the bullying experience negatively impacting their retirement plans. Allie and Rosie ultimately changed career paths, avoiding the need look good for future K-12 public school employment. It is not uncommon for individuals who are bullied to leave their profession or to retire or just quit as a result of having been bullied (Namie & Namie, 2009, 2011). Thus, various school employees of various ages and levels of experience who suffered bullying behaviors evidenced a variety of methods of dealing with what had happened to them. Based upon factors of age, years of work experience, and position, some participants had retirement, a position change, a job in a new school district, or leaving the profession completely as options.

Research has shown time and again that the culture of a school or of a school district greatly impacts the extent of bullying behavior. As discussed in chapter two,
culture has much to do with how bullying is encouraged, made invisible, or actively addressed (Fahie & Devine, 2014; Thompson, 2017; Waasdorp, Pas, O’Brien, & Bradshaw, 2011; Zapf, Escartin, Einarson, Hoel, & Vartia, 2010). School culture is an analytic category which I found runs through each of the themes discussed in this chapter. Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) defined school culture as “the quality and character of school life” (p. 182). The culture of a school has to do with expectations, mores, norms, and acceptable behaviors. The women participating in the interviews for this study described school cultures which supported bullying, either through sanctions or by ignoring what was occurring. In general, a hierarchal, non-collaborative culture in which there was little accountability for behaviors existed in the schools in which each participant worked. In the present study, male administrators were found to be largely responsible for bullying behaviors against female subordinates and were given carte blanche authority in terms of their behaviors with staff members. Marilyn’s description below of the male-dominated administrative culture provides an excellent example of culture gone wrong, but being encouraged and allowed to flourish:

I remember a teacher and my supervisor giving him [a male supervisor] a birthday card that, “You suck,” and this was funny to all of them. All three of them thought it was funny. There was, like, this goofing around, joking, [by the men]. – Marilyn

Marilyn feels she was caught in a male-dominated culture in which inappropriate behaviors constituted bullying, as she also was ignored and not included: “I so wanted to say something. Like, this is jack-ass fooling around.” Marilyn reported that she did not want to participate in this type of bullying or behave like a male. She said she felt that she needed to do so in order to survive in the culture of women often being bullied by
men. This example is aligned with the results of the 2017 Workplace Bullying Institute Survey which indicated that males were often found to bully females. At the end of her second interview, Justine related school culture to how she views the more generalized current culture in the United States, namely the current president’s behavior:

Look at the role model we have for the country now. Our president thinks it’s okay to bully and harass women, to grab their pussies. Our whole country in a culture of incivility. – Justine

Justine views the bullying she has experienced as a symptom of a larger culture of bullying. It is this kind of conviction that so strongly impacted the participants in this study, leading them to employ various techniques in order to help them survive the abuses inherent in bullying behaviors.

Rosie described the culture of her school as “fiercely male,” despite the small number males working in the school. The top-down bullying, and a non-collaborative style of leadership exhibited by her school principal made the environment fearful, hesitant, and closed for the majority of employees, as Rosie reported. This is the same cultural environment Suzanne described experiencing. No one at Suzanne’s school disagreed with the principal’s dictates and decisions without unpleasant consequences. Staff members talked among themselves, but they felt they had no recourse other than to do what they were told or to leave. Rosie lamented the reality of a negative school culture in her own case and believed she and others could have been much more successful at changing the school culture had they been given more responsibility and authority. It is just such environments that have been shown to handicap school staff and to lead to negative perceptions, unsatisfied staff members, and bullying behaviors.
(Hague, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007; Roland & Galloway, 2004). Allie similarly described unhappy staff and the limiting nature of non-supportive, negative administrators who demonstrated dishonest and self-serving behaviors. For Marilyn, the culture of sexual innuendo and non-support was intolerable and she left her job as a result of this culture. Culture, then, is an important factor in whether bullying is allowed to persist. The culture of a school or a district appears to determine whether bullying behaviors are tolerated, resisted, or clearly not allowed with clear consequences for those who do bully.

The lack of accountability for those who bully, whether through a general failure to enact district policies, the lack of formal workplace anti-bullying legislation, misogynist-tolerated behaviors, or a lack of administrative attention to uncivil behaviors, certainly seemed to promote the experience of being bullied for this study’s participants. It is possible that, in some instances, those in higher positions within the school or the school district promoted bullying behaviors in order to encourage the targeted employee to leave. The use of bullying as an accepted leadership behavior has been documented in the research literature by Namie and Namie (2003).

At least one participant talked about using the culture at her school to her own advantage in agentive ways to mitigate at least some of the material and social effects of the bullying targeting her. Beverly, for example, explicitly identified school culture as “a good old boys’ club,” and felt she needed to become a member of that club in order to survive and flourish. The jocular culture of the male administrators she encountered would be considered inappropriate by many, but, for Beverly, entering into a
conversation about skinny-dipping proved that she “could play with the boys.” “I looked at the six of them and said, ‘Hey, guys, if you’re going to go skinny-dipping in front of me, I’ll be there with no problem.’” Calling their bluff as six principals and vice-principals talked about going into a pool naked demonstrated that she could be as tough and as sexist as her male counterparts and was not threatened by their talk or behaviors. Later, when Beverly learned that the culture supported less pay for female administrators compared to her male counterparts, she began planning how to negotiate a higher salary by acknowledging her naiveté while clearly stating that, in the future, she expected to receive the same pay as her male counterparts: Interestingly, she got what she wanted. Emma, as referenced earlier, also took advantage of an opportunity to support the district when they needed her to assist with avoiding a parent lawsuit. Her willingness to be once again moved to another school in order to work with a specific student mitigated the earlier bullying and placed her in a position of having some authority. Each of these incidents demonstrated that the targets could turn around their positions of being bullied by either amending behaviors or through suddenly being valued due to a school district need.

As each individual participant discussed the symptoms and manifestations of being bullied, additional data was provided in response to the central question of this study: What are the reported experiences of professional adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools in New Jersey? It is clear that the manifestations experienced by the targets have psychological, emotional, social, and career/professional impacts, some of which are relatively brief in duration and others which continue even to the interview experience.
How each individual survived the trauma of having been bullied is yet another theme and is discussed in the next section.

**Theme Three: Did I Really Experience This and Survive?**

Each of the individuals interviewed for this study considered the bullying experience to have been one of survival. They reported dealing with a variety of traumatic events, and many had their careers threatened, their confidence shaken, and their usefulness questioned. That being said, each participant also reported surviving and finding some type of peace for her future. The process of making meaning of what had occurred--of letting go of rage and frustration--and of moving on was not necessarily an easy path, however. This section discusses the techniques used by the study participants to move on from the bullying experience, the supports available to them, and the resulting move to a life in which the bullying has, largely, subsided. For some, there was not a single survival technique, but a combination of more than one that allowed them to preserve a sense of self and to feel somewhat vindicated and triumphant.

Being the exemplary worker was one approach used by some of those participating in the study and this is a fairly common response to being bullied, as cited in the work of Rosalyn Schnall (2009). Allie declared:

> It’s really weird, I guess, because I had this sense that this was what’s happening [losing her job] and I had made this conscious choice that I was going to do everything to the same level that I always did and not allow myself to be tied up in it. I felt ok.

Eve was another person who refused to allow the bullying to affect the quality of her work:

> It didn’t impact my work in any way. In fact, as I was leaving [retiring], I left with a grand finale. We had [an incredible program] with all the
students in the school. I was always innovative and, right to the end, I was innovating. The teachers and the parents said it was great!

Refusing to rationalize the bullying experience was yet another survival technique and allowed the targets to see that they were not at fault for being bullied. At one point, Allie told herself that what had happened might not have occurred if “only I had done a better job,” but this rationalization didn’t last long since, as she stated, “I knew my value.” Beverly knew she needed the job and that her ability to fight back, at least for a while and until she, too, was in a position of power and authority, was limited. Her career path ultimately led her to heading departments and holding highly regarded positions in the field of education, allowing her to function in accord with her values and her beliefs, feeling that this was the ultimate “fighting back.” Suzanne knew she would not get ahead in a male-dominated district, but quietly fought for an increased female presence in the district, believing this to be her own means of fighting an unfair and biased system. Ava and Maria have several years left to work in public education before they can retire and they have found ways of surviving these years. Both were moved to different positions where they believe they can continue to work without the bullying they had experienced earlier. These are individualized means of remaining at work in varied school districts and are methods of finding some peace and ameliorating the bullying behaviors, either by moving away from the bully, keeping quiet, or moving to other positions with greater authority and power.

Fighting back or standing up to the bully were responses evidenced by many participants. Eve, Allie, Liz, Beverly, Emma, and Marilyn all found the strength to face and to attempt to counter the bullies. The approaches varied somewhat, but all
experienced some satisfaction with having stood up to or spoken back to the bully, as in Liz’s case when she told her administrator “I don’t think so. I’m not interested” in reference to his suggestion that they “share a room” at a conference, despite his informing her that “it would save the district money.” Eve, Emma, and Marilyn spoke with their teachers’ associations, which had some impact on limiting the bullying behaviors. Emma was successful in having the association resolve the issue for her and assuring that she would not be let go by asking them to advocate for her, something that was done with directness and with a clear knowledge of the legal concerns. Allie documented what had occurred, what she had done to help the school district and other staff members in her school, and presented this to the Board of Education in a very large binder. She had hoped to speak at an open session in which members of the public would be able to hear what she had to say, but the Board asked that she speak in a closed session. Afterward, she felt that she had gained strength in “speaking truth to power” and in having the courage to relate her experiences. Emma found her own cultural heritage to be an asset in knowing how to deal with the bullies:

In the Asian culture, you don’t fight. You just wait. You present the information and you just wait. This worked. I went to the teachers’ association and they said they would fight for me. I just waited.

For Eve, having the association document and speaking about the inequities showing how she was treated and how others in the same role were treated provided some satisfaction and enabled her to be involved in the same jobs as her peers.

Having some type of support provides significant assistance to the targets of bullying (Namie & Namie, 2009). Every person interviewed was able to identify at least
one individual who provided a form of support for her during the bullying experience. That support took the form of a family member who is willing to listen and who provides hugs and affirmation; or a friend who is patient, kind, and caring; a co-worker who has witnessed or experienced the same behaviors; an attorney who apprises the target of her legal rights; a counselor or therapist who hears what the person is saying and who tries help the individual regain a strong sense of self; to formal institution, such as a teachers’ association or the Office of Civil Rights. The value of such supports is apparent as told in the participants’ own words:

I felt supported by one other person. She was the Assistant Superintendent. With my kids, I didn’t want to share 100% because they were starting to worry about me, but I could talk to her. – Liz

I could talk to my husband and that helped, but I couldn’t tell him everything because he would be so angry. – Beverly

The other teachers were so important. They liked me and they supported me. They said they couldn’t believe what was happening to me. – Eve

My department is horrified about what they [central office administrators] are doing to me. They support me and help me through this. I am so grateful to them. I don’t know how I would survive without them. – Suzanne

I couldn’t get through this without my therapist. She is great. I have seen her for years, but I really need her now. – Justine

How much to tell and what to tell can be difficult for someone who has been stripped of confidence and who may feel that she has in some way caused the bullying (Tehrani, 2012). Tehrani considers counseling an important aspect of resolving bullying issues and argues that all bullied individuals need some type of therapy. Numerous researchers (Bazelon, 2013, Duffy & Sperry, 2014, Fahie & Devine, 2014, Fevre et al., 2012; Sennett...
& Cobb, 1972; Skorek, 2009; Thompson, 2017; Vartia, 1996; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2011, 2017; Yamada, 2008; Zapf, 1999) have documented the importance of having supports when being bullied in order to not succumb to the potential damage bullying behaviors can cause. The form of the support may vary, but having someone who validates the target’s experience as aberrant goes leagues in assisting the individual who is being bullied to understand that what is occurring is real and that this can be dealt with through a variety of means.

As with the culture of a school, imbalances in power structures are additional factors which weave their way through each of the themes. Of the 11 participants in this study, all described the bullies’ misuses of power. The majority of the bullies, 10 out of 11, held positions of authority over the targets. They were school superintendents, principals, or supervisors. At times, the misuses of power included overt behaviors which were witnessed by others and, oftentimes, the behaviors were hidden and subtle. Although there were differences described in the individual narratives, similarities in bullying behaviors included humiliating the target, public embarrassment, ostracism, extreme criticism, and allegedly harmless sexual comments. For each of the targets, a real or perceived power differential existed between themselves and those who bullied them. Power and role seemed to be important aspects of the bullying behaviors described by the 11 women in this study, with some of the bullying involving specific sexual harassment incidents. Power manifested in a range of ways, including silencing, attempts to terminate employment, differential treatment, public humiliation, and impossible job expectations.
Emma was effectively silenced for years by not being allowed to present pertinent information to parents at Back to School Night. Her school administrator’s rationale for this silencing was that “people would not understand [her].” This single-person dictate made Emma relatively invisible to the parent/guardian community until those persons had individual contact with her and learned, in Emma’s words, “that they could communicate.” Another interviewee, Beverly, found herself silenced by her need for the position: “I was so upset, but I needed the job so, I just took it [the bullying behavior] and I kept quiet.” Thus, bullying can reduce the reactions of otherwise strong and intelligent women to that of adopting a passive and non-confrontational position in which they are silenced. All eleven participants in this study described their bullies’ misuses of power. Many of the bullies, 10 out of 11, held formal positions of authority over the targets. These power positions included roles such as school superintendents, principals, supervisors, and department heads. In the remainder of this section, the participants describe their experiences.

He said I couldn’t present at the Kindergarten Parent Orientation because no one would understand me. He wouldn’t let me speak for three years.
– Emma

The perpetrator, Emma’s direct supervisor, selected her language skills as the area to target; that is, parents wouldn’t understand Emma because of her accent. As with many bullying incidents, the bully may locate sensitive areas to address, such as Emma’s difficulties with English language pronunciation. One of the issues in this instance, and a concern which made a legal fight possible, is that Emma is Asian-American, making her a member of a protected class based on federal legislation. Emma is a veteran staff
member with many years in the school district, making her relatively expensive since she is at the top of the salary guide. This factor, Eve herself suggested, may have been a part of the reason for the bullying behavior; that is, wanting her to leave her position and free up monies to hire someone less costly, but without formal disclosure by school and district administrators. Emma will never know. Liz clearly felt that her successes were a threat to the administrator who was her supervisor and that, by bullying her, he would be able to either have her adopt a less-successful, subservient position or force her to leave. Beverly similarly felt that the power accorded to the males in her district, although in the same position that she held, forced her to work harder, put up with bullying behaviors, and fight for some type of equality. Suzanne believed that the power accorded the male administrators and the attendant bullying behaviors she experienced in her district relegated her to a position from which she would never be able to rise. Thus, power often is a prerequisite to being able to bully. It is holding a position of authority or of perceived authority, being left alone, and having a limited system of checks and balances that allows the bully to continue his or her behavior. Bullying is not always easy to recognize or to understand. Bullying specialist Tehrani indicated that there are always, often unknown or unconscious, reasons for being part of a bullying drama. Tehrani considered self-awareness to be an important aspect of removing oneself from an experience of being bullied.

He hired me himself. I believe . . . and this is just my personal belief . . . I think he hired me right out of school assuming I young, impressionable, and that . . . he would just retain the power and that I would do whatever he wanted. – Rosie
In this instance, Rosie was young, relatively inexperienced, and beginning her first job in her field. To a tyrannical school principal who desired to be all-powerful and omniscient, and who experienced no professional repercussions for his behaviors, these were appealing characteristics for someone he would hire. Rosie’s solution to the continued bullying was to leave the profession altogether. Frequently, the targets of bullying are unaware of any reason for the bullying behavior and why they are being bullied.

It may simply be that the person being bullied is costly to the school district and that removing that person will save money. It also may be that the target speaks her mind and counters what she considers injustices in a school system, creating dissonance and conflict. It is possible that the perpetrator is afraid for his or her position and that the target’s successes make the bully look inadequate. The latter seems to be the case in Marilyn’s experience, for example:

So, he [a bullying supervisor] later revealed little by little that he was not appreciated by the department and they didn’t think he did anything for the students and that he had alienated them in different ways. . . They liked me. — Marilyn

Marilyn explained that she must have been a threat to this supervisor due to her ability to provide services for students, to get along with other staff members, and to be liked by parents. That was enough reason; it seems, for her supervisor to bully her.

Yet another pattern appears throughout each of the themes: that concerning diversity and differences. A great deal of literature exists related to the fact that persons from diverse backgrounds, those with intellectual and physical disabilities, individuals whose cultural background doesn’t match that of the dominant culture, and others who seem “different” are more likely to be bullied (Bazelon, 2013; Heinemann, 1970; Hong &
Espelago, 2011; Olweus, 1993). In Emma’s case, a culture of intolerance regarding diversity worked in her favor and the teachers’ association was able to fight to maintain her position based on her specific class of being an Asian-American. Maria, who is of a mixed race background, similarly experienced intolerance for her cultural background when compared with other staff members, but her association representatives offered little assistance. She described her association as “weak.” All participants described feeling “less than” on at least one occasion during the bullying behavior due to their gender.

Each study interviewee found a means of making sense of what had happened and of making the needed changes in order to function successfully, although, clearly, this was not a simple or quick task. For several, the changes were internal (e.g., learning to maintain confidence or seeking help from a counselor) or relatively minor (e.g., going to the gym or ignoring the comments). For others, the changes were external or major. For example, Rosie developed a future plan for eliminating bullying and planned to implement this in a future environment, allowing her to garner increased power and to believe she would be doing good work which had arisen from her bullying experience:

> It seems so trivial and small, but, that is how you build community and that is when people want to work with and for each other. So, if somebody crosses the line, we can, in a respectful way, say, “Ya know, I didn’t feel comfortable with that.” – Rosie

Rosie’s plan helped her to believe in her own power and assisted with believing that there were concrete steps she could enact if she ever encountered bullying again. Still in the same school district, but in a different school and a different position, Ava is resolved to maintain work boundaries which keep her healthy and already has begun planning for
post-retirement activities which will make her happy. Seeking other positions in independent schools will allow Justine to collect a pension in a few months, while also feeling constructive and enjoying continued work: She doesn’t want to retire completely from education, doesn’t want to lose an income, and still enjoys working with students. Maria’s role in a different school has allowed her to continue to advocate for her students. She is away from the co-worker bully and is able to enjoy her work. She indicated an increased sense of accomplishment now that she is no longer a target and needing to fend off the emotional toll of being victimized. Working with a homeopath has been extremely valuable to Maria and she reported feeling that the emotional, social, physical, and spiritual aspects of her life are now well-integrated. Each individual who participated in this study was successful in surviving the bullying experience and in making meaning of what had occurred.

Understandably, my participant pool was comprised of survivors. It was highly unlikely that participants who felt they hadn’t successfully survived the bullying would volunteer to participate. Potentially, the pain involved in reliving their experiences and of speaking about uncomfortable, preferably forgotten or hidden memories would be unbearable. However, I now have insights regarding specific adult to adult bullying experiences in schools, related to how each individual coped with being bullied, and how meaning was made in order to have a sense of success and of having triumphed over what had happened to them. With respect to how my 11 participants made meaning of what happened to them clearly references that they each drew on a range of skills, behaviors, and thoughts to help them cope with the bullying at the time and to help them work
towards healing afterwards. Each woman unequivocally understood power was in play
and learned what she could do to fight or flee the bullying. From the reports of these 11
respondents, I learned that bullying need not lead to a literal or a figurative death, that the
women participating in this study found personal power and success, and that they
removed the bully’s power through their responses and personal meaning-making. Being
able to report what had happened to them with the conviction that the bullying is over
provides a template for future work in schools with adult to adult professional bullying.

**Extended Analysis**

The analysis above focused on identifying key themes across the data provided by
the 11 participants. It also proved interesting to examine each participant’s experience in
order to learn what worked for her, what her thinking was, how she problem-solved, and
what behaviors were necessary in order to be successful. Clearly, each study participant
survived the experience of having been bullied by another adult in a school setting. The
thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors involved in surviving successfully varied by participant
and are discussed below in each of the participant survival descriptions. These are
designed to further clarify how each respondent managed to adapt to the experience of
having been bullied, yielding additional data to the field.

Emma, the participant of Asian background, found the approach utilized by her
culture of origin to be valuable. She shared that her background taught her not to react,
but, rather, to be patient and to address the problem in small segments. As she reported,
Emma’s cultural mores provided her with a calmness that allowed her to think clearly, to
believe in her ability to manage the situation, and with insight into how to fight back.
She enlisted the help of the district teachers’ association, which provided strong support related to a culture-based argument to address the bullying. In this instance, Emma’s racial and cultural background allowed for specific methods of fighting against the bullying she had experienced from a school principal.

> It’s that nature’s healing process will take over. So, when there’s a problem, I need to leave it along and I need to move forward. That is the Asian culture... So, if you treat me badly, I need to be quiet, but, the underlayer is that I need to move. – Emma

In contrast to Emma’s strong philosophically “Zen approach,” Lauren was one of the participants most negatively impacted by her experience of being bullied. As a new hire, Marilyn was bullied by an immediate supervisor who also demonstrated sexually-harassing behaviors. Already somewhat unsure of her abilities and position, being placed in an inappropriate position left her doubtful of her strengths. As a non-tenured educator, she also believed there were few avenues for recourse available to her. She did speak with colleagues, but these individuals were her peers and offered no administrative clout. Marilyn felt that leaving the position was the sole method of providing relief from the bullying experience and she desperately looked forward to the end of the school year.

Ava’s strong personality has benefitted her through her school bullying experiences. She described herself as always having been self-assured, but that the bullying by a school administrator rocked her resolve a bit. A tenured educator, Ava viewed the work she had done as exceptional and noted that her outspokenness might have prompted a school principal to target her and to remove her from one school and have Ava moved to another position in another school. Through all of this, Ava was determined to do her best and to continue to provide outstanding services for students.
One survival technique was to not speak with her school principal about an already-approved maternity leave that would take place when the school administrator had fired her. The Board of Education maternity leave usurped the principal’s actions.

Another new educational specialist with no prior school experience, Rosie found herself bullied by the head of her school. Self-reliant, outspoken, and an advocate for children, Rosie spoke up when she saw wrongs and developed alternative plans for providing excellent programs to benefit students. Being a bullying target was a situation Rosie didn’t understand for quite a while, but her survival techniques involved speaking with supportive colleagues and, thus, developing a strong support network; continuing to be an exemplary staff member, leading to parent, co-worker, and student support; and beginning to look for another job. Her move to become involved in an advanced degree program also provided future career alternatives.

Being closer to retirement than many of her colleagues has provided Justine with a soon-to-be option and with the ability to tolerate some of the bullying behaviors she has experienced. Holding multiple certificates also provides Justine with post-retirement work options, something she is considering with pleasure. In her current school, several colleagues have provided support and understanding, which Justine considers important to her survival as she completes the 25 years she needs to retire. A teachers’ union representative and Uniserv representative from the office of the state teachers’ union assisted Justine with accessing legal advice and support when this was needed at one point in her career.
Eve retired, leaving the bully behind. She described her survival in a bullying situation as being difficult, with retirement the only way to stop the bullying. She did involve the teachers’ association at one point to counter a clearly inaccurate evaluation by her supervisor-bully, but described the entire bullying experience over several years as being very difficult. For Eve, supportive family, friends, and a therapist helped her to be able to function during this time.

Beverly’s method of surviving and thriving was unique. She described her progression from a neophyte educator to a savvy school administrator as a process of “learning to be one of the boys.” Beverly experienced bullying behaviors throughout her career, but “learned to give it back,” which allowed her speak up to the bully and to never show fear. Support from family members and colleagues was extremely valuable, but her single recommendation for handling bullies is to “behave like a man.”

Although a school administrator herself, Liz described two experiences of being bullied by higher-level administrators. Survival in the first experience meant finding another job in another school district. Liz indicated that being able to speak with a few colleagues about the situation helped her to deal with the situation, but that she found the bullying largely untenable. She needed the assistance provided by health care professionals to help with somatic symptoms and sought the support of a therapist during this time. Her second experience of being targeted by a bully led her to again change jobs. Liz is vocal about the lack of available actions for addressing bullying in schools, and laments this fact.
Allie described herself as confident and able to handle adversity, but shaken by the bullying she experienced. Her survival was defined by her ability to tolerate adversity, as well as being able to find other jobs. Allie considered speaking to the Board of Education as a strong survival technique. She documented everything that had occurred and provided this in writing, as well as verbally in front of the Board of Education (BOE). The BOE allowed her to speak in a closed session: Allie stated that she would have been happier speaking in a public session. Although she was forced to leave a position in which she had experienced success, Allie had her say and left with dignity, something on which she continues to pride herself. The support of colleagues, family, and friends also was described as assisting with Allie’s ability to tolerate a difficult situation and to survive.

Maria is one of the participants who never moved into an administrative position and also represents a diverse background in a school staff dominated by White women. She was primarily bullied by a colleague, but this colleague was able to influence a school administrator against her. Maria described her primary survival techniques as speaking to the bully, maintaining personal dignity, and continuing to be a strong student advocate. She takes pride in working with her students and doing the best she can for them. Maria says she is unafraid, although she did find the bullying experiences “exhausting and draining, wearing.” She continues to feel “more apprehensive and cautious” due to having been bullied. She believes much of the bullying behavior is the result of jealousy from colleagues since she receives frequent accolades from parents and students and her bullying colleagues do not.
At the time of the interview, Suzanne’s retirement was only months away. As a school administrator, she described the toll repeated bullying had taken on her. The bullies were upper-level administrators and the Board of Education, leaving her with little recourse. She takes pride in her work and thinks about her retirement as a survival technique. Suzanne is saddened to leave her career in this way, but believes she will feel re-energized and renewed with retirement. The sadness is a prescient issue at the present time due to feeling “pushed out” of her job by others in positions of authority. She did state that her salary is near the top of the salary guide for her school district and that they “probably can hire two people for the price of me.”

Power may be power may be power, as described in this section, but each woman in this study acquired her own power in order to deal with the behaviors that had caused self-doubt, job insecurity, job changes, family problems, physical symptoms, and a host of difficult situations accompanied by disquieting emotions. The data included here demonstrates that real women who are school professionals were able to triumph over their experiences through differing methods and to find meaning in their stories of what had happened to them, while also contributing to the research literature through their participation in this study.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to hear interviewees describe their experiences of being bullied by another professional adult staff member in a K-12 New Jersey public school. The 11 female respondents described their specific experiences, how they dealt with the bullying behaviors, and how they managed to survive and make meaning of the
experience. Three themes emerged from the process of listening to the audiotapes and examining the participants’ descriptions of their experiences: How does the bully bully?, What am I experiencing?, and Did I really experience this and survive? The themes were developed through an examination of the data provided in the participants’ reports. The first theme describes the tactics used against the target by the bully and examines the range of approaches and the degree of severity of the abuse. The second theme moves into discussion of specific symptoms, thoughts, and behaviors experienced by the target. Theme three provides an understanding of the power, resolve, and commitment shown by each woman as she enacted a plan for addressing the bullying and for her future. These themes and the implications for future researchers, counselors, and K-12 public education institutions will be discussed in chapter six.
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to listen to and understand the lived experiences of K-12 school professionals in New Jersey as they told their narratives about their experiences of having been bullied by another adult school professional. Only females volunteered to participate, which provides an interesting same-gender demographic, and the 11 women volunteers were interviewed to access their stories about the research question: What are the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying among New Jersey K-12 school professionals? The participants were asked questions related to their role in the school and the role of the bully, the tactics used by the bully, what manifestations the experience caused in them as the targets, and how they survived the bullying experience. In addition, those interviewed were asked how they made meaning of the bullying experience.

Discussion of the Findings

The research driving this study was the plethora of data related to student to student school bullying, as well as with adult to adult workplace bullying where the workplaces are corporations and industries, and the underrepresentation of data related to adult to adult bullying in New Jersey K-12 schools. My desire for an answer to the question: What are the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools in New Jersey? drove the search for additional information which would inform the literature. In addressing this question, three main themes emerged as a result of data analysis: 1.) How does the bully bully?; 2.) What am I experiencing?; and 3.) Did I really experience this and survive? Within these three themes, other findings focus on
the culture of a school or a school district, the use/misuse of power, and diversity issues. The findings lend themselves to considerations related to the prevalence of adult to adult bullying in schools, school structures and power differentials in schools, gender issues, school settings, and the lack of recourse available to bullied targets, all of which are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

I chose to disclose my personal experience of having been a bullied veteran school counselor in an educational work environment to each participant. I chose to do so in order to facilitate mutual understanding between each interviewee and me, a posture also aligned with my feminist theoretical base for this study (Bateson, 1989; Brisolara et al, 2014; hooks, 2000; Miller, 1976). Sharing some of my background and my experience of having been bullied as an adult by adults in a school setting was a necessary component of this research project in terms of positionality and trustworthiness with my specific population. Because a feminist theoretical perspective was used in this study and because such an approach involves the study investigator and the participant as co-researchers, establishing trust through an explanation of my personal position related to the topic being explored was of great importance (Saldaña, 2015). As the interviews progressed, each of my participants expressed appreciation for my disclosure, while expressing their passion for explaining individual experiences; from the coding and re-coding of the resulting data, the three themes identified above emerged.

The first theme, How does the bully bully? provided detail about the variations of bullying behaviors exhibited by each perpetrator and allowed the targets to provide descriptions of what they had experienced. Several participants (Rosie, Emma, Marilyn,
Allie, and Carol) did not immediately recognize the behaviors they experienced as bullying. All respondents ultimately experienced the bullying as a misuse of power that led to their mistrust and all but one interviewee were bullied by individuals in supervisory positions of authority. Most bullies utilized their rank and position to undermine individuals who had demonstrated work success by countering their opinions, ignoring their efforts, challenging their responsibilities, and frequently writing negative observation and evaluation reports which were in contrast to highly positive earlier reports.

The first theme illustrated some of the data concerning more general workplace bullying that has been provided by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2011, 2017) and others (Einarsen, et al., 2009; Lubetzky, 2015; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Tada, 2010; Vartia, 1996; Yamada, 2008) related to power differentials and culture and how these factors contribute to bullying behaviors. Indeed, all participants mentioned power and culture as sub-themes in their interviews and commented on the need to attend to both factors in order to reduce or eliminate bullying among adults in schools. Current literature supports the impacts of power and culture in relation to student to student bullying in schools and related to workplace bullying in sites other than schools (Beswick, Gore, Palferman, 2006; Bjorquist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukainen, 1992; Einarsen, 1996, 2000; Namie, 2009, 2010; Namie & Namie, 2003; Olweus, 1978, 1979, 1993, 1994, 1997). What the present study contributes is a rich description of the significant range of bullying tactics the 11 women in my study were targeted with. These ranged from being ignored and ostracized to being formally threatened regarding work...
competencies to being subjected to humiliating sexual comments and propositions. This range underscores the futility of reducing adult-to-adult bullying in schools to a single or simply set of stops and measures. Bullying is complex and often insidious. What is clearly significant is the fact that many of these women reported trying to rationalize what was happening at first until they realized that they were indeed being bullied. The present study also emphasizes that it not just principals bullying teachers in schools in New Jersey, but other certified professional adults in a variety of roles. This is also an important finding because it means that any response to adult bullying in schools should not be confined to upper administration faculty. Rather, bullying occurs among those in similar positions in schools, such as teacher to teacher or counselor to counselor bullying, and among same-level administrators, as well as from those in superior positions toward those in lower positions.

The second theme, What am I experiencing? focused on the symptoms or effects of bullying as experienced by those targeted. In many ways, the symptoms reported by these 11 women were aligned with those described by earlier researchers who had collected data about general workplace bullying in non-school settings (Cooper, Walker, Askew, Robinson, & McNair, 2011; Croft, & Cash, 2012; Einarsen, 2000, 1996) and included psychological, emotional, physical, social/family, and career-related issues. Every participant in this study experienced some type or types of symptomatology, ranging from the development of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (Justine) to severe headaches (Liz) to jaw and neck pain which required months of physical therapy (Allie). There were no single symptoms, but typically several occurring at the same time for each
participant. Some had difficulty sleeping and lost confidence at work and in their work (Rosie, Liz). Others found themselves quick to anger with family members, while either eating too little or too much (Ava, Eve). Still others found their self-confidence significantly eroded (Suzanne, Rosie, Marilyn) and sought professional counseling in order to re-build self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. These results are aligned with the symptomatology described by researchers examining student school bullying (Olweus, 1978, 1979, 1993, 1994, 1997) and workplace bullying (Beswick, Gore, & Palferman, 2006; Einarsen, 1996, 2000; Namie, 2009, 2010; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2014, 2017), but what this study offers are detailed accounts of how these various symptoms shifted and morphed over time—in some cases over years—and how these symptoms also affected friends and families. In many ways, the “bully + target” nomenclature is shown to be inadequate by this study because of its ripple effects in terms of who is harmed by the bully.

The third theme, “Did I really experience this and survive?” focuses on participant responses that kept cycling back to a kind of wonderment at now being on the other side of being bullied. Responses and coping skills varied from leaving a job, furthering one’s education in order to leave the field of K-12 public education, fighting back through appeals and personal statements to the Board of Education or, with the support of teachers’ unions, standing up to the bully, or “becoming one of the boys.” For each participant, it was important that she re-negotiate a sense of self once the bullying situation had changed and that she make meaning of the bullying experience, something that occurred for each participant, but which occurred with differing degrees of support.
from others within the school and elsewhere and within varying timeframes. Again, within this, culture, power, and diversity issues were woven throughout the interviews and will be discussed in detail in this chapter. All have been shown to influence bullying in the existing literature (Cemaglolu, 2007; Fahie, 2014; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Schnall, 2008; Skorek, 2009). What this study contributes to the field is a strong sense of how targets variously addressed their situation—some with overt agency (e.g., leaving their job; petitioning school boards) and others in perhaps what can be described as “self-first” ways, where they took action to look after themselves first and foremost by speaking with family and friends, becoming involved in therapy, consulting with attorneys, or avoiding the bully at all costs.

These are significant issues and are indications of the need for anti-bullying workplace legislation in order to protect those who suffer from the bullying experience. Enacting any future legislation, just as enacting current district anti-bullying policies, needs to be consistent in order to protect employees.

It is clear from the data in this study that adult to adult bullying in schools is a problem. The way in which the bully bullies, the symptoms experienced by targets of this bullying, and how each individual dealt with this experience show significant variation. All study participants described the experience as traumatic and as causing self-doubt and a loss of sense of self, at least for a short period of time. Several participants left the field of public education completely, others changed positions or schools, and some had the benefit of being able to retire in order to get away from the bullying behavior. The duration of the trauma varied from relatively brief to still
experiencing symptoms, when triggered. Each interviewee found it necessary to make sense of the experience and all explained an increase in strength and self-advocacy as a result of having been bullied. No participant believes that bullying is acceptable, although several consider bullying to be part of our natures as human beings. In contrast, there are several respondents who firmly believe that their roles are to help others to fight a bullying culture. This, too, sheds important light on adult to adult bullying in schools because it underscores how there is no single bullying experience. What is troubling, though, is the duration of much of the bullying described by these women. Even taking into account that many did not even realize for quite some time that they were bullied, their accounts suggest that the bullying was overt and in some cases extended over years. The issue that this raises is why other colleagues did not step in. Just as with children, adult to adult bullying is clearly a whole school issue and any programs designed to redress this issue necessarily need to be whole school focused.

**Implications**

There are several clear implications related to this study which address each of the three themes described earlier. First, the manifestations of bullying behaviors are significant. Behaviors which challenge an individual’s self-esteem, sense of self-worth, and ability to do the job tend to defeat the target. When one’s identity as an employee is challenged by someone in a position of authority or power, the target may have little recourse in terms of addressing the situation. As was demonstrated in the narratives of several participants, job responsibilities were made impossible or credit for work done was claimed by the bully. Thus, little could be done to address a being-bullied reality.
For two participants, sexual harassment was a behavior that shook the targets to their cores. They made attempts to avoid contact with the harasser. This brought to the fore the need for explicit and well-known processes for clearly enacting anti-bullying and anti-sexual harassment legislation as important implications for the future.

The symptoms experienced by those who were bullied were significant, varied in duration, but were always traumatic. Having an anti-bullying specialist who attends to the issues of adult to adult bullying and providing counseling are two implications which need to be considered. The isolation brought about by the bullying described by many interviewees engendered self-doubt, depression, family issues, and concerns about job performance. Assuring that a well-trained bullying specialist will listen to and acknowledge individual experiences might lessen attendant trauma or certainly would serve to assist the targets with accessing appropriate medical, psychological, and career supports.

Two specific study questions resulted in participant responses which were interesting and, to this researcher, significant. Around the question of “What can be done to reduce or eliminate adult to adult bullying by professionals in schools?”, several respondents said, “Nothing.” They indicated that they firmly believe bullying to be part of human nature and that people will always bully. Several respondents stated that training, legal ramifications, and outside consultants who enforce anti-bullying legislation and are involved in the trainings will resolve some of the problem. The data provided in this study has implications for informing and improving educational institutions and for reducing not just student to student bullying, but the bullying that occurs among
ADULT TO ADULT BULLYING

professional adults who work in such settings. In this section, I offer suggestions to address the themes and findings that emerged from this study. Many recommendations come directly from the study participants.

As counselors and counselor educators, it is of great importance to consider the topic of bullying when working with clients or students. Schools, agencies, and mental health institutions may be the seats of adult to adult bullying. Although clients, consumers, and students may not be directly involved in the bullying, they may experience the toxicity that often accompanies such environments. It is incumbent upon those working with the client or student population to assess the level of discomfort and the degree of impact experienced by those with whom we, as counselors, are working. Additionally, it is crucial for the counselor to provide the student and client with a means of speaking about and resolving the problem. Asking specific questions about levels of distress related to the counseling environment would be valuable. Additionally, being reflective about our personal involvement in acts of bullying is a necessary component in order to determine whether we, too, are being impacted by a bullying climate.

Counselor educators are another group which needs to increase a focus on what is occurring in the workplace related to bullying and harassment. Too frequently questions related to workplace behaviors are relegated to the arena of “career counseling” and are not included in counselor practice. Assisting counseling students with understanding the impact of worklife and the potential negative effects of adult to adult workplace bullying should be an integral component of all counseling. The significance of work-related
issues in the lives of clients/students cannot be diminished and needs to be highlighted with potential counselors.

**Best Practices Framework**

As a framework for best practices for the development, implementation, and maintenance of reducing or eliminating adult bullying in schools, I reference the Workplace Bullying Institute, or WBI, (2014, 2017) and their recommendations. This organization has focused on non-educational workplace bullying, but many of the recommendations would apply to educational institutions. This organization’s primary goals include:

1. Provide information and support about workplace bullying.
2. Make available to individuals and institutions methods of measuring workplace bullying.
3. Conduct thorough research related to workplace bullying and make this available to the public.
4. Enact legislation in U.S. states and Territories through enactment of the anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill to protect targets of workplace bullying.

In the case of the present study, changes to the above recommendations would be to replace simply “measuring” bullying and replace it with opportunities for respondents to describe in depth the nature of what they’re experiencing. What also seems to be missing is a focus on making clear to bullies when they are bullying, and equipping a
range of people with strategies for speaking up when they see bullying occurring without risk of retribution.

In addition, New Jersey’s “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights” Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15) provides a useful template for addressing adult to adult bullying in schools. This Act addresses harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) and went into effect September, 2011 (www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/hib/). Based on this law, what follows are specifications for dealing with bullying in schools and should be applied to addressing adult to adult school bullying:

1. Provide a clear definition of bullying which includes a single incident as bullying (i.e., not requiring the bullying to occur multiple times over time).
2. Assign an anti-bullying specialist.
3. Develop a school safety team.
4. Observe a “week of respect.”
5. Ensure appropriate training on harassment, intimidation, and bullying.
6. Develop a clearly-defined policy that outlines consequences and remedial actions for HIB.
7. Have a policy which defines the consequences of falsely reporting HIB.
8. Provide yearly reporting of all incidences of bullying to the NJ Department of Education (Drew, 2011).

The legal requirements identified above can be related to the narratives of the participants in this study as viewed through the work of Fahie and Devine (2014), Skorek, (2009) and others who have begun to address the issue of adult to adult bullying in schools. Many of
the above factors were mentioned by study participants, which can help to inform recommendations for best practices in K-12 schools. For example, most of the participants in this study referenced a focus on student to student school bullying, but reported that little attention is paid to bullying among school adults; that there were few, if any, persons to whom the target could safely speak; and that the power of the bullies was a significant factor. Interviewees also described the costs related to physical, emotional, and mental health and that having a specialist available might assist with these concerns. The experiences of the participants in this study address what is discussed in the following sections.

**Policies and Procedures**

As described earlier, New Jersey’s Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights” Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15) is designed to assist “students and teachers alike” (Drew, 2011, p. 22). However, the reality as defined by this study’s participants is that students remain the primary focus and little support or legal recourse is provided to school employees.

Although each school district is legally required to develop specific policies regarding bullying, harassment, and intimidation, policy implementation may vary from district to district and school to school, due to inconsistencies in training and in policy interpretation. The Workplace Bullying Institute has argued for the implementation of anti-bullying legislation in all 50 states and in U.S. Territories, which would address the two major issues considered in this study; adult to adult school bullying. Aligned with what has been reported here among New Jersey K-12 educators, it is feasible that the bullying experienced by these respondents is similar to what is experienced by others
throughout the United States. This also is aligned with more general workplace bullying research which has shown that bullying occurs in a variety of industrial, medical, and corporate sites (Croft & Cash, 2012; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2013; Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). This is a topic for future research. Entitled “The Healthy Workplace Act,” such legislation would provide a legal structure for the formation of school district policies and would ensure legal protections for targets and legal consequences for the bullies. To date, this Act has been promoted in 30 states and Territories, with efforts to bring attention to the issue in additional locations. However, the legislation has not been passed in any state or Territory (WBI, 2017) as of this time. Nearly all of the study participants addressed the importance of some type of formal legislation in which the bullied individual would be protected and the bully punished.

Training and Programming

Many study respondents addressed training and programming for all members of a school community as critical aspects of dealing with adult to adult bullying in schools, although some also mentioned the inherent difficulties, such as consistency and assuring that trainees understand the seriousness of this topic. In Skorek’s (2009) study of adult school bullying, training and programming were identified as two elements necessary for the protection of those bullied. Schnall (2009) also addressed the need for training and programming in her study of principal abuse of teachers. This similarly is addressed as one of the recommendations of the Workplace Bullying Institute and of other researchers (Evans, 2012; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Fevre, Lewis, Robinson, & Jones, 2012; Thompson, 2017). The value of strong training and programming was stressed by study
participants, with several stating that the individuals conducting the trainings, program
development, and investigations needing to be persons outside of the school district in
order to assure confidentiality and non-biased recommendations. This suggestion has
both positive and negative elements in being more difficult to arrange, but also in having
the potential to help targets to feel more protected by reducing the impact of school or
district-power influences.

As referenced earlier, attending to counseling students’ needs to be educated and
informed related to workplace bullying by adults should to be a component of all
counselor education programs. Any counselor who will be practicing should be cognizant
of legal requirements and options, such as Title VII (https://
www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titleVII.cfm), Title IX//www.justice.gov/…/overview-title-
IX-education-amendments-1972-20-USC-1681-e…), and New Jersey’s Anti-Bullying
Bill of Rights” Act (NJSA 18A-37-15)
(www.state.nj.us/education/student/safety/behaviors/hib/), as well as local policies and
procedures. Understanding that workplace bullying has negative and potentially lethal
consequences is important for not just career counselors, but all counselors.

Peace as a Value

Each study participant discussed her longing for a more peaceful, more cohesive,
more collaborative social structure in her school. Peaceful societies have existed for
generations (Sponsel, 1996). Although they have largely been more isolated, less
industrialized, and more agrarian cultures, all have held peace and non-violence as values
(Peaceful Societies, 2013). It seems to me that making peace an overarching societal and
school value would lead to reduced bullying. Albeit a difficult goal, focusing on kinder, more peaceful, and less violent social structures could, in my opinion, have a significant impact on small school societies and a larger world society. In the United States, attention to Amish and Quaker societies might lead to the adoption of more peaceful methods of managing conflict. Not assuming incivility, cruelty, and unkindness to be human characteristics also might lead to a kinder, gentler social structure. Additionally, learning to communicate thoughtfully, with skill, and with understanding might enhance understanding and reduce misunderstanding and conflict. Knowing that culture can change for the better is important as we investigate what is positive and what is negative about the culture in which we live (Thompson, 2017). It certainly is worth a try, given the negative issues related to the continuation of the alternatives.

For Emily Bazelon (2013), the elimination of bullying relies on two words: character and empathy. She believes that being able to care about others with sincerity is a reflection of empathy and that this builds kinder societies. The size of the society should not matter if each individual is able to demonstrate empathy toward others, regardless of gender, age, race/culture, or religion. Character has to do with having and upholding good values. If the values of an individual, a group, a school, and a society reflect cooperation and egalitarianism, according to Bazelon, there should be no violence and no bullying. Every study participant reported longing for a school culture, district, community, and larger society which valued peace and non-violence.
Gender and Power Differentials

Females were the only individuals to volunteer to participate in this study and males, with the exception of one female, were the primary bullies. It is unlikely that males do not experience bullying, but reporting their experiences might be emasculating and the overarching power of predominantly male bullies may have made sharing their stories impossible. The intersection of gender and power is an interesting factor addressed in this study. As has been discussed in the responses of this study’s participants, gender issues and male dominance patterns exist in school systems. Aligned with the feminist theoretical perspective utilized for this study, the gender and development (GAD) approach is appealing in dealing with adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools and offers increased understandings of, and possible solutions to, some of the issues involved in these bullying behaviors. In their essay in Brisolara’s, Seigart’s, and SenGupta’s book on feminist research, *Latin American Feminist Perspectives on Gender Power Issues in Evaluation* (2014), Mulder and Amariles argue that a gender and development (GAD) approach “seeks to eliminate gaps in gender power relations (p. 231). GAD has a focus on the socially-constructed aspects of male-female relationships and looks at “the interconnection of gender, class, and race” (Podems, p. 125). Because a feminist perspective was utilized for this study and because I believe gender has many socially-constructed elements, it is my hope that a GAD approach would assist in eliminating some gender-specific power factors related to adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools. Certainly, increased awareness would be beneficial.
Each participant in this study mentioned the use/misuse of power and the impact of power differentials. The development of collaborative, non-hierarchal school structures would be of benefit in eliminating unequal power structures. Although Brisolara, Seigart, and SenGupta (2014) and Thompson (2017) indicated that a structure which is clearly understood is important to the development of positive school cultures, that structure need not be rigid or non-collaborative. Having open communication in which each individual feels respected and listened to, although not necessarily agreed with, can have a positive impact on eliminating bullying behaviors (Evans, 2012, Thompson, 2017). Similarly, if a school structure truly is collaborative, power differentials may exist, but will be utilized respectfully and responsibly.

**Bullying as a Leadership Style**

In addition to referencing the above issues of power and gender, the utilization of power as a leadership style frequently was reported by study interviewees. None believed this to be a necessary behavior, but rather, this is a frequently-known style of intimidating and/or removing someone from a position. Although Human Resources personnel are known as providing employee services, they also were viewed by study participants as providing little support or assistance in instances of employee to employee adult bullying. Allie was the only participant who gave an example of an administrator demonstrating a different form of behavior when letting her go:

I had one principal . . . He was really nice. When he needed to staff and let me go due to budget issues, he sat me down and told me what was happening. . . He was honest. He didn’t destroy me. He thanked me for what I had done and explained what was going on [in the district].
School administrators, Boards of Education, and Human Resources personnel need to be made aware of the costs of employee to employee bullying in schools and need to be provided with alternative methods of coping with this problem. They also need to be trained related to personnel improvement and changes in order to avoid potential negative school cultures and possible legal consequences. This could be done through gender, power, and responsibility descriptions and training.

**Limitations of the Study**

Several notable limitations exist related to this study and future research is recommended. Among the limitations is that participants self-selected to be a part of this study. This does not mean that different voices were not heard, but, because the participants volunteered to engage in the study, it is possible that different perspectives may have been omitted. Also, because snowball sampling was used, this could have limited characteristics of potential participants. A relatively small number (11) of participants were interviewed. This was adequate for this qualitative study, but a larger participant pool could be of value in future studies. The characteristics of the study also involve some limitations. Although attempts were made to recruit a socio-culturally diverse group, I would have preferred more diversity. The all-female interviewees provided for an interesting examination of power dynamics, but there was only one Asian participant and one participant with a Caribbean/African American background. More diversity related to cultural background and race would be suggested for the future. An all-male or mixed gender population would be of great value to future studies around this topic. No males volunteered for the current study and a question for further examination
is whether males experience the same degree of bullying as the participant females - or not, or whether they simply are less willing to discuss their experiences of being bullied in schools. As I began planning this study, I considered including non-professional staff (non-certified aides, custodial staff, cafeteria staff). I was encouraged by the members of my dissertation committee to limit the parameters of this initial study and to make it more narrow and more clearly defined and, thus, focused only on certified professional school staff. The inclusion of non-certified staff members in another study might yield some interesting results which would further enhance the literature.

As with all studies, numerous questions and variables become evident as one continues with an investigation; this became obvious as I conducted my research. I do believe the topic of adult to adult bullying in schools is one which would benefit from further investigation and attention. It is my hope that this particular study adds to the literature and piques the interest of other researchers.

**Directions for Future Research**

This was a qualitative study in which 11 participants were interviewed twice. Only females volunteered to participate. Future research should involve qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches in order to provide a broad base of data. Differing recruitment avenues are recommended in order to attempt to recruit a larger number of participants representing male and more socio-cultural groups would be advisable. Suggestions related to this would possibly involve providing recruitment surveys to large numbers of educators on the web and/or at teaching conventions.
This study was an initial study utilizing the specific participants who were identified as certified professionals who work or who have worked in a K-12 public school and who experienced bullying by another adult professional. Non-certified school staff, which would include bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, and some para-professionals should be included in future research in order to assess whether their experiences differ or provide similar information. Yet another study which investigates teacher to teacher bullying or bullying by those in specific roles similarly would add to the data around adult to adult school bullying.

It is my hope that this study has started a conversation about the prevalence and impact of adult to adult bullying in schools. I will leave it to other researchers to further investigate this topic and to develop the evidence-based programs necessary to eradicate this problem in order to truly make schools places that are safer, gentler, kinder, and in which learning can occur.

**Contributions to the Field**

The limited research related to adult to adult bullying in schools (See Fahie, 2014; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Olson, 2008; Schnall, 2009) makes this study particularly relevant. With such a strong focus on student to student bullying in schools and adult to adult bullying in workplaces other than schools, there is a gap in the data related to adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools. Although limited in scope, this research supports the fact that adults in schools bully one another and should lead to further research concerning this topic. This study provides data which informs the literature related to an
under-researched topic. As such, it is a significant start to an investigation of adult to adult school bullying.

**Conclusion**

On February 8, 2014, in the midst of my research, I listened to a National Public Radio (NPR) interview with a researcher who was discussing work to reduce student bullying in schools. The researcher said that not all meanness and cruelty can be eliminated. I have heard this statement many times before and, each time, I bristle against our limitations and rage that this message is once again being shared. The radio announcer is not personally cruel, ignorant or unkind. I am a proponent of change and I have worked hard to assure that schools are kinder and gentler places for our students and adult professionals. We human beings have studied and learned a great deal. We know there are and have been societies in which people co-exist in peace, such as some Pacific Island communities, earlier Amish groups, and the Quakers (Peaceful Societies, 2013).

Each of these *peaceful societies* provides a system for managing conflict and values peace above all. Of note is the fact that some of the original peaceful societies have changed as their economic welfare and social structure have been corrupted by Western influences (Thompson, 2017). I am well aware that economic inequities can lead to frustration, anger, and war. I know that holding onto idiosyncratic beliefs regarding politics, religion, and other culture mores can be isolating and remove universalist viewpoints. We have learned about how we learn and know we learn from behaviors that are modeled (Bandura, 1977, 1986; 1999; Skinner, 1987). We have studied what occurs when basic needs remain unmet (Maslow, 1943, 1998) and we
understand the socio-economic causes of conflict. I am well aware that violence, cruelty, meanness, and bullying exist. I also firmly believe that holding each individual, each family, workplace, and school; each society; each nation; and ourselves to a higher standard will result in the eradication of bullying and cruelty. As noted by Thompson (2017) in *Culture as Weapon*, “changing public attitudes is no mean feat. . . The United States is not a monolithic machine. It is a cumbersome infrastructure with competing, if not outright conflicting, interests” (p. 148).

It may be difficult, but I believe it is time to begin. It is my hope that this study will provide a starting point and that adult to adult bullying by certified professionals in schools can be reduced, and perhaps, ultimately eliminated.
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APPENDIX A

LIST OF CHARTS

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<th>Experience of Bullying Behaviors</th>
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(Chart 1)
# Chart 2

**Theme 2: Manifestations of the Bullying Experience**  
**Pt 1**

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<th>Somatic symptoms</th>
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## Chart 4

**Theme 3: Support and/or Lack of Support**

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### Chart 6
#### Theme 4  School Culture

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APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT STUDY LETTER

July 27, 2014

Dear Potential Research Participant:

I am looking for volunteers who are willing to participate in my dissertation study, “The Reported Experiences of Adult to Adult Bullying in K-12 Schools.”

If you:

- Are or have been a New Jersey certified professional public school employee (teacher, counselor, school nurse, administrator, media specialist, Child Study Team member).

- Were ever bullied in a New Jersey K-12 public school environment by another certified professional staff member and

- Are willing to discuss your experience during 2 confidential face-to-face interviews of approximately one hour each over a period of approximately 2 -3 weeks . . . then, I would like to hear from you!

Although there is a great deal of research about student to student school bullying, as well as information on adult to adult workplace bullying in corporations and industrial settings, there is little information about adult to adult bullying in schools. This may be your opportunity to discuss your experience of having been bullied in a school setting and to contribute to the research literature. If you are interested, please contact me at mazzarellaj2@montclair.edu.

I hope to complete all interviews by the end of October and would appreciate your immediate reply. If you are interested and do reply, I will arrange to speak with you over
the phone and to answer all of your questions prior to your completion of a consent form.

Thank you for your consideration of becoming a potential study participant.

Sincerely,

Julia R. Mazzarella, M.A., LDT-C, M.Ed.

Doctoral Candidate

Montclair State University
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR ADULTS

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you fill in this form.

Study’s Title: The Reported Experiences of Adult to Adult Bullying in New Jersey K-12 Schools

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to examine the reported experiences of adult to adult bullying in K-12 schools. I am interested in finding out how certified professional school personnel have experienced bullying by another adult in a school setting. The nature of the bullying, how this impacted you, and what you did in response is the focus of the study.

What will happen while you are in the study?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in one initial in-person interview which will be held at Montclair State University or in your home. You will be asked an initial question about your experience, with additional questions for additional information or clarification. The interview will be audio-recorded. The responses from all participants will be transcribed and analyzed to arrive at themes. Following the initial
interview, a second interview will be conducted with each participant in order to allow further clarification and explanation of the experience of adult to adult school bullying. Only the research team members will have access to your responses, both the recordings and the transcriptions.

Please Note: No specific information should be given regarding individual’s names, the name of the school, school district, or community.

Time: This study will take a total of about 2-3 hours. The initial interview will be 60-90 minutes in length. The second interview should take no longer than 1 hour. There will be an opportunity to speak again should you or the interviewer require further information or clarification.

Risks: The risks in this study are no greater than those in your daily personal or work life. There may be some personal discomfort with reviewing your personal experience and needing to describe what occurred. Your responses will be confidential and your identity known only to the research team. If, however, there becomes evidence that you are experiencing some distress, the research team has a responsibility to report this to the research study advisor. All participants will be provided with a list of mental health resources and will be given the opportunity of discussion concerns with the study advisor.
**Benefits:** You may benefit from this study by having a sense of relief at relating your personal experience or knowing that you are contributing to the research literature in a confidential manner.

Who will know that you are in this study? You will not be linked to any presentations. We will keep who you are confidential according to the law. We will use pseudonyms to identify participants during presentations and publications related to this research.

Do you have to be in the study?
You do not have to be in this study. You are a volunteer! It is okay if you want to stop at any time and not be in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Do you have any questions about this study? Phone or email Julia Mazzarella, mazzarellaj2@montclair.edu, or Dr. Larry Burlew, burlew1@montclair.edu.

Do you have any questions about your rights? Phone or email the IRB Chair, Debra Zellner (reviewboard@mail.montclair.edu or 973-655-4327).
It is okay to use my data in other studies:

Please initial: X____ Yes _____ No

I would like to get a summary of this study:

Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

*It is okay to audiotape me while I am in this study:*

*Please initial: X____ Yes _____ No*

The copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

If you choose to be in this study, please fill in your lines below.

__________________  ___________________  _____________
Print your name here  Sign your name here       Date

Julia R. Mazzarella  ___________________  _____________
Name of Principal Investigator  Signature         Date
APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

DEMOGRAPHICS INFORMATION FORM FOR POTENTIAL STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Your Name: ____________________________________________________

Your Email Address:______________________________________________

Study Title: The Reported Experiences of Adult to Adult Bullying in New Jersey

K-12 Schools

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in my study. I am hoping the collected data will add to the literature about adult to adult bullying in schools and bring attention to this issue.

Julia R. Mazzarella, Doctoral Candidate
Montclair State University

Please complete each item to the best of your ability. You are welcome to skip any items with which you feel uncomfortable.

Please Note: All persons who agree to participate in the study are being sent a copy of this demographics information form in an attempt to have gender, racial, age, and/or ethnic diversity represented in this study. Nobody will have access to any of your forms with identifying data but me. Once the forms are completed and returned, you will be assigned a code number and later assigned a pseudonym. If you are selected for participation through a process known as purposeful sampling,
you will be informed via email and an initial interview will be arranged. You will be assigned a pseudonym at the time of the interview and all of your information will be coded in order to protect your identity.

If you are not selected, possibly due to having too large a number of potential participants, you will be notified via email. You may be asked if your information may be maintained until the study’s conclusion. The reason for asking to maintain your contact information is in the eventuality that if someone drops out of the study, you may be asked again if you would be willing to participate.

At the conclusion of the study, you will be contacted once again, thanked for your information and interest, and informed that all of your contact and demographic information will be permanently removed.

Directions: Please circle the response to each item that best describes you. You can also include a comment if necessary or if asked to do so.

1. Work status: Currently working Retired Not working due to (if so, please comment): ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

2. Certifications related to education: ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________
3. Highest level of education attained: Bachelor’s Master’s PhD.

Number and title of duplicate degrees, if applicable

________________________________________
________________________________________

4. Current position: Teacher Administrator Counselor Retiree

Child Study Team Member Other

5. Position at time of school bullying: Teacher Administrator Counselor

Retiree Child Study Team Member

Other

6. Type of school at time of school bullying: Elementary Middle High School

7. School setting at time of school bullying: Urban Suburban Rural

8. Independent or public school at time of school bullying: Independent Public

9. Number of years in education when bullying occurred: 0-3 4-6 7-10

11-15 16-19 20+

10. Racial/ethnic background: African American Asian Hispanic/Latino

Native American White Pacific Islander

11. Gender: Female Male Other


51-55 56-60 60+
APPENDIX E

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORMAT

Interviewer’s Name: _____________________________

Interviewee’s Coded Name: ___________________________

Date: ______________

Time of Interview: __________ to _____________

Interview Location: ________________________________

Interviewer: I am glad we have this opportunity to talk about your experience of having been bullied by another adult in a school setting. I have read a great deal about student to student bullying in schools and about adult workplace bullying, but have found very little research with regard to the issue of adult to adult bullying in schools. I appreciate your willingness to be a participant. This is the first of 2 or 3 interviews and this interview will be 60-90 minutes in length.

I have the demographic information you submitted online when you agreed to participate in this study. I would like to go over this information with you now.

During the interview, please do not tell me the name of the person or persons who bullied you, please instead refer to them as John or Jane Doe or any other name.

I want to reiterate that you can leave the study at any time, ask questions, or take a break. Just ask. Any questions? (Allow time for responses.) Are you comfortable? (Allow time for response.) Is there anything you need before we begin? (Allow time for response.)

Ok. Let’s begin. Remember you do not need to identify any information about your current place of employment or where the bullying occurred. During the interview, I will refer to you with the pseudonym selected. I am now recording.
So, tell me about your experience of being bullied by another adult in your workplace? Interviewer will question based on what interviewee shares to elicit information about where this occurred, who bullied, the length of time involved, the form(s) of bullying, impacts, whether the bullying was reported, and any other information based on, based on what the interviewee shares.

Some of the information may be elicited through the following probing questions:

Can you tell me more about ___________?

How do you define bullying?

What behaviors characterize bullying?

Since the experience of having been bullied occurred _____ months/years ago, can you tell me how you feel about this now? Is there anything you would have done differently?

**Note:** The format for the second interview also will be a semi-structured interview and will be based on the initial interview with each participant.